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Italians posing between public and private. Theories and practices of Social Heritage

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ABSTRACT

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage (Unesco 2003), from the point of view on Social Heritage, the Family Photo, and by extension Family Albums, play a particular significant role. In particular, Family Albums are a specific referent point for conservation, transmission and development of a community Social Heritage. At the same time, Family Album can be considered “places” of the Italian memory and places of transmission between public and private, because the photography, since its debut, is a public space, as if to say: posing is already being in public. Amateurs photographs and professional photographs offer a chance to see a visual history of Italy and so a visual history of dominant ideologies, perceptual and cultural models of Italian life. In this sense, with Family Album we can analyzed the continuous interweaving between the idea of history and history of ideological, economic and political thinking, factors influencing consumers, tastes change and the impact of scientific progress. Specifically, Family photo is a new source for the study of Italian family’s history, that is “The True Homeland of the Italian” and so the institution on which the national identity is found (Ginsborg 2001).

Some Online Italian Photography Archives in which to search photographs on different themes developed in this paper are:

- National Italian Photographic Archive – Rome
<http://immagini.iccd.beniculturali.it/eng/ihome.htm>
- Archivio Storico Luce - Rome
<http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/>
- Fratelli Alinari - Florence
http://www.alinari.it/default_en.asp
- imago online - University of Bologna Rimini Campus
<http://www.imago.rimini.unibo.it/imago-en/default-eng.htm>

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1.

Also having roots in different and scattered historical-cultural context, we can say that the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Unesco 2003) is based on the link "Heritage-Memory-Identity" (Anheier, Isar 2011; Graham, Howard 2008). In this regard, as Pierre Nora says: "A constellation of three terms – heritage, memory and identity – has dominated ideological thinking for thirty years. (...) What is particularly striking, is the way in which all three terms have shifted, over the same period and in the same manner, from the individual to the community. They echo and complement each another. *Heritage* traditionally referred to goods and properties you inherited from your father or your mother; today, it refers to the goods and properties of a group which help to define the identity of that group. (...). *Memory*, strictly speaking a phenomenon linked to the psychology and physiology of individual person, now encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings relating to the different forms of presence, real or imaginary, of the past in the present. (...) *Identity* traditionally expressed the unique character of a person in an administrative or police sense, (...) today, it is the broadest of the three terms (...) we speak of the 'identity' of this or that group or minority; at the other of national identity" (Nora 2011, ix). The emergence of this constellation is linked to a number of fundamental changes in contemporary society, and also directs, at the same time, some research guideline of the latest national and international historiography. In short, these research guidelines include:

1. the relationship between Social History and Postsocial History (Cabrera 2004);
2. the possibility of applying operationally to historical phenomena, the concept of Social Imaginary (Taylor 2004);
3. the possibility of applying to historical phenomena the Systems Theory (Luhmann 1984);
4. the complexity in Social Sciences and Humanities (Buzzetti 2008).

With the advent of these research guidelines we investigate, between persistence and changes, how the Social Heritage of a community, constituted by tangible cultural and intangible cultural heritage, is transmitted from one generation to another by a new theoretical perspective. Given the inherent complexity of this kind of historical research a new theory of society, to include the constellation of heritage, memory and identity, in a general framework and an evolutionary perspective is required. In this regard, we can try it using the tools of the theory of social systems, particularly using the concept of social system. A social system is a self-referential and autopoietic system. It is formed as a difference towards an ambient and is constitutive of meaning. In this sense, *what is and what is not* depends on the perspective of observation that we adopt. That is, it's not sufficient to indicate what we are talking about, but we must also indicate who (which system) is looking at it, because others are doing it differently. At the same time, a phenomena of heritage require appropriate methods of analysis, because "inheritance implies the recognition of relationship between a collective whole or a "taxonomic group" seen as an object that can change indefinitely without ceasing to be the same individual", and its connected parts. The constituent parts of such an 'individual' are related not because of their identical properties, but because of their participation to an identical object that comprises and connects them as its components. For an individual object of this kind, the whole is not defined by the identity of the parts, but the parts are defined by the identity of the whole. It is the sameness of the whole that creates the bond, not the similarity of the parts: the parts may change, but the composite whole still remains the same" (Buzzetti 2008, 297-98).

According to the Convention Unesco, from the point of view of historical research on Social Heritage the *New Sources* such as photography, film, oral sources and audiovisual sources play a particularly significant role (Calanca 2009). These sources are the product of

technological progress over the past two centuries, but at the same time express the ways of communication between different subjects, and characterize the main forms of human relations in the political, sociological, economic, anthropological of contemporary's societies (Mignemi 2006, 735). Therefore, with the New Sources, we can study the connections between "Heritage-Memory-Identity" according to the new theoretical and historical approach. In particular, first the family photos, and by extension Family Albums, are a specific important referent point for conservation, transmission and development of a community Social Heritage, as can be seen for instance in some research projects in progress in Italy (Calanca 2010). As an example, we can consider three cases. The first is *Paesani in posa*, a research on family representations in a rural area of Southern Sardinia between 1900 and 1970 (Ravenna 2010). The research was carried out between 2003 and 2004 on behalf of XXV Mountain Community of Sa Jara, that includes the municipalities of Tuili, Gesturi e Stzu in Cagliari province. Analyzing the photographic heritage preserved in the families living in three municipalities the object is form a representative digital photo archive of the traditions and communities of the territory. From the methodological point of view 43 families were selected, especially in Tuili municipality, on the basis of the willingness shown by each group to display images of their albums and to allow duplication for its inclusion in the photo archive. In the case of Gesturi municipality were acquired only images of the Association "Reduci e Combattenti" on the First and the Second World War. The area of research includes the Marmilla region in Southern Sardinia, characterized by farming and breeding sheep and wild horses, populated by small communities with a population of 800-1000 inhabitants. The second case is the project *Le tradizioni familiari attraverso la tecnologia: tecnologia, storia locale e tradizioni familiari, il progetto della mediateca di Brindisi*, and include the project "Brindisi nel tempo", in Puglia (Ibid.). It's very innovative initiative and invites the residents to participate with their own stories and memories to create a digital photographic archive as a virtual museum of the collective memory. From the educational point of view the virtual museum, alongside the traditional cultural institutions. With the multimedia systems, the virtual museum stimulates to learn more, to explore areas related to territory and social life both visually and conceptually. The purpose of this project is to reconstruct the story of the region and province territory with images of the landscape and of the families daily's life. The third case is the project *Famiglia della regione Lazio: raccolta e valorizzazione dell'immagine familiare*, promoted by Lazio Region Presidency, "Fondazione Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e democratico", and "Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento italiano". The aim is the collection and enhancement of the great private visual heritage, made available through the web (Ibid).

At the same time, Family Album can be considered "places" of the Italian memory and places of transmission between public and private, because the photography, since its debut, is a public space, as if to say: posing is already being in public (Calanca 2006). In this perspective with the support of Family Album the civil society between the politic and private history can be studied. Amateurs photographs and professional photographs offer a chance to see a visual history of Italy and so a visual history of dominant ideologies, perceptual and cultural models of Italian life. In this sense, with Family Album we can analyzed the continuous interweaving between the idea of history and the history of ideological, economic and political thinking, factors influencing consumers, tastes change and the impact of scientific progress (Ibid.). Specifically, Family photo is a new source for the study of italian family's history, that is "The True Homeland of the Italian" and so the institution on which the national identity is found (Ginsborg 2001; Calanca 2004).

Born more than 100 years ago, the Family Album was considered as a small house alter, as something very important to show that marks the membership and the genealogies. From this point of view, we have many archives of middle-class members, merchants and travelers, which documents the transmission of principles and values from parents to children, from one generation to another (Ravenna 2010). For instance, from the archive of Museo Storico

del Risorgimento in Pavia, we know the Cairoli Family history. A family of upper middle-class, that had a very important role in the process of national unification and so in the construction of the post unification New Italy. This family has become an icon in the myth of Risorgimento (Ibid.). Specifically, the union between family and Country are included in the photographs dedicated to the public political figures, that coexist with the intimate portraits of family members. On the other hand, as Banti says, in the national political discourse there are deep figures of the Risorgimento, known for a long time, and that can be adapted to new discursive context. They are the nation as a family, the nation as a sacrificial community, the nation divided in two kinds, masculine and feminine, in roles and hierarchical relations (Banti 2011, VII ss).

So can be developed different visual historic itineraries, for example, to reconstruct the transformation process lifestyle, tastes and consumptions, which marks the transition of Italian society towards modernity. Bearing in mind that, as said Guido Piovene in 1941, the photography has profoundly changed the costume of the men, indeed with photography all men have changed their way of seeing and imagining (Piovene 1941). From this point of view, the photography allows to expand the horizons of historical research, especially if focusing the attention on the concept of social imaginary and on the new theory of society (Taylor 2004). In this sense, the need to move beyond the debate between materialism and idealism, objectivism and subjectivism, has led to a significant rethinking and has developed a new image of society. This image has a causal logic which is different from that intended by historians until about 20 years ago (Cabrera 2004, 14 ss). The traditional history was based on the subject and the subjectivity of historical agents and it was considered rationale and autonomous. For social history the subjectivity and the culture are not rationale products, but are representations and expressions of the social context on which the causes of action were founded. So, in this perspective, analysis proceeded from socio-economic structures and came to cultural practices. However, in the last two decades has developed a new theoretical paradigm that opposes both idealistic history and materialistic history. The *New Historians* argue that social reality is always inserted in the consciousness of people through his own conceptualization, and the set of categories is not a reflection of that reality, but is configured in a specific context with its own historical logic (Cabrera 2001). Categories are regarded as a complex network of relationships whose nature is the result of a historical phenomenon with its own rules of operation and change. These categories, then, are not only simple tools to convey meanings of reality, but play an active role in the process of constructing meaning. Substantially, the New Historians propose a new paradigm of historiography by applying the concept of social imaginary: the ways in which people imagine their social existence, the ways in which people imagine their social context, conveyed in images, stories, legend (Taylor 2004). The interesting aspect of social imaginary is that shared by large groups of people because is the common knowledge that enables practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. That is the unstructured common understanding which defines the background. So the importance attributed to this in structured common understanding lead us to consider photography as a basic document in order to investigate the background, and the social imaginaries. In this sense, is known that the photography organize the return of reality with a geometric perspective which is also ideological. But this is not all. Is known that ideology and practice are united in the *double vision's paradigm* of Frye: there is a spiritual aspect in human primary interests such as food, sex, property, and there is a physical aspect in human secondary aspects such as political, religious and ideological belief (Frye 1991). And then, from this point of view, as a way of thinking born in Western world the photographic image, can expand the boundaries of historical knowledge: each cultural area has its own visual paths, their symbolic images, their ways of viewing on double vision paradigm. In this regard, there are many examples of memory's stratification or of persistence over time, in a homogeneous cultural area, of viewing mode. And this to start from the historical relation between "photograph and family", because to photograph is

given the task of family's philosophy of middle-class ideology, in the nineteenth century. Specifically, the photography spread the image of *eternal family*, in a historical context of modernity, between the *New* and the *Old*, the Costume and the Fashion (Calanca 2004). In this sense, for instance, the beginning of the twentieth century is dominated by the enthusiasm for scientific discoveries, technological development and acceleration of time, indeed a new dynamic sense of life and new forms of life as a result of industrial development. Celebration of the power and of individual dignity become a way of life in 19th century. This model manifests itself in the fashion of travelling and holidays, and in the sport practice. In this way fashions develop between invention and innovation. So, new means of locomotion contribute to spreading these new fashions. Everything is new, everything is fashion. In this sense, fashion is not just clothing, but it is passion for the new, the recent, the elegance, the promotion of individuality, aesthetic and renewal forms and modernization (Ibid.; Gentile 2006). From the point of view of the varied development of mass society, upper-middle class men and women are photographed throughout changing of the activities and consumptions: on the one hand there are rich urban subjects and on the other side figures of rural world as synonymous of backwardness. These rural figures document the Italian complexity between modernity and tradition, the coexistence of different worlds, not only on material conditions, but also on the social imaginary's basis.

In this framework, with the Family Album we can see some aspects of relation between modernity and tradition, that is the social visual imaginary of Italian modernity: a multiple modernity, often complex and contradictory. From this point of view, it's important the correlation between modernity and modernism. Modernity is a descriptive concept that marks the contrast between "The New" and "The Old" within a time lived as historian. The modernism is the attitude of modernity, seen as wellbeing (Jedlowsky 2002). Such as, for instance, the social imaginary of Modern Italy, that is an imagined Italy, next and parallel to an Italy full of real contradictions that characterized the fascist Italy and the years of economic boom after the Second World War (Gentile 2008; Crainz 2009).

2.

One of the tools used to realize the anthropological revolution of the new man, during the fascist regime, is the photography (De Luna et al. 2005). But the message is very contradictory: on the one hand, are represented wives and husbands posing fashionable dressed, on the other hand rural women and men have the role to enhance the Italian race. It is a cultural model contradiction because while it claims the signs of social distinction, also wants to erase it, and also confirm rigid social hierarchy. The conditions of the rural working class, don't see positive radical changes during the fascism, despite the welfare politic regime, particularly bring out after the crisis of 1929 and with the start of autarkic politic (Calanca 2004). In this sense, there are few images of consumption in the family album a clear sign of strong class division. Also, the proposals to innovate the female figure are contradictory: on the one hand, the woman needs to modernize, on other hand she must be a wife and a mother. Sport, fashion and physical beauty, between propaganda and collective imaginary, constitute a fundamental relationship for understanding how woman's innovation is contradictory. However, the social imaginary of modernity linked to movement is one of the founding myths of fascism: body dynamic, beautiful physical presence, physical development, trough sport, are the icons of a Modern Italy of a New Italy. In this sense, the visual philosophy of the bathing images during the fascism, shows itself organized around a platform that allow to see another Italy close to the real and official one. A nation imagined and idealized in which the modern-movement is one of its founding myths (Calanca 2008). This myth, along with others, forge the sense of the seaside holiday that in Thirties already anticipates the economic boom after World War II, becoming a highly distinctive symbol of

national identity in the twentieth century. In this direction, comparing images of common Italian beaches of early Twentieth century with those of the Thirties put in evidence that, within a few decades, the seaside holiday has been transformed from elite ritual to folk costume. The few tourists who portrayed fully clothed and sheltered by umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun, walking on the beach or posing as if they were in the living room, have been replaced by many men, women and children in swimwear. In particular, documenting the profound changes that occurred during the Fascist period, the images of the beach of the Thirties and Forties are self-representations. In most cases they concentrate in most cases the focus on the person, as is the case for example of the girls who are portrayed standing still smiling, wearing the latest fashion dress expressing, showing a certain aesthetics pride.

Similarly, next to family groups portraits posing on the beach, flaunt practices of accession for new forms of appearance, that are self-representations which denote the space movement and body dynamics, as in the case of boys and girls photographed while walking with a firm step, or intent to row. Dynamic body movements and forms are well exemplified in the images, such as diving, swimming, and vertical human pyramid exposure.

This is increased with the sport campaign officially inaugurated by the regime in 1923. In this framework the sport qualify itself as a driver of such a culture of the body, where the sport's practice ideologically recalls to athleticism, movement, strength, vigor and beauty. In this respect, Mussolini himself becomes the icon of an Italy increasingly moving to an era that celebrates physical development through sport, and therefore dynamic, as a new "religion" (Gentile 2008). From this point of view the fascist exaltation of collective life encouraged intense and widespread promotion of sports and fitness activities, also placed at the service of "propaganda of the faith" because, as explained by the commission for the development of physical education and military training in 1926: the cult of physical strength always connects with that of the homeland, and where there is perfect redemption, the redemption of national, once manifested the love of physical exercises (Poggi Longostrevi 1933, 59). The regime took considerable resources to increase the practice of gymnastics and sport by financing the construction of gymnasiums, stadiums, colonies, which became even these, places where the cult of physical health is an integral part of the fascist worship of education and training of the masses for "new Italians". Preparing, in this way, the body and tempering the character of the manly and virtuous citizen, becoming believer and fighter for their country. In fact, this period representing the active and rational dynamics, makes the Italian people care of the physical development through sport (Ibid., 11). And here, is expressed the desire to offer a picture of dynamic equilibrium, where it is the beauty conceived in terms of balance itself in the strong ethical and political connotations that characterizes the physical culture propagated by the regime used as ideal norm: ugliness is unbalanced, the divine beauty of a body is harmonic equilibrium (Ibid).

In particular, the need for women to engage in sporting activities is considered essential both to achieve a "modern beauty" and "so in order to fulfill the most holy duty, to give healthy children to the country" (Bergamo 1935, 212-213).

However, women's sports practice will remain mostly a society life practice: the rural masses and the most humble and backward population will remain excluded. Physical education, in fact, finds its main channel in schools where sport is compulsory, and therefore all the girls who did not complete the education cycle were excluded. Definitely is the same Italy imagined and idealized that emerge in the Adriatic Coast images at the time of Cinegiornali Luce between 1935 and 1939, characterized from the appeal for technology as the "new secular religion" (Calanca 2008).

3.

During the Fifties, and the Sixties, particularly during the economic boom, the Italian family of the great urban transformation relies to the photography to show its social climbing, its level of consumption achieved, and comfort conquered (Calanca 2008¹). Many are the self-representations in which the Italians are photographed with the symbols of wellbeing: car, motorcycle, television, holidays. They are images-souvenir-monument. Also, the Italian family assign itself to photography to represent, the perfect family life, happy and peaceful, satisfied of consumption achieved. To photography is asked to build the memory of the "how we would be" and not the "how we really are". In this sense, each family's photography produced is a monument, a memory built between modern and tradition, persistence and change (Ibid.).

As a matter of fact in the Fifties cinema, the "Italian comedy" reflects new lease of life. In this sense the "dolce vita" is accomplice, considered in terms of a secular and social phenomenon, in relationship with the films of Federico Fellini's "La Dolce vita" of 1960. It is the best possible imaginary configuration for the Italians as represented in the newspapers of those years. From this point of view "today's myths" multiply, those that Roland Barthes identified at the base of contemporary bourgeois society. The myths on the images are an extraordinary instrument of diffusion, a metalanguage by many expressive possibilities that can create a mythical world and an imaginary with its ambiguous nature suspended between reality and representation.

The roman nightlife myth, led up to invention by actors and actresses, marks aesthetic forms poses and forges one of the fundamental themes of the ideology of visual culture during the economic boom, that is the link star system-consumer welfare (Calanca 20082).

It's the case, for instance, of amatorial photographs that can be properly considered real photographic icons next to traditional and classic images of the family posing which appears in the private archives and produced and reproduced in its complete life cycle, play a particularly significant value as part of a philosophy of consumption in the picture.

For example the photographic representation of cars, motorcycles, Vespa scooters etc. together with males and females, adults and children, alone or in groups, located in the space / time of the holiday and leisure, are symbol of the practices and values of mass consumption in the years of economic boom.

In this regard, there are numerous photographs depicting scenes of campings, where young people pose next to tents or Vespa scooter together with adults, and families. And yet, in this direction, there are many images in which cross several symbols of consumerism represented simultaneously, contributing to spreading the picture of the image of the consumption of those years. And is the case of those pictures where girls at work, as shop assistants, are photographed into clothing stores, perfumeries, fashion houses, where clothes and beauty products contribute markedly to outline the consumption of aesthetic, so fundamental in those years. But this is not all. Another icon it's the case of models, as can be seen for example in the private archive of D. M., that keep 50 photographs taken between 1950 and 1958. Goods on display on the one hand, and girls who sell the same goods on the other are images of the consumerist way of life. So, in the same way, girls and boys working as waitresses and waiters in hotels, guesthouses and bars of the main holiday resorts such as Rimini and Riccione, photographed in the workplace, increase the visual dictionary of consumption (Ibid.).

Finally, if the picture spread the imagery, the myths, practices, and cultures of consumerism, then it is plausible to assert that the self-representations between public and private in that historical period are already expressions of the "anthropological revolution" caused by television, as Pier Paolo Pasolini detected in the mid-Seventies. He said that "The "middle

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class" is radically - anthropologically - changed and its positive values are no longer Sanfedists values but ideology of hedonistic consumption (Ibid.).

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