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PRESENTACIÓ

Living in the Mountains. Reframing Imaginaries, Im/mobilities and Sense of Belonging

Vivir en la montaña. Imaginarios, in/movilidades y sentido de pertenencia

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A Perspective on the Making of Locality in Mountain Regions

Mountain regions are undergoing rapid changes, closely intertwined with economic globalisation and neoliberal practices, which modify their production models, land use, population, and lifestyles in unexpected ways. This Special Issue aims to reflect upon ways of living in mountain areas today, taking an innovative stance and a reflexive approach. This Issue examines mountain life from the perspective of the production of locality, being a matter of relationships and context (re)produced by, and within, social interactions (Appadurai, 1996). This approach invites us to take an alternative vantage point to the classical area of mountain anthropology, exploring the making of locality in a global world, while strengthening the debates between issues of im/mobility, migration, and mountain studies.

Our wish with this dossier is to highlight and extend the reflections we have been carrying out in a recent long-term research project in the Swiss Alps and Spanish Pyrenees[1]. For close to four years, we studied the production of locality in four ethnographic field sites in the Alpine valleys of Zermatt and Entremont (Switzerland); and in the Pyrenees, in Val d'Aran and Cerdanya (Spain). The data collected there and subsequent analysis gave us the desire to expand our reflections

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to other mountain regions around the world, thus we opened a call to contributions. This Issue is the result, offering an extensive picture of what does it mean to live in a mountain area today – in terms of gentrification, cohabitation, and social and economic diversification. It brings together a range of challenges and issues related to economic globalisation, the Anthropocene, the roles of mountain areas as places of life and spaces at stake in the world, while highlighting the similarities and differences between countries, in Europe and in South America.

Are mountains (still) at the margins?

Over the last few decades, a growing body of literature on mobility and migration has examined changing social dynamics and people's transnational lives, especially in (large-scale) urban settings. However, less attention has been paid to the ways these processes take place in small-scale communities such as mountain areas, which have been (and still are) too often associated with backwardness, limited movement, lack of connectivity, and a strong attachment to the place itself – which is seen as negative. For a long time, it was as though mountain places, like islands (see Sahlins, 1985), were the polar opposite of modernity and progress, situated outside of globalisation, time and indeed, outside of the world. Yet, the reproduction of mountain communities has always been intimately linked to a vast array of mobility patterns (e.g., transhumance, commercial exchanges, temporary or permanent labour migrations, migrations for love, travel and tourism). It is striking to consider that even today, in the common sense (but not only), urbanised, commodified and globalised mountain regions are still associated with the rural space, in opposition to the urban one. In contrast to these views, we believe that static approaches, based on a dual vision of rural and urban societies, respectively of past and present, immobility and mobility, tradition and modernity, prevents us from fully grasping their historical, economic, and social complexity (Marié, 2004).

Mountain areas around the world certainly share the common feature of having experienced episodes of marginalisation (Oiry-Varacca, 2019). Indeed, the construction of nation-states and national identities has taken place to the detriment of regional and local specificities (Berthoud & Kilani, 1984; Berthoud, 1982). In relation to the centre (state, nation), the mountains as places to live have often been considered as being on the periphery. As a result, mountain people have been sometimes stigmatised, and often stereotyped (de Baecque, 2018; Cretton, 2022). It can be argued that a process of marginalisation constitutes a kind of commonality between the mountains of the world, be it the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, the Scottish Highlands, the Alps in France (Oiry-Varacca, 2019), the mountains of Kabylia (Lacoste-Dujardin, 2002), the Himalayan mountains (Benabou, 2007; Ives & Messerli, 1989); or the Andes in South America (Hastrup, 2013).

In this Issue, we consider that mountains as a place to live are inseparable from the many different ways in which they are viewed, consumed or used, by their own people, by outsiders, and also by scientists (Berthoud, 1982; Boscoboinik & Cretton, 2017; Debarbieux & Rudaz, 2010; Frigolé & Roigé, 2006; Kilani, 1984; Roigé et al., 2017; Tissot, 2000; Walter, 2005). Relationships between local societies and global worlds intertwine in uneven ways. Just as the local is not an autonomous concept with its own substance, mountain life has no existence apart from the various gazes in which it is seen, by its own people and by outsiders. Whether historical, artistic, politic, economic, or social, the representations of the mountain are as much a part of its making as of its makeup (composition).

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Global Concerns, Local Divergences

This Special Issue underlines that the current economic globalisation might increase some similarities and synergies, but also accentuates the gaps and divergences between mountain areas (Oiry-Varacca, 2019). As the nine papers gathered here illustrate, some regions are evolving within the framework of a tourist or residential economy, in dependence on urban centres. Others find their own ways and promote local features of interest. Some inhabitants, native to the area or outsiders, propose various alternatives to the way of life generated by the liberal economy. Others still are very involved in the free-market economy, whether they are local businessmen, foreign workers in tourism industry, or newcomers from another municipality. Others yet adapt to new global transformations while maintaining a very active emotional link to the past. Each article in this Issue exemplifies in its own way and style, in Spanish or in English, how the living in the mountains is closely linked to the economic and social transformations of the place.

On one side, the decline of farming activities as a main activity, and participation in a post-industrial economy based on leisure and tourism (Berthoud, 1982) have led to new ways of dwelling in the mountains. As we will see, the shift to an economy based on natural and cultural commoditisation is deeply – but not homogeneously – redefining the identities of mountain communities (Friedli, 2020; Cretton, 2018; Frigolé & Roigé, 2006; Vaccaro & Beltran, 2009). Rural development policies – at a regional, national, and supranational level – play a very significant role in the redefinition of imaginaries and uses of mountainous regions (Del Mármol, 2017), creating tensions but also alliances between local and non-local actors and institutions.

On the other side, in many mountain areas, the prioritisation of tourism as a political development strategy has driven local communities to find "a product" to stand out in a globalised world, stimulating heritage activations in farming and food production (Aguilar et al., 2016; Aguilar & Lozano, 2008). This also applies to landscape and varied cultural resources associated with a past, that is being reinvented as an economic strategy to be projected onto visitors and to build a local identity in a context of greater cultural hybridisation (García-Canclini, 1999).

Tourism, with its multiple expressions (ski tourism, mass tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism, food-tourism, experiential tourism, and so on), has favoured the emergence of a vast array of economic ventures providing goods and services for external visitors, the development of infrastructures, public services, new job opportunities, and real estate appreciation (Lasanta et al., 2013; Vaccaro & Beltran, 2012). There is also evidence of demographic recovery, as a result of increased youth retention, the return of retirees, and the attraction of new population, may they be international, national, or multilocal residents, fixed or temporary inhabitants. With their own different cultural and social backgrounds, new and less new mountain dwellers can be said to find themselves in different "regimes of mobility" (Glick-Schiller & Salazar, 2014), that lead to different positions in global and local social hierarchies (Salazar, 2020). Indeed, various forms of mobility are currently recomposing the social fabric of mountain areas, reshaping the terms of solidarity, participation and conflict, forging new forms and feelings of belonging and otherness structured on the basis of age, class, gender and origin, among other axes of social stratification.

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(Un)Privileged Place to Be

A trend towards life in the mountains has been observed for at least three decades (Clivaz, 2013; Petite & Debarbieux, 2013; Perlik, 2008, 2011). The search for a "better" life in nature, away from hectic city life, might be seen as another consequence of economic globalisation, in reaction to the unbridled lifestyles imposed by neo-liberalism (efficiency-innovation-mobility) (Boscoboinik & Cretton, 2017; Cretton, 2018). The increase in the phenomenon of second homes and multi-locality, for another example, is also linked to global economic transformations. Authors have outlined a change in residential behaviour – owning or renting several homes at the same time and over the course of a lifetime, seasonal residences – (Camenisch & Debarbieux, 2011; Stock 2006, 2007), which embodies a facet of the recent changes in human movements and ways of life in Europe and beyond (cf. Claval, 2013).

In this respect, local economies have become highly dependent on external seasonal behaviours and the urbanites who consume the natural and cultural environment also contribute to gentrifying it, with the help of insiders who are engaged as well in the transactions. Indeed, tourism cannot be explained by tourists alone. Similarly, gentrification cannot be explained by gentrifiers only. One needs to consider the endogenous elements of tourism or gentrification production: local bourgeoisies, traders, middle classes from neighbouring towns, farmers, local historians, local celebrities, and so on (Marié, 2004), as the articles collected here show.

Changing local socioeconomic dynamics and structures are also transforming local farming and agricultural cultures (Offenhenden & Soronellas, 2021). The literature has addressed de-agrarisation, but also the intensification of production or shifts in production orientation, such as agroecological conversion or the incorporation of artisanal production (Soronellas & Casal, 2018). However, mountain areas with restricted tourist potential struggle to redefine their position in a globalised economy and are affected by a deep depopulation process that is rooted in an overarchingly massive migratory exodus. Some mountain areas are also particularly affected by economic overexploitation, as is the case with mining in the Andes, and this overexploitation profoundly affects both humans and the mountains, as separate but interlinked entities (Carreño, 2012; Gose, 2018; Cometti, 2020).

Considering the (re)production of locality to be a dynamic between past, present, socio-cultural relationships, practices and imaginaries, this Special Issue explores how global forces affecting mountain locations are shaping social and political arrangements in diverse and unpredictable ways. To do so, the articles gathered in this dossier use an ethnographic approach to explore how imaginaries and values of locality are negotiated, contested or reshaped among different social actors at different levels (political, economic, cultural, social); how people negotiate their identity and feelings as being natives, as well as being international, mobile, worldwide connected and concerned by both local and global causes; how several categories of dwellers (such as international, national, local, or multilocal residents, fixed or temporary inhabitants, tourists or workers) relate, practice and produce locality in everyday life; and in turn, in which ways place and space affect their relationships in mountain areas.

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On the Contributions to this Special Issue

"Living in the Mountains" brings together long-term ethnographic fieldworks conducted in different mountain regions: the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Iberian Central System, and the Andes. It offers a panorama of what it means to live in the mountains today in countries such as Spain, France, Andorra, Switzerland, Argentina, and Chile. Each paper reflects on the articulation between identities, mobilities and imaginaries, at varying degrees, showcasing the dynamic and complex process of making locality.

Beginning with an ethnographic account of a meeting in a bar with local men, Camila Del Mármol and Joan Frigolé show the complexity of belongings and attachments to a mountain district in the Catalan Pyrenees (Spain). The authors explore the conditions that enable and reject diverse trajectories of movement in relation to the complexity of local population categories. From an emic point of view, they try to unravel the questions: "Who is local?" "Who belongs to the village?" Through the analysis of different labels for naming the people living in the region, the authors detail how belongings and attachments do not rely solely upon (im)mobility. Against the image of rootedness and immobility associated with rural and mountain villages, this article highlights how in the past mobilities were necessary to find alternatives to scarcity and to complement financial inputs. The "gent de país" (locals) belong to a house within which they occupied a position of differential power according to their position in the inheritance system. In the mountain county studied by Del Mármol and Frigolé, belongings are more related to a house and a household, than actual living and social investment in the locality. Thus being "local" does not mean staying or living in the village but being related to a specific family or household. On the other side, someone can be considered a foreigner even if they have been living in the village for decades.

Del Mármol and Frigolé invite us to consider labels in the context of fluid social realities. They show how behind the apparent static characteristic of the category "gent del pais" (locals), we find highly mobile trajectories. Nevertheless, despite this fluidity, their ethnography reveals the rigidity of some categories showing the limits that loom over people beyond moving images.

The tensions between the ancient inhabitants and the newcomers are also explored by Danaé Leitenberg in her long-term fieldwork in Grindelwald, a ski resort in the German part of Switzerland. She reflects upon the production of locality in the light of Romanticism, and draws a genealogy of the meanings ascribed to the "local people" or the "village" in Swiss Alps imaginaries. Her ethnography highlights how Romantic sensibilities both informed tourism imaginaries fostering the mobility of objects, visitors, and investors to the resort as well as nationalistic imaginaries of cultural belonging, rootedness, and boundedness. Although the Alps have become a "contact zone", where flows of people from all horizons converge, including those who come to work, those who come to spend their holidays, or both, it appears that belonging to the village remains a "contested zone". While considering the natives' feelings of belonging, associated to populist or far-right extreme parties, Leitenberg reveals the imbrications of international tourism and nationalism in the making of localness.

Showing how the alpine village was constructed through the Romantic imaginary as the authentic place of birth for the Swiss nation, she gives the voice to "typical" mountain villager, or "Ureinheimische" (genuine native), and "less typical" ones, to explore the politics of (non)belonging. In depth, her paper illustrates how the production of (alpine) locality also stemmed from nationalist discourses and

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global tourism industry. Her account draws on the concept of inspiring narratives, and Leitenberg also draws attention to the various forms and hierarchisation of difference which shape the particular politics of belonging she encountered in Grindelwald, where local nativism is juxtaposed to a national, exclusionary nativism when it comes to foreigners – "Ausländer" – and particularly migrant workers.

In his study in Teruel, in Spain, Jordi Gascón explores the question of identity and belonging to the village, but from another perspective. That is, the process of return of former village dwellers or their descendants as tourists. Starting from the paradox of villages with low demography, but houses kept in good shape and a productive economy, he explores the influence of the former inhabitants or their descendants who periodically return there from the cities. This phenomenon, called domestic tourism or tourism of proximity, differs from other forms of tourism because it has a specific link with the village, stemming from the past and in connection with rurality. The author shows that not only houses are being maintained: the villages agricultural production has been renewed – and has recovered from disuse. His study case provides a counterpoint to the village situation described by Del Mármol and Frigolé, where the population dwindled and the houses were destroyed due to lack of care.

Gascón's paper highlights how domestic tourism has been historically - and still is - neglected by regional tourism development and by academic studies. However, this invisible practice is both contributing to agrarian production recovery and to keep the villages alive. In contrast, in Del Mármol and Frigolé's study, the promotion of tourism encouraged by both national and European spheres led to the progressive abandonment of primary productive activity, sinking the already weakened dairy production. Both studies illustrate two drastically different avenues of tourism development, both of which have a deep impact on the social structure of the population, the relationships with the environment embedded in land issue, as well as local imaginaries and representations.

Imaginaries are also at the heart of seasonal labour migration, as analysed in Montserrat Soronellas and María Offenhenden's case study of the mobility of temporary workers in Val d'Aran, a ski resort in the Catalan Pyrenees. Here, individuals alternate between jobs in the mountain in winter and contracts by the seaside in summer, or follow the winter through the northern and southern hemispheres. Soronellas and Offenhenden analyse the mobilities of these workers, whose jobs in the ski resort are precarious and uncertain. They show how age and life-cycle stage appear to be important dimensions conditioning the highly mobile lifestyles of temporary workers. Whether they are young mobile workers without family constraints who enjoy combining travel, leisure and work, or older economic migrants, who are less interested in the leisure attractions of the ski resort, both categories appreciate their work primarily for the sense of freedom it allows them.

In such a fluctuating living environment, the authors ask how the research participants who practise a "rotational nomadism" construct their belongings. Based on the life stories collected, they draw up different strategies of symbolic attachment: to a fixed "home" somewhere, to family, friends and landscape, or to the movement itself. No one identifies an anchor to the place where they migrate or circulate, perhaps because of the temporary nature of their stay, or also because of the possible tensions between the native-born inhabitants and the foreigners. These tensions are also highlighted in the articles by Leitenberg, and Del Mármol and Frigolé. But through the eyes of Soronellas and Offenhenden, the mountain appears to be a

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privileged place from which to observe the seasonal movements of precarious workers, held between local transnationalism and globalised mobilities.

In their study of two ski resorts in the Swiss Alps, Andrea Friedli and Andrea Boscoboinik also give voice to immigrant workers in the tourism industry, but unlike those studied by Soronellas and Offenhenden in the Pyrenees, these ones eventually settle in the Alps. Like Del Mármol and Frigolé, and Leitenberg, Friedli and Boscoboinik consider how (im)mobilities, circulation and rootedness are combined in the sense of belonging. However, they pay special attention to places and spaces as being shaped by different (im)mobility regimes, while developing a comparative analysis with mobile lifestyle migrants that they have previously studied in the same area. How do the different types of mobilities and presentations of belonging by new inhabitants of urbanised mountain resorts influence their strategies of making sense of place and (local) community?

Exploring data collected during the fieldwork carried out in collaboration with Cretton and Decorzant, Friedli and Boscoboinik analyse more particularly the imaginaries and narratives of immigrant Portuguese people in Zermatt. They show how practices of place-making and narratives of community and belonging are embedded in a sort of "translocational positionality" (Anthias, 2008), structured by the interplay of different positions relating to gender, origin and class, amongst others. Here, the processes of attachment to place as enacted by working inhabitants with a migrant background contrast with those performed by lifestyle and upper social class migrants. Indeed, their paper highlights not only how the economic, financial, and social backgrounds have a strong impact on the de facto regimes of mobility, but also how place-attachment, rootedness and commitment to the local community might vary in the light of the intersection between gender, origin, and social class dimensions.

Taking a different perspective, mountains can also be dangerous places. Thus, living in the mountains could involve an element of risk, and not only for those who practice high-adrenaline sports. This is the angle chosen by Viviane Cretton and Yann Decorzant to exemplify the entrepreneurial way of life that can be found in a mountain resort in the Swiss Alps, among both outsiders and insiders. Analysing the imaginary of risk as a shared point between various individual and collective actors, the authors consider risk at different levels, and taking a risk in sport activities as well as in entrepreneurship. Verbier is a location cherished by risk-takers, not only in the field of sports but also in the worlds of finance, art or business.

In contrast to the other articles in this Special Issue which focus on the tensions between old and new inhabitants, Cretton and Decorzant insist on the collaboration between locals and outsiders, as a necessary strategy for the economic and social development of the resort. Imaginaries of local inhabitants and outsiders match in shaping the growth of this alpine village that became an international resort, well-known not only for winter sports but also for its start-ups, entrepreneurial atmosphere and cultural events. The authors show that far from being a place colonised by foreign entrepreneurs, locals have managed its growing, have been involved in projects, and have taken advantage of situations that concern the resort's development. While describing how mountain sites are transformed via global market processes (via sport, art, or finances), they also deal with apparently contradictory concepts such as rooted cosmopolitanism, or mountain capital, within the context of contemporary transnational and translocal mobility and migrations. In this article, the imaginaries of insiders and outsiders meet within the tourism device, unlike that of

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Soronellas and Offenhenden in the Pyrenees, or Casalderrey Zapata et al. in the Andes, as we will see now.

The different imaginaries at work in the design and implementation of a resort development are also the concern of the ethnography presented by Constanza Casalderrey Zapata, María Alma Tozzini, and Juan Lobba Araujo. In a neighbourhood of San Carlos de Bariloche, a city at the foot of the Argentinean Andes, their study illustrates how to deal with the urbanisation "destroying" what the new population search for when choosing to live in nature. We see here the imaginary of the rural idyll that influences urban dwellers to move temporarily or permanently to rural areas, where mountains are part of. Once settled there or having acquired a second residence "in paradise", these (former) urbanites are very reluctant to the further development of the area that would allow the arrival of more new residents or tourists. The "mountain paradise" should be kept pure for those who found it first. This wish of the new residents contrasts with the visions of local authorities and municipality who intend to increase the development of the place, thus creating conflicts between locals and new residents around the territorial management. Opposite to the Cretton and Decorzant's study, in which insiders and outsiders' imaginaries match when it comes to increasing the internationalisation of the resort, here they are in conflict when it comes to territorial management.

Through detailed ethnographic observation of meetings and discussions between neighbours and officials, the authors analyse the distrust in the capacity and even the interest of the institutions to govern in accordance with what the neighbours really want. While enlightening the tensions and negotiations at the heart of the process of territorial planning, they also raise the issue of the process of gentrification.

Xavier Roigé, Mireia Guil, and Iñaki Arrieta Urtizberea approach mountain imaginaries in another way, through museums, in the Pyrenees. What is chosen as traditional, as heritage, what should be shown and preserved? How museums provide and nourish a particular image of the mountains as well as the main characteristics of living in the mountains? These are the questions guiding the article by Roigé et al. who gathered and studied material and artefacts from numerous ethnographic museums that present and represent mountain life. Pirineism and folklore, both related to the Romantic movement which considers the authenticity of the life in the mountains, are put in relation to the origins of local museums. This paper is in dialogue with Leitenberg, reinforcing the role of Romanticism in the construction of mountain imaginary and a sense of authenticity, in the case of Spanish, French, and Andorran Pyrenees. Considering that their aim is to keep alive a testimony from the past, the museums make a choice as to what should be kept and shown, reproducing a certain conception and representation – usually idealised. The article shows all the complexity of museography: how what is shown hides what is not shown; and how making something visible often, in the same stroke, renders many other aspects invisible (such as violence, segregation, conflicts, or changes).

While highlighting houses and household identity as a key feature in the Pyrenean museums, Roigé et al. connect to Del Mármol and Frigolé, when they show the identity dimension entailed both in the house and the lineage in the Pyrenees, and to Casalderrey Zapata et al. who raise the economic and territorial issues behind the building zones of the private households. Clearly, family and its homes still play an important role in the way of (re)presenting the village mountain imaginary, but not always in the way one might expect.

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Jorge Razeto, Isidora Lea-Plaza, and Juan Skewes conclude our travel across mountain imaginaries with a combination of ancient and current practices of living in the Chilean Andes in the age of the Anthropocene. Their paper is an ethnographic snapshot of how muleteer communities in the Andean mountains of central Chile respond to the challenges of global change by redefining the management, control, and meanings they give to their territories and transhumance routes. It shows how their sense of rootedness, tradition, and sovereignty is confronted with extractivist intervention, modernising pressure, and variations in water regimes due to global change, in new scenarios that reformulate their routes and territories.

Razeto et al.'s work is based on a long-term fieldwork, including narratives compiled from in-depth interviews conducted in the context of a long-standing relationship with the muleteers and their families in the Chilean Aconcagua Valley. While delving into the transformations that have occurred over the past decades, their analysis highlights the interdependence of human – human collaboration, through the importance of the collective work, but also human – animal interactions, as the one would be nothing without the other. The transformations in the mobilities of the muleteers provide an inspiring case to understand how humans cope with challenges of living in the mountains in periods of profound climatic, socio-economic and cultural transformations. Overall, this article highlights a non-Western sensibility of human responsibility towards non-humans, and emphasises the significance of the mobility of animals, which goes hand in hand with the human one.

Finally, a key idea of this Special Issue is that mobility, in its plural forms, is nothing new for mountain societies, but that it can be a useful anthropological lens to observe tactics of coping with global changes and challenges in mountain regions, as well as their resilience. It appears a valuable concept for understanding the movements of humans and non-humans on their home planet, their anchorage, their circulation, their relations among themselves and to the mountain territory as a living space. It may be a way to answer to (personal and social) crisis, or to handle pressures and multiple circumstances. Mobilities can also be understood as a strategy or a solution to face social, economic, and ecological conditions. They offer us a special opportunity to know, analyse and understand the abilities of humans and non-humans to deal with the challenges of mountain life in a time of profound climatic, economic, social, and cultural transformations.

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