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Stigma, Markets, and the State:

An Ethnography of Gastro-Tourism in Calabria

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines how cultural and territorial stigmatization affect the development of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, what forms these stigmas have taken, and how they recirculate. To the Italian nation-state and wider Europe, Calabria often remains a 'question mark' southern Italian region of liability and uncertainty. It often represents a 'left behind,' developmentally stagnant and corrupt place, even though it has vibrant cultures, distinct natural landscapes, and rich gastronomic traditions. Stigma and stereotypes do not spontaneously appear from nowhere. They are constructed (politically and economically) from outside and inside stigmatized communities, deeply rooted in socio-cultural contexts, and maintained through systems of hegemonic power. Using gastro-tourism (food and wine) as an original analytical lens that has not been used in the same way yet in anthropological research on Calabria, interrogates these forms of stigmatization in ways that other topics could not. This is because of how closely entangled food cultures and tourism are to expressions and representations of identity, place, belonging, value formation, morality, and socio-economic class. This thesis is an original and contemporary ethnography on Calabria, from my positionality as a liminal member of the culture (having ancestry from the region but being born and raised in Canada), and I utilize this transnational component to demonstrate further how malleable and dynamic Calabrian cultural identity is, countering the limited representations of the region which portray it as static, often focusing only on analysing corruption and its mafia organization. My thesis develops an original approach to researching stigma that incorporates historical contexts, interdisciplinary research, alternative forms of non-academic discourses (such as travel writing and popular media), and the voices of Calabrian communities. This approach achieves a more nuanced understanding of how forms of stigma are created and maintained, which then can be applied cross-culturally within anthropology and tourism when engaging with other stigmatized regions and communities.

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Chapter 1: The Return



Figure 1. Top: Cosenza's *centro storico* (historic centre) with the Castello Normanno-Svevo at the apex, and the confluence of the Busento and Crati rivers at the base. Bottom: the view atop the same castello at night with the mountainside on the right and the more contemporary city towards the centre-left (personal photographs, July and May 2019).

Calabria was not unfamiliar to me. Both my parents were born in separate neighbouring mountain villages located in the province of Cosenza, which they had left half a century before, along with the mass wave of southern migration to Canada during the post-Second World War period. They were part of a population fleeing poverty and unemployment and seeking opportunity and security through chain migration to the new shores of a much younger country. This was one of two mass waves of migration southern Italy experienced which saw its populations flood to North America. As a response in-part to Italy's economic insecurity, the first wave occurred between 1880-1929, then stopped during the Great Depression where countries closed their borders to migrants, and then resumed in the late 1940s (Iacovetta 1992). Historian Simone Cinotto has researched the first wave of this migration to New York and states that,

> …the recollections of immigrants and their children were separated not only by time but also by space: the former remembered having grown up in Italy, and the latter in New York; most immigrant children could only imagine the distant *paese* through their parents' tales (2013: p.59).

Growing up, I only recall hearing of Calabria through stories and recollections from older relatives; mixed reminiscences of pain and adoration for the 'old country.' They expressed a slight bitterness towards the region and self-criticism towards their own communities, combined with the stigmas associated to the region and its cultures. These sentiments were commonly circulated inside and outside the Calabrian-Canadian communities I was part of. At the same time, for them there remained a strong lamentation for the land, their cultural traditions, and daily rhythms familiar to them, which were severed through the migrant journey made. Within Ontario's Italian diaspora communities, I grew up hearing my family and friends refer to themselves as Calabrian when speaking to other Italians and that emphasis on regional identity or *campanilismo* stuck with me. I was Canadian born but in some deeply metaphorical sense my upbringing reinforced that I was really *Calabrian*, identifying closer to the label and cultural traditions that surrounded me in those communities, than the actual place itself, since I had never been to Calabria before in person. It was not until I started my research on Calabria's food cultures and began unpacking the stigmas placed on the region that I was able to journey there, meet both sides of my extended family, experience the place first-hand, and unpack my own Calabrian cultural identity in the process.

Cosenza is one of Calabria's largest provinces and its largest city (also called Cosenza) was where I had first visited in 2016 for five brief weeks of graduate thesis fieldwork, to examine how cooking practices for Calabrians facilitated their reconnection to nature and the earth, to their innate human ability to physically create and craft, and to each other through the practices of commensality. This time it would be nine months living in Cosenza for my DPhil thesis fieldwork, in my own flat and under new circumstances. The initial proposal for my DPhil project was to examine the commodification processes of traditional Calabrian food practices, from their origins of austerity and oppression to the contemporary class-ascension tastes and markets of global capitalism, within the transnational contexts of Calabrian diaspora in Toronto and Calabrian communities in their home region. As with any ethnographic fieldwork, once I arrived and began my project, different phenomena and dynamics surfaced and required prioritization. Amongst the Calabrian gastro-tourism entrepreneurs I interacted with both in Toronto and Calabria, there was a consistent emphasis from them on the lasting stigmas and stereotypes the region continued to face and how these negatively affected its economic growth and sustainable development. Thus, my project topic had to adjust and adapt to investigate these more relevant phenomena. As a result, I would be examining the region's gastro-tourism (food and wine) industry, with the aim of gaining a more nuanced understanding on a region historically stigmatized and how and why these narratives and representations continue today. Popular and political discourses often depict Calabria as being a series of binaries and rigid contradictions; beautiful but problematic, rich in culture and history but dangerous and unknown, full of promise but never rising out of its developmental rut. It is a region along with others of southern Italy which have a rich and diverse socio-cultural, intellectual, political, and agricultural history, despite having suffered the chronic consequences of the feudal system, Risorgimento, political regimes, and joining the European Union, all of which have resulted in different forms of oppressive economic and political dynamics. These dynamics have lingered and continue to complicate the region's relationship with notions of stigmatization, narrative, and belonging to the Italian nation-state and larger European continent.

Calabria and its gastronomic culture remain under-researched topics in anthropology and this thesis will add to this gap in literature on southern Italy and the Mediterranean. It is also through this analysis of Calabria and its gastro-tourism industry that important contributions will be made to larger discourses on 'left behind' regions and communities,

ones that have been territorially and culturally stigmatized, such as parts of eastern Europe and the Balkans (Murdure 2022, Tordova 2009), the Mediterranean region (Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein 2020), and more recently post-Brexit UK (Degnen, Tyler, and Blamire 2023), and why these communities and regions remain in these states and narratives. Specifically in the case of the latter example, Cathrine Degnen, Katharine Tyler, and Joshua Blamire's research on post-Brexit England examined and challenged the stigmas and essentialized depictions of the 'Leave' and 'Remain' voting blocs through the examination of everyday lived experiences of residents in the North East, South West, and East Midlands of England, and how they navigated their emotions, social relationships, and 'senses of belonging' (to their localities, the UK, and Europe) after the Brexit referendum (2023: p.24-27). My thesis takes a similar approach in that it challenges the broad categorial and essentialized assumptions of the region of Calabria in how it has always been understood in comparison to the Italian nation-state and Europe. My research demonstrates how a nuanced ethnographic approach to examining the everyday lives of Calabrian entrepreneurs while incorporating vital contextual information on the region's history (how it has been studied and written about in different discourses) can lead to achieving a more nuanced understanding on the region and in a broader sense, how cultural and territorial stigma is created and maintained.

Within the last decade or so there has been a *renaissance* if you will, of Italian gastro-tourism globally and specifically between Canada and Italy. At the outset of my DPhil research in 2017, representatives of Canada and Italy, as well as the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario (ICCO),[1] were forming important food and technology related bilateral trade deals and initiatives to expand and strengthen the economic relationship between Canada and Italy (leveraging its historical connection with migration and diaspora of second generation skilled Italian-Canadians).[2] A year prior in 2016, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italian Chamber of Commerce representatives across the world, and Assocamerestero,[3] funded and launched the *True Italian Taste* program in North America and then later across other continents in the following years after that. This program (which still operates today) was part of a broader initiative called *The Extraordinary*

[1] An independent, non-profit created in the 1930s and later formally established in 1961. It is part of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Canada (EUCCAN) with its main function being to promote cultural and economic relations between Canada and Italy (http://www.italchambers.ca/who-we-are/).
[2] http://www.italchambers.ca/canada-italy-trade-mission-2017/ .
[3] An association of 84 international Italian Chamber of Commerce globally.

Italian Taste program aimed to 'strengthen the value of and protect authentic Italian products,' focusing heavily on Italian food certifications, through programming such as 'virtual events with local and Italian chefs, the *Authentic Italian Table* dinner series, tasting events, masterclasses, educational tours, buyer trips, and virtual B2B (business-to-business) meetings.'[4] In 2018, the ICCO held their CENTItalia conference with keynote speaker for that year being the founder of Eataly Oscar Farinetti, which coincided with the opening of the first Canadian Eataly store in downtown Toronto. There has been a growing expansion and popularity of the Eataly company, which is a high-end Italian food retailer with shops, restaurants, and education spaces, all culminating in its FICO Eataly World food themed park which focuses on Italian food and drink *terroir*, and the gatekeeping of Italian food sovereignty and authenticity.

Debates around Italy's food sovereignty, further protections on food heritage, traditions, and authenticity have surfaced as a key political debate in Italy today with the Italian government led by right-wing president Georgia Meloni. In March of 2023, Meloni's government proposed a bill to ban 'laboratory-produced food and animal feed' in a move to protect Italy's food culture, heritage, quality, and the well-being of consumers. Meloni's administration went so far as to rename Italy's ministry of agriculture as the 'ministry for agriculture and food *sovereignty*' (my emphasis). To critics opposed to this bill, in the wake of the climate crisis, food insecurity, and the unsustainable global meat industry, this seems to be a step backwards for scientific progress in climate and food technologies and would diminish Italy's economic potential and scientific advancement, setting it back from the rest of the world.[5] Climate change is specifically affecting Italy's southern landscape and its food and drink production in consequential ways, and in the case of Calabria with its central location in the Mediterranean, it is more sensitive to the effects of climate change. Another phenomenon that has politicized narratives surrounding southern regions of Italy has been the migrant crisis that has occurred over the last ten years or so, where refugees and asylum seekers from North Africa and the Middle East have fled to Lampedusa, Sicily and other southern Italian regions from the growing socio-economic and political crisis occurring in their home countries.[6] This has not only put strain on southern Italian regions but also has

[4] https://buonissimo.ca/discover-true-italian-taste/ .
[5] https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-moves-ban-lab-grown-meat-drive-protect-home-products-2023-03-28/ .
[6] https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/whats-behind-the-surge-in-migrants-arriving-to-italy .

been used to re-radicalize historical anti-southernism and racially charged political sentiments towards those regions.

Regarding Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, with the exception of the 2019 CENTItalia event hosted by the ICCO which focused on Calabria, the region itself and its food and drink traditions are noticeably underrepresented in Italian gastro-tourism programs and initiatives both within Italy and internationally, when compared to the presence of other regions. With Calabrian diaspora being one of the largest Italian regional demographic in Canada and many of these Italian gastro-tourism initiatives centred on the education, promotion, and commodification of an *authentic Italian national foodscape*, Calabrians are not only engaging in a reframing of Italian food identity that under-features their region but also under-represents the region internationally to non-Calabrians. With Calabria having such a deep history of stigmatization as dangerous and backwards, these narratives continue to be recycled and affect the ways in which local entrepreneurs in Calabria and Calabrian diaspora are able to create and run their gastro-tourism businesses. This is why it is pertinent to examine the relationship Calabria has with the rest of Italy and investigate why it still remains a 'question mark' region to both outsiders and insiders in terms of economic viability, investment, gastro-tourism, and travel. Within the European continent and countries adjacent to it, what enables narratives of stigma on a community or region to enter a cyclical process of reincarnation, and one that is seemingly immune to time, facts, and truth? This is not a phenomena unique to Calabria or southern Italy (as I have outlined previously), and can be seen in other regions such as Croatia and the Balkans (Śetek 2016), former Yugoslavia (Bakić-Hayden 1995), the United Kingdom and the aftermath of Brexit (Degnen, Tyler, and Blamire 2023), and countries within what is typically categorized as the Mediterranean (Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein 2020). Through incorporating interdisciplinary research and genres of writing with anthropological studies and ethnographic vignettes from my fieldwork, this thesis will demonstrate an approach to examine stigmatized regions, communities, and their cultures, one that focuses on contexts and realities rather than narratives and assumptions, in order to interrogate how stigma is created and maintained. The next section will begin this important exploration of the contexts in which Calabrian stigma originated from.

The North-South Binary: A Recontextualization of Southern Stigma Through the Southern Question Debate

Historical contexts play an important role in understanding a region and its communities beyond their stigmatizations and anthropologist Stavroula Pipyrou's research on second-hand clothing shops in Reggio Calabria (the most southern province of the region) demonstrates how the histories of trauma, injustice, natural disasters, colonialism, imperialism, shame, and poverty experienced in Reggio Calabria resurface today in the form of silence, showing that 'history is a lived present that is manifested in multiple forms' (2016: p.47). She continues that,

> …history is contemporary when it is embodied and folded into lived experience, therefore an interest in the past springs from a practical consideration of the present. The present is thus the temporal magnet that attracts and assembles past and present interests (Ibid: p.47).

Referring to Calabria's historical contexts, it is important to understand how the region and others part of the South have been understood, defined, and problematized though these discourses because they have not only influenced the way locals and outsiders understand Calabria and its communities, but these discourses resurface and remain in circulation today, albeit in slightly different forms. A key component to understanding the stigmatization of Calabria is the historical contexts that have negatively affected the region's development and the large discourse of the Southern Question because both of these communicate the historical contextualization of southern Italian stigma which has defined what southern Italy was historically to its own country and wider Europe.

Like most of the Mezzogiorno, Calabria has historically been linked to complex and richly layered agricultural, political, and social histories. During ancient times the Italian peninsula was inhabited by Greek colonies (Calabria being part of a larger southern region called Magna Grecia), then later by Etruscan urban expansion, and then Roman conquest (Sereni 2014). As a result, Calabria has many of its food and drink traditions connecting back to Greek antiquity, one being its traditions and culture in wine production which remains relatively unknown to Italian gastro-tourism markets within and outside of Italy. The developing pastoral economy through the conquering of land and slave labour evident during these periods of antiquity laid the foundation for the powerful patrimonies of the ruling class and furthered the socio-economic disparity lines of that time (Ibid). The Early Middle Ages

saw the birth of the feudal system where lords ran their large-scale agricultural estates (*latifundia*) and fortified country villas (*castra*) (Ibid). The oppressive socio-political and economic hierarchies established from this system had lasting negative effects on the economic development, social security, and political stability of the South since it remained in place well through the Renaissance period while northern and central Italy developed into a Commune system (Ibid). The following period of the Counter-Reformation saw changing prices in Italy's agricultural economy, which shifted southern regions (including settlements in Calabria) away from grain production towards animal raising on existent temporary land clearings (Ibid) These often exploitative practices deteriorated the landscapes of central and southern Italy, which later contributed to large scale landslides, flooding, and outbreaks in malaria in the future centuries to come (Ibid).

The 18th and 19th centuries were consequential for the Mezzogiorno as they saw both periods of success, progress, and stability, but also an increased circulation of discourses and debates around the 'Southern Question' by the soon-to-be 'unified' nation. Historian Marta Petrusewicz explained that in 1734, the (then named) Kingdom of Naples became an independent and stable dynasty in terms of foreign policy, commercial ventures, its relationship with the papacy, and on economic and administrative reforms after the corrupt and violent Spanish rule it was under (1998). The South developed as a thriving cultural and intellectual hub, with the renovation of the University of Naples, and the growing number of students and intelligentsia[7] flocking to the South, all of whom contributed to Neapolitan Enlightenment (Ibid). Although King Ferdinand I's conservativism and modern thinking was aimed at improving the South[8], fears grew amongst the monarchies of Europe during the start of the French Revolution in 1789, and as a result, the abandonment and reversal of reform agendas for the Kingdom occurred (Ibid). Petrusewicz stated that 1799-1815 period saw 'revolution, civil war, and foreign defeat' (Ibid: p.30) while at the same intelligentsia and student revolutionaries who contributed to the overthrow of the monarchy only saw themselves passive members under a Napoleonic restoration of a new Bourbon Kingdom (Ibid). Even with this change in occupation, the next decade or so was one of stability, which included the abolishment of the feudal system in 1806 (Ibid).

[7] Highly educated intellectual class.
[8] His reign extended from 1759-1825, during which the Kingdom became the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Petrusewicz 1998).

Petrusewicz explained that out of this came a generation of two groups: new intelligentsia who despised Enlightenment's universalism, and associations influenced by romanticism, localism, and traditions, which aided in the development of a middle-class way of thinking within the new concept of a "civic' space" (Ibid: p.31). When Ferdinand II took power in 1830, he focused on modernizing the South, gave amnesty to the exiled intelligentsia, began construction of a railroad, and put efforts in developing banking and industrial sectors (Ibid). New private and public institutions, academies, and schools as well as publications, literature, and the formation of artistic circles developed as a result (Ibid). Economic, political, and romantic societies of the 1830s and 40s became themselves creators of autonomous reformist action separate from the government, and it was not until 1848 when these groups became political, creating a representation of the Mezzogiorno that was 'modern' and was a member of a global economy (Ibid: p.39). I argue that these accounts of the South's history are important because they document the damaging nature of Spanish rule on the South and the periods of conflict in the Kingdom sparked by the French Revolution which negatively affected southern Italy. At the same time, they also highlight the vibrant intellectual and political culture that existed in the South and regions like Calabria, which have often been overshadowed in popular discourses through their overemphasis on the South's negative histories.

The period leading up to and shortly after the Unification of Italy in 1861 was critical in the South's history which negatively affected its economic and political stability, as well as its intellectual and cultural vibrancy. Petrusewicz argued specifically that after a period of growth and dynamism in the Kingdom, the year 1848 was consequential in witnessing another uprising and revolution period against the monarchy and in 1849, Ferdinand removed parliament and repeal the constitution (1998). This caused repression on ideas, people's freedoms, and the movement of goods, resulting in the transformation of the South as a police state with contributions from religious and political authorities who doubled down on censorship laws (Ibid). Public projects stopped development, the Church controlled the education sector, half of the state's finances went to military development in 1854, trade and entrepreneurship stopped, and outside investment turned their interest away from this new police state (Ibid). Petrusewicz explained that, 'the only groups to benefit were the police, the army, and the higher echelons of the Church' (Ibid: p.44). In addition to this, there were three other socio-political contexts that formed from Italy's Unification in 1861 which negatively affected the South: the first being the forcible conquest of northern loyalist

militants over southern regions, the second being that southern bourgeoisie prioritized 'power and status' of its land ownership in contrast to northern bourgeoisie's prioritization of economic and industrial expansion, and the third being the national government widening economic disparities between the North and South by lowering tariffs which used to protect the South while increasing northern commercial investment (Harney 1998: pp.12-13, Tarrow 1967). These paradigmatic shifts seen in this period of southern Italy's history led to a resurgence and radicalization of the Southern Question debate.

The Southern Question consisted of three main components, the first being that the origin of its political radicalization came shortly after the Unification period between 1870-90 (Schneider 1998b). Secondly, the circulation of its radicalization was done by northern Italians and non-Italians from continental Europe, as well as southern Italian intelligentsia (Ibid), similar to what anthropologist James G. Carrier termed 'ethno-Orientalism' when societies essentialize their own communities (1992: p.198) or Milica Bakić-Hayden's concept of *nesting orientalism* (1995) which will be outlined in more detail later in this chapter. This point was still prevalent in everyday conversations with Calabrians who participated in my research, where many aired their complaints about how Calabrians behaved and worked, as well as sharp criticism of systems of government (local, regional, and national) and state politics. The last component to the Southern Question was that Italy and its inhabitants had defined themselves as different within the dynamics created by the 'colonial and neo-colonial' forces of France, the United States, and England, which operated during the 19th and 20th centuries (Schneider 1998b: p.4). Through a structural lens, expanding markets during the period of 1815-1849 in southern Italy revealed the South's existent weak economy and in terms of socio-political contexts, the *Historic Bloc* (*Blocco Storico*) was an important mention (Petrusewicz 1998). Historian John A. Davis explained this term as,

> …the alliance between reactionary southern landlordism and northern industrial interests that took shape around the protective tariffs of the 1880s and thereafter dominated Italy's political system until the collapse of the Liberal state (1998: p.212).

The consequences of this historical and contemporary colonization contributed to the development of the Southern Question through the destruction of the southern dynasty and its territory, and the ways in which the North destroyed southern industries, turning them into a source of cheap controllable labour and a space for northern commodities (Petrusewicz 1998).

Although the origins of the Southern Question have been marked with the Unification of Italy, the notion of 'southern backwardness' was formed earlier in nuanced and complex ways (Ibid 1998). Criticism of the (then named) Kingdom of Naples and its weakness in the sectors of agriculture, industry, transportation, economy, and education, when compared to the rest of Italy or Europe, were not viewed by southern societies and intelligentsia as a southern 'backwardness' per se, but a 'relative inferiority' (Sereni 2014), or relative lagging behind, because the standard of comparison for industrial and agricultural development was England and France (Petrusewicz 1998). Petrusewicz continued that through the European understanding of progress, *development* and *backwardness* were not opposites but rather, 'different relative positions on a material and temporal *continuum*. In this representation, at once pessimistic and optimistic, the Two Sicilies was a backward country, but one in which progress was possible' (Ibid: p.39). In a wider continental context, Unification freed Italy from foreign rule but through that process of transformation also reclarified the divide between the North and South, categorizing qualities which differentiated and defined each from one another (Moe 2002). An additional aim of the Risorgimento was to transform Italy into the likeness of a more 'northern' European nation through 'Eurocentrism and nationalism,' which inadvertently furthered the 'othering' of the South (Ibid: p.2). Dickie argued in the late 1990s that,

> The South was one of nineteenth-century patriotic culture's most important funds of images of alterity. The barbarous, the primitive, the violent, the irrational, the feminine, the African: these and other values–often but by no means always negatively connoted–were repeatedly located in the Mezzogiorno as foils to definitions of Italy' (1999a: p.1).

Through these examples, southern stigma played an important role in reaffirming a nationalized Italian identity through its disassociation with and alienation of the South.

Nelson Moe, a scholar of Italian cultural studies, has argued that the North-South divide did not only exist exclusively within Italy but applied to its relationship with that of wider Europe (2002). Since its prominence from the Renaissance period towards the 19th century, Italy was culturally and politically dominated by northern Europe, and in relation to the European continent, became categorized as a 'southern country' (Ibid). The 'South' or '*Mezzogiorno*' had historically been defined as the regions in Italy south of Rome, which were labelled to be historically poor, with underdeveloped economies and industries, political systems rooted in clientelism from long standing historical feudalism, all of which fostered a

haven for organized crime and violence to thrive (Schneider 1998b), despite the South having had a history of rich intellectual and cultural communities with distinct economies as outlined above. In the late 1990s, Jane Schneider stated that the stereotypes created and circulated about southerners, alleged that they, 'by dint of their very essence, or at least their age-old culture and traditions, possess character traits that are opposite to the traits of northerners' which included an inability to collaborate, passionate and irrational behaviour, and competitiveness (Ibid: p.1). Around the same time, historian John Dickie's research examined the relationships between stereotypes and nation building in Italy during its unification period, and concluded that for the nation building process from 1860-1900,

> Stereotypes are thus important to nationalist discourses: they produce the kind of essentialized differentiation which is necessary for the idea of the nation to take hold in our minds for it to seem like an obvious, objective reality (1999a: pp.19-20).

It was through the essentialized stereotypes of the South that the Italian state and its nationalized culture was able to define and express itself both nationally and internationally (Ibid: p.20). This belief of an innate backwardness or regressive state inherent to people living in the South was reaffirmed and circulated in-part by British and non-Italian travel writers and exiles, as well as anthropologists during the late 19th century towards the 20th century. One could argue that the historical relationship between southern regions of Italy and the rest of the peninsula (pre and post-Unification) was 'orientalist' in nature, similar to the hegemony of the 'West' and the 'Rest' or more specifically what has been essentialized under the term 'Orient.' Dickie argued that southern stigma and the Southern Question was not a homogenous unified discourse on a region conceptualized in this simplified way, and criticized Jane Schneider's *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (1998a) in that she approached the editing of the book in a way that attempted to adopt Said's Orientalism for Italy's 'Southern Question' (Dickie 1999b). He continued that this recontextualization of Orientalism onto the example of Italy fell short in that the relationship between Italy's North and South was not 'imperialistic' in the same ways and that 'ethnocentric representation' could not be reduced to a unified definition (Ibid: p.81). My thesis is not to claim a unitary answer to an equally unitarily defined discourse surrounding southern Italian stigma in relation to Calabria, but rather to contextualize a range of academic discourses (i.e., anthropological, literary, sociological, geographical, historical, etc.) which identify where southern Italian stigma originated from, how it has affected the region of Calabria (both in the past and present day), and to show the sometimes overlooked

heterogeneity of phenomena that is present in the region. All of these aspects affect how Calabria is still viewed and understood today, which in turn affects its gastro-tourism industry. To Dickie's argument, it is important to note that I do not equate Edward W. Said's comprehensively examined conceptualization of Orientalism (2003) to the ways academics have applied his Orientalist framework to Italy's case in relation its North-South divide. They each have differing political, colonial, racial, cultural, and economic contexts that require acknowledgment and nuance. Considering the evidential discourse of how the South has been historically labelled and defined as 'different' from the rest of Italy and even more closely affiliated with Africa than the continent of Europe, it is still useful to engage in this literature because there are similarities in approach to how the South has been constructed and labelled as the 'other' in line with western Orientalist traditions. Said explains that, 'the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, re-markable experiences' (2003: p.1). This parallels with how travel and academic writing by social elites during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries had typically documented and engaged with southern Italy. Said continues that,

> …as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other (Ibid: pp.4-5).

This can be seen in the ways in which political and cultural discourses were used during the periods before and after Italy's Unification, to invent a national identity and later membership with the EU, which remained distinctly separate and different from southern Italy and what it always had been to the 'Italian Nation.' Similar to the relationship of West and East being one of 'power' and 'domination' (Ibid: p.5), discourse on the Southern Question highlights similar hegemonic dynamics and relational forces. Arguably in similar ways to what Said described Orientalism as being 'a created body of theory and practice' with significant 'material investment' (Ibid: p.6), the South has been in its own ways and through its own contexts mythologized, essentialized, and later radicalizing for political and economic intentions and advantages.

Another lens through which one could interrogate European and Italian anti-southernism and its parallels with Orientalism is examining Eastern Europe. Although a critically important contribution, Said's interrogation of Orientalism did not consider the Eastern and central European periphery, and one example being the Balkans, was not

considered categorically part of Europe when early western Orientalist discourses developed in the 18th century (Mudure 2022). Balkanism cannot be fully equated to Orientalism (Tordova 2009), just as in the case of this thesis topic, where anti-southernism cannot be a literal Italian equivalent to Orientalism. In similar ways though, just like the Balkans have acted as one of Europe's regional targets for displacing its frustrations, fears, contradictions, and conflicts within its collective identity project while avoiding allegations of its racism, islamophobia, eurocentrism, or colonialism (since the Balkans are still categorically perceived as 'white,' 'Christian,' and 'European') (Tordova 2009: p.188), Calabrian stigma stems from the continued absorption of the displaced grievances, fears, insecurities, and frustrations from the weak and dysfunctional aspects of the Italian nation-state. This then connects to the larger European identity politics of belonging, race, modernity, civility, migration, neo-colonialism, and religious intolerance.

Within the contexts of eastern Europe and its periphery, Milica Bakić-Hayden developed a similar concept, that of *nesting orientalism* (1995). This took Said's interrogation of Orientalism and examined it through the different geopolitical scales of eastern Europe; where it was understood as comparatively less 'eastern' than Asia, the Balkans considered less western than other eastern European countries within eastern Europe, and the Balkan regions themselves being categorized within their own orientalised hegemonic binaries (Ibid). Within this framework, eastern Europe was viewed as backward and the Balkans as more violent than 'western Europe' (Ibid). In essence, *nesting orientalism* articulated the appropriation of orientalist discourse and the act of othering by communities or groups who themselves had been orientalised and othered, and Bakić-Hayden used the case of former Yugoslavia in expressing her concept and how it demonstrated this process of appropriation (Śetek 2016). Adopting Bakić-Hayden's concept of nesting orientalism, Nika Šetek (comparative literature scholar) argues that Croatian communities demonstrate this by disassociating from their country's label as being part of the Balkans because of the connotations associated with the Balkan regions being backward and othered, reaffirming their membership with western Europe, and in turn placing the pejorative Balkan stigma on other regions outside of Croatia such as Bosnia and Serbia (2016). Michael Herzfeld has argued that the risk of polarities like these is that they can be conveniently useful and can quickly transform into generalizations and moral equivalents which can be mistaken for fact (1997: p.165). I argue this relates directly to the North-South binary of Italy. It is convenient to create these oppositional categories looking at external superficial phenomena without

examining historical contexts, economic and environmental realities, cultural intimacies, and interiors of socio-political systems.

Early Representations of the South: Intellectual Elites and the Enlightenment Lens

Southern intelligentsia were aware of the difficulties chronic to their region well before the term Southern Question became its own discourse and later radicalized political debate. They did not label these views of the South as a 'Southern Question' but as a backwardness or underdevelopment caused by structural issues (economic, political, and social) viewed through the lens of Enlightenment common across Europe and not innate characteristic of those communities (Petrusewicz 1998). These issues were then transformed into essentialized narratives of a failed loyalty of intellectuals to the South, failure of social classes' ability to conduct collective action, of institutions of development, and of self-government (Ibid: pp.27-28). Southern intelligentsia argued five causes to the problems facing the South which included: the historical feudalism and ecclesiastical institutions which controlled large areas of land and prevented land market development, a fiscal system which favoured those few who drained it and oppressed the labour and entrepreneurial classes, unchecked baronial control, a confusing land owning system which established no clarity of defining private property and hindered agricultural improvements, and lastly the social and intellectual understandings of the peasant classes (i.e., their poverty, illiteracy, and superstition) (Ibid). Most notably, Antonio Gramsci examined the influence of Italian intellectuals in Italian history, social group and class formation, their 'solidarity' and maintenance of established hegemonic forces, their diversity, and their position in 'an industrial society' (Buttigieg 1992: p.11). Francesca Congiu (scholar of social and political science) argues,

> For Gramsci, the annexation and repression of Southern Italy by the Italian state belongs chronologically to a period of colonial expansion, and the Southern part of the peninsula appears to have served as a testing ground in preparation for Italy's imperialist foreign policies (2012: p.165).

Petrusewicz argued that in 1848, two forms of exile experienced by southern intelligentsia were consequential in the development of the Southern Question (1998). The first was their internal exile due to the revolution of that year which saw the South transform

into a repressed police state controlled by the military and the church, forcing the intelligentsia to recede from public life by force, laws, or personal shame (Ibid). The second was an external exile of them moving North to Piedmont and Tuscany, or internationally to England, Switzerland, and France (Ibid). It was this very point of the negative sentiments from exiled intelligentsia towards their homeland during this period up until the Risorgimento, that became another significant contribution to Southern Question argument even before outsider discourses circulated it (Ibid). She stated,

> More and more, the image seemed to constitute the reality, as suggested by the frequent repetition of words such as backward, run down, despotic, savage, uncivilized. Of particular interest is how the exiles, in just these years, contributed to the new representation, expressing their pessimism through publications, correspondence, and debates among themselves (Ibid: p.45).

Petrusewicz concluded that, 'angry, bitter, and homesick, their life was hard. Nor could they help but admire the political and economic advances of the host countries in which they were living' (Ibid: p.46). From this discourse, came a further circulation of these opinions and ideas of the South by non-Italian visitors.

Post-War Periods to the Present Day

Political and economic weakness caused by the First World War contributed to the rise of Fascism, more prominently in the South (Sereni 2014). Fascism halted southern development while galvanizing anti-southernist sentiments, and combined with the economic crisis at the end of the 1920s, these established a relational dynamic in which the North further modernized (industrially and ideologically) and the regime fed to the South ruralist and populist propaganda (Gribaudi 1996). Changes to the Lira (Italian currency) in 1927, along with the increased politically clientelist investments in the South after 1950, were not established in the best interests of southern development and sustainable growth (Davis 1998). During the 1940s and 1950s of the Second World War period, the Southern Question resurfaced, connecting similar ideologies originating from the enlightenment period, which encouraged a strong presence of American state intervention, framing the South as a 'zero level' development stage region, and as historian Gabriella Gribaudi described, 'once again a land without history, in a state of nature' (1996: p.81).

From the late 1980s towards the present-day, some contexts which furthered the imbalance between the North and South were the large-scale mechanization of agriculture, policies created through public investment, and Italy conforming to the European Union common market (Sereni 2014). Right before the EU was formed in the early 1990s, Italy revised their economic restrictions and removed many programs aimed to develop the South which dated back to the 1950s, and along with these economic consequences, the development of the EU created a heated argument on 'belonging' and 'national identity' in reference to Italy and the North being perceived as more European, and the South a more backwards welfare state which relied on and drained the resources of the former (Schneider 1998: p.3). Southern Italian stereotypes originally formed during the unification period became politically vital and recirculated during the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of anti-southernist political parties in the North (Dickie 1999a). This radicalization of anti-southernism can be seen in the formation of Lega Nord, originated in Lombardy and Veneto by charismatic leader Umberto Bossi (Schneider 1998b). It was popularized in the 1994-96 elections with the main agenda in support of the North-South binary, anti-southernism, and racist anti-immigration, criticizing the national government for overtaxing the 'productive economy' of the North and over-financing 'welfaristic infusions of capital and social services' for the South (Ibid: p.1). These political arguments still remain today and can be seen in the rise of populism and far-right politics in Italy. In 2018 and 2019, Italy saw the rise in popularity of Lega (Nord) where it voted its current leader Matteo Salvini into government as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior in Italy's coalition government at that time, with the anti-establishment and populist party of Movimento 5 Stelle. Prior to this election when Salvini took over the party from the 'old guard' of Bossi, he dropped the 'Nord' from the party's name, in an attempt to disassociate it geographically from the North, reframing it as a 'national' party to gain more appeal from central and southern Italy.

Although the community of locals in Cosenza I spent time with were critically opposed to these right-leaning political parties, there remained local support in Calabria for Salvini when he visited parts of the region. Locals I spent time with aired their grievances and disgust towards other Calabrians supporting a leader of a movement which condemned the South, most publicly for its *'Ndrangheta* (Calabrian mafia) and acceptance of refugees. Interestingly though, Calabria voted predominantly for Movimento 5 Stelle in 2018[9] and had

[9] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-43272700 .

continued its far-right majority during the 2022 election which saw Fratelli d'Italia's Giorgia Meloni[10] become Italy's first female prime minister and (some argue) the first far-right leader of that country since Benito Mussolini's fascist reign. Davis explained that Italian historians' revisionist agenda of the country had the South as a main component in analysing the failings of the liberal modernization of Italy and the rise of Fascist movements (1998). This connects to the present day in similar ways with the populist right-wing movements ruling Italy, where they still use the South as an excuse for failures or threats to the nation (i.e., refugees, mafia, economic dependency, etc.). With these contemporary contexts outlined above which have affected the development of southern Italian regions, I will now further detail the realities Calabria faces today.

Calabria's population (as of 1st January 2023) was at 1 846 610 which was only 3.1% of Italy's national population. Economically speaking, there still remains a distinct divide between the northern and southern Italian regions today. In 2022, the GDP of the EU grossed €15.9 trillion and its highest regional levels were in fact demonstrated in the northern Italian region of Lombardy at €440 billion. In the case of Calabria, the region grossed approximately €36 billion, contributing 1.9% of Italy's national GDP, and out of all the region's provinces, Cosenza (where I based my main fieldwork in) had the highest GDP in that year.[11] Recent data showed that in 2023, the EU employment rate of working-age people 20-64 years of age was at one of its highest percentages of 75.3%, but three southern Italian regions recorded the lowest percentages of employment across the EU. These included Sicily at an employment rate of 48.7%, and both Campania and Calabria at 48.4%. In the same reporting, the EU region with the highest disparity of employment was Italy and this was shown distinctly in a north-south divide with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano at 79.6% and Campania and Calabria at the previously stated percentage. This was also reflected in the unemployment rate data of 2023 which had the EU average at 6.1% and Italy remained the country with the widest disparity of unemployment, where the same regions of Autonomous Province of Bolzano had the lowest unemployment rate at 2.0% and Campania had the highest at 17.4%, reiterating a clear north-south disparity. Regions with lower employment numbers like

[10] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/world-europe-63025985 .
[11] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/regions-2024#High%20employment%20rates%20for%20recent%20graduates%20in%20several%20Dutch%20and%20German%20regions .

southern Italy also demonstrated corelations with having rural peripheral landscapes and locations, limited work prospects, and lower populations.[12]

During this same year of reporting, employment rates in Calabria of recently graduated students of upper secondary to tertiary education aged 20-34 was at 44.5% which is one of Europe's lowest rates when compared to the EU's rate of 83.5%. Regarding unemployment in people aged 15-74, Calabria had one of the higher rates at 15.9% compared to the EU which was 6.1%.[13] Although southern Italy's GDP is comparatively lower than central and northern Italy, in 2023 alone the South experienced a faster growth rate than the rest of Italy. It saw growth in its GDP, employment, construction and service sectors, export of goods, public investments from European cohesion funds and PNRR,[14] and other public funds supporting business incentives and public works.[15] With this being said, a more recent report published in November 2024 by *la Repubblica* explained that although the South had demonstrated a faster GDP growth than the rest of Italy, this may begin to plateau within the next two year because of the withdrawal from 'investment stimulus policies and support for family income.'[16] Additionally, a significant concern for the growth of southern regions is the continual emigration of young educated Italians leaving the regions (primarily due to low wages and opportunities) where only in the past ten years, 200,000 have moved from the South to the Centre-North of Italy and 138,000 moved abroad.[17] Since the economic crisis of the 2000s, and particularly from 2014 when Italy experienced a 'boom' in emigration from its citizens,[18] there has been an increase in young educated Italians emigrating internationally or from southern Italian regions to northern ones in search for better economic opportunities (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2014). Many Calabrians have left the region to pursue higher education, gain work experience, and find employment for economic security within northern Italian regions and abroad, and most of the Calabrian participants involved in this project are examples of this. Even with the difficulties facing the region, they decided to come back to

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[12] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Labour_market_statistics_at_regional_level .
[13] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/regions-2024#High%20employment%20rates%20for%20recent%20graduates%20in%20several%20Dutch%20and%20German%20regions .
[14] Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza or the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.
[15] https://finanza.repubblica.it/News/2024/06/19/svimez_mezzogiorno_rialza_la_testa_e_cresce_piu_del_centro_nord-63/ .
[16] https://www.repubblica.it/economia/2024/11/27/news/rapporto_svimez_sud_nord_crescita-423746116/ .
[17] Ibid.
[18] https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/12/09/news/istat_boom_di_italiani_che_lasciano_paese_immigrati_tornano_a_casa-102464313/ .

the region to help facilitate long-term economic development and expand opportunities for local communities through their businesses within the gastro-tourism industry.

Regarding the tourism sector across the EU, it was reported in 2024 that since the pandemic, southern European countries once pejoratively labelled by the EU under the PIIGS acronym (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain) because of their perceived under-development and economic liability to the rest of the union, in fact demonstrated the highest economic growth in the tourism sector due to an increase in foreign tourism driven by a growth in their international currencies. Out of the southern European countries listed, Portugal, Spain, and Italy saw particular success in this sector.[19] In the case of Italy, reports in 2023 showed that tourists stayed in the country for 447.2 million nights with 52.4% of those from foreign tourists. Compared to other southern regions like Sicily (16.4 million nights stayed with 48.8% being foreign tourists) and Puglia (16.8 million nights stayed with 30.4% being foreign tourists), Calabria recorded lower rates at 8.1 million nights stayed by tourists with only 18.4% of those being from foreign tourists.[20] Many locals I spoke to who worked in Calabria's gastro-tourism industry explained that although there were foreign tourists who vacationed in Calabria (one of its popular destinations being the seaside town of Tropea), tourist numbers were lower compared to other Italian regions because of the region being less internationally known as a vacation destination outside of its negative stigmas, along with issues in its infrastructural development and transportation services. Another point they made was that many Italians from other regions chose Calabria as their vacation destination because of its lower foreign tourist numbers and commercialization. I also witnessed this first-hand living in Calabria for fieldwork during its peak tourism seasons, particularly during the country's summer holiday called *Ferragosto* which happens in August. Calabria's tourism industry and its potential in developing into one that is sustainable and mutually beneficial to its host communities and visitors alike will be explored in further detail in the last ethnographic chapter of this thesis.

With this historical and contemporary contextual knowledge of the South, returning back to Calabria would be a return journey for me, in my attempt to unpack these heavy

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[19] https://www.repubblica.it/economia/2024/06/21/news/il_boom_dei_turisti_americani_e_la_rivincita_delleuropa_del_sud_cosi_il_mediterraneo_e_diventato_il_motore_economico_ue-423267159/ .

[20] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/regions-2024#High%20employment%20rates%20for%20recent%20graduates%20in%20several%20Dutch%20and%20German%20regions .

historical dynamics through examining parts of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry and interacting with the local entrepreneurs who work in it. It is through an analysis of gastro-tourism and food's capacity to create and transmit identity and belonging, where I hope to gain a greater understanding as to how the region has been stigmatized, for what reasons, and why these narratives and hegemonic imbalances persist today. Through these analytical lenses, I embarked on a journey into gaining more understanding on the state of the region's development today, and why certain socio-political and economic issues which hinder its progress, remain chronic and perceivably unsolvable.

A Journey Made: Winding Routes and Deep Roots

I had a significant layover at Flughafen Zurich airport after flying in from Toronto Pearson International airport, unavoidable by the fact that there were no direct international flights to Calabria from Canada. Most international flights to Italy would arrive at Fiumicino airport in Rome and since it was mid-January, it was also 'off season' for tourism travel. After a blurred culmination of days, I arrived at Calabria's Lamezia Terme airport in the evening, disoriented but relieved. Lamezia was one of three main Calabrian airports (the other two being Aeroporto dello Stretto in Reggio Calabria and Aeroporto Sant'Anna in Crotone) and was often described by locals and people who worked in Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, as the only 'real' airport in the region since the other two were smaller and operated poorly. The airport looked the same from three years prior when I last visited, even though time had in fact continued on. Nothing in life was static. Ascending down the airplane stairs onto the tarmac runway, the cool but thickly humid air blew through the same large palm trees and tropical plants dotted around the facade of the rust coloured 1970s neo-futurist structure of the main building. The dimly lit small baggage claim area with its customs officers was unchanged, and because this was a Sunday evening arrival flight with not many passengers, the space appeared all the more deserted and neglected than it may have otherwise been.

When my two large suitcases arrived, overpacked with things needed for the fieldwork year and the direct flight back to Oxford when I finished, I went to one of the border officers at the exit and gave him my passport. He skimmed through to the page where my temporary Italian visa was placed, then back at me and said 'to be good' (implying not to

make trouble). I smiled, leaving that interaction and the airport slightly unsettled, while I made my way to the entrance where I reunited with my cousin Alessio and his father Massimo. Big smiles of excitement accompanied their warm welcome. Massimo owned and still ran his father's food specialty shop (which was passed down to him) called Alimentari Sisca, where he predominantly sold local traditional Calabrian products with his wife Loredana. Over the years, he progressively focused more on supplying and supporting local producers of regional products, as well as fairtrade and organic products. Massimo was pivotal in helping me as the main gatekeeper in my research when I was there last and was generous enough to help again. He was well networked with local producers and business owners, had built strong relationships with them, and was a wealth of knowledge when it came to the products he sold. His shop was also a hive of activity at lunchtime for locals who wanted to have a quick panini and soda to-go. Fresh crusty local breads, rich flavourful cheeses, and delicious cured meats sliced to order were among the treasures to choose from. I had my fair share of *mortadella* and *provola* panini, a staple in any Italian's childhood, which Massimo was persistent in me not paying for. His store and the street it was located on were always bustling with activity: people, cars, relationships intersecting, and social life buzzing. Me being 29 years old at the time, his son Alessio was around the same age as me. He was a very talented professional drummer and music instructor, and was extremely supportive in my research. His ability to speak and understand English helped immensely in me communication at the outset and for translation. An added unintentional advantage which I came to realize later was that Alessio and his wide community of artist, musician, and vocalist friends became the social group I frequented, and enabled me to interact and visit with people and places which widened the scope of my access. Through them, I witnessed the creative artistic communities that existed in Calabria, which I was unaware of to that degree, not hearing about them from the communities I grew up in, nor from popular media discourses which failed to show or circulate their existence. The communities I became a part of were also outspoken anti-mafia supporters and advocates which helped in my navigation through Calabria's regional gastro-tourism industry, safer and easier than it may have otherwise been. There was more to the region than its oppressive mafia groups and journeying back to Calabria for this longer trip reconfirmed that there were many stereotypes still in existence to be re-evaluated and understood.

Seeing Alessio and Massimo after three years at the 'Arrivals' exit in Lamezia felt surreal and the most welcoming of reunions. I dusted off my Italian language skills, while we

were catching up walking towards their car to head back to their new apartment where Loredana was excitedly awaiting with a small welcome dinner. On our drive to the city, we moved along the winding serpentine roads which traced the contours of the mountainsides, every so often burrowing into tunnels carved through them, so dense that Wi-Fi reception cut out completely and we were left in silence with no car radio or cell phone signal until we reemerged out from the other side. I remember when the plane was landing in Lamezia a few hours earlier, looking down at the evening geography and observing what looked to be the small lights of skyscrapers (similar to any Toronto and Gatwick skyline I flew into), but were in fact the lights of distant houses, roads, and low-rise buildings set within the peaks and valleys of the region's colossal stone giants. These mountains were Calabria's skyscrapers. It was this incredible landscape in Cosenza and others completely different to it found across Calabria (i.e., coastlines, hilly pastureland, alpine forests, and others) which made the region so unique and special, contrary to its negative stereotypes. This natural diversity of place allowed for the existence of wide ranges of unique food products, traditions, and cultures to develop over the centuries of occupation, colonization, and rule the region had seen. After driving for some time, we finally arrived in the city of Cosenza. There was a main roundabout located at the foot of an aging shopping mall which marked the start of the Viale Giacomo Mancini, a major road which connected Cosenza to the countryside where we came from and to the neighbouring university town of Rende. It was partially blocked off due to construction for a development project that was to see parts of the road transformed into a wellness park and additional outdoor exercise spaces. As we continued on driving through the city's urban spaces, in contrast to the mountainous landscape of motorways and tunnels we had come from, the city was more compact. Smaller residential and retail buildings lined the main streets and from them spread side streets which sprawled and meandered throughout the city in a tightly knit irregular lattice. Some buildings were well maintained, others were adorned with graffiti on their ground floors. There was no traffic when we arrived in the city that Sunday evening, so the streets were quiet, lined with parked compact cars and the occasional accumulation of trash that had either been littered or not yet collected. We finally pulled up on the street where Massimo, Loredana, and Alessio lived and where my flat also was. I quickly dropped off my luggage at my place, and we went to their apartment where I was warmly welcomed by Loredana and her great hugs. All four of us spent the rest of that first evening eating her delicious food together, discussing the disbelief that after all the planning for this return to happen, the journey was made, we were all together again sharing meals and stories, catching up over lost time.

The *Doing* and *Writing* of Travel

The notion of 'a journey' or 'journeying' remains at the heart of anthropology and ethnography, and will be an overarching theme for this thesis. Humans have always been 'mobile beings' and mobility has been a core theme in the social sciences when examining, 'exploration, trade, migration, displacement, exile, expatriation, travel and journeying' (Higginbotham 2012: p.189). In the introduction of his seminal work on Tarantism in Southern Italy entitled *Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism* (originally published in 1961), Neapolitan anthropologist Ernesto De Martino stated that,

> …the ethnographic journey lies within the framework of modern humanism as a total upheaval of the mythic journey into the great beyond embarked upon by magicians, shamans, initiates and mystics of all religious civilizations, who thereby seek to regain a presence lost in critical moments of being in history (De Martino 2005: pp.2-3).

Ethnographic study has since come a long way from the time in which De Martino unpacked this notion of journeying in the 1960s. James Clifford later argued that conceptual terms such as 'travel' were in fact, 'translations, built from imperfect equivalences,' thus the concept of journeying, could be argued as being one of diversity of meaning and limitations (1997: p.11). Journeys can embark on a new place other than one's own, but also through familiar places and communities one is already part of, but in new ways. They can be physical travel or emotional, through symbols, feelings, materials, or metaphors. Journeys can even be embarked on through digital or virtual realms. As anthropologists and ethnographers, our research documents and analyses the journeys we undertake, are included in or excluded from, and inevitably become entangled within.

Not only is the theme of the 'journey' connected to the disciplines of anthropology and ethnography but within its historical context, Italy also has a strong relationship with 'travel' and 'the journey.' Scholar of English Sharon Ouditt and Italian studies specialist Loredana Polezzi explain that out of Europe, since the time of the Renaissance period to present day, Italy has represented 'the ideal travel destination,' even when looking at all different aspects of the societies developed within that peninsula both in positive and negative ways and that, 'Italy owes much of its identity – to travel and to its narration, to journeys and the stories told about them' (2012: p.97). They continue that one could view Italy as a 'practiced space,' in the sense that the phenomena of travel has influenced the

country's development in every aspect of daily life, and by not viewing Italy as only a destination or place, it 'shifts the attention onto what people do when they travel, onto the way in which they move through space, the encounters they have, the images they produce, gather and perpetuate' (Ibid: p.97). More specifically, Calabria has had a unique relationship with this notion of journeying. Firstly, there have been centuries of historical occupation, colonization, and empirical rule and settlements by regimes and communities from across the world. Later from the late 18th century up to the beginning of the 20th century, it became a site for travellers, missionaries, intellectuals, and artists of the Grand Tour (some of which exiled from their northern European countries) 'brave enough' to journey south of Naples, 'back in time' to what they incorrectly believed was the site of an untouched Western antiquity. Through the unification period of Italy, the pre-existing discourses of the 'Southern Question' were reignited and re-galvanized, discouraging journeying to the south of Italy, where stereotypes of its backwardness and violence gained political and socio-cultural momentum. Later after the post-World War periods, journeying took on new forms for the region of Calabria; the mass exodus and emigration of its populations mainly to North America, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, and other parts of Europe. It was not only people living in the South who moved, but also the export of southern Italian goods, products, and resources all across the globe which became foundational for the southern economy. Presently, the most contemporary forms journeying in Calabria besides the migrant crisis, are that of emigration and return migration; of Calabrians moving away for educational and economic opportunities but also Calabrians (in the region and its diaspora around the world) returning to their land of origin through travel. The latter example of return migration also represents a symbolic 'returning to' and reengagement with their cultural traditions in an effort to restrengthen the region's economy and cultural identity. The growing market of 'roots tourism' where tourists comprised of people returning to their homeland or place of ancestral origin, is an example of this.

Calabria's deep history of 'journeying,' along with the complex socio-cultural, political, and economic histories of the region as outlined earlier, all play an important role in the understanding of present-day Calabria outside of its stereotypes. Early on, De Martino called for the need for *critical ethnocentrism* (2005), and this correlates still today with the historical and contemporary ethnocentrism of the South in how its regions, communities, systems, and issues are represented and argued within contemporary discourses. Ethnography allowed for this understanding by revealing the limitations of human-built societies and

enabled an analysis of ‘circumscribed humanity’ caused in part by ‘historical circumstance’ (Ibid: p.3).

Travel and journeying are fundamental to the phenomenon of tourism. How a place is perceived and represented reveals the sometimes invisible or at lease covert dynamics between communities, nation-states, belonging, and identity. Where academic research is consequentially more influential in political and economic circles of government and policy making, travel writing as a genre, directs its potency of influence to an exponentially wider readership, thus influencing cultural shifts and social sentiments. Chapter two, which is a companion chapter to this one, will expand on this topic further, but here I will briefly present a few key points to introduce. International travellers visited southern Italy through its history even before it was a unified country, which saw an increased popularity from European travellers back in the 17th century (Marrone 2010). It was during the 18th century that the Grand Tour was at its height of popularity as a rite of passage for artists and aristocrats visiting southern Italy (although they were careful not to travel farther south from Naples as those regions which included Calabria were considered ‘Africa’) (Ibid). To these travellers, the Grand Tour was a witnessing of a perceived untouched European origin of Western antiquity (Herzfeld 1987, Schneider 1998b), not unlike the primitivists and evolutionists of early British anthropology (though different regional contexts), and the late 18th century saw travellers, artists, and northern Italian bourgeois class fascinated to travel to southern Italy as it was to them *la terra vergine* or untouched land (Moe 2002). Upper class Europeans were also exiled to the South, and during the 20th century one popularized but controversial figure at that time was Norman Douglas, who was one of the first to write a book documenting his travels throughout Calabria entitled *Old Calabria* (1915). Following sociologist Loïc Wacquant’s notion of *relegation* (2016), it is important to note that by branding the South as a place for exiles, it relegated those southern regions and their communities, and transformed them into something equal in kind to those very exiles, which shifted the power dynamic in a way that made southern Italy ‘lesser than’ northern and central Italy and Europe. Travel writing as a textual genre is often overlooked by academia as comparatively lesser in validity and academic rigor, but it is significant in the context of Italy and tourism because of the sheer volume that has been published by Italians and non-Italians alike. The image of Italy and its culture has always been and continues to be a process of co-creation both internally but most predominantly from foreign visitors, and this has had a significant role in developing national and regional identities (Ouditt and Polezzi 2012). With this

understanding, I apply this notion to my thesis topic arguing it to be an important and new way of approaching an understanding of Calabria, not only as a geographic destination but as a *practiced space* (Ibid) by insiders and outsiders who have co-constructed the region's identity over time up to the present day.

Methodology and Aims of Thesis

I conducted one full year of fieldwork from the autumn of 2018 to autumn 2019. The structure of the fieldwork was divided into three months at the outset in Toronto within the Calabrian diaspora communities there, and the remaining nine months spent in Calabria with local communities conducting the main ethnographic fieldwork for my thesis. During the Toronto portion of my fieldwork, I conducted my own semi-structured interviews with Calabrians and other Italians working in the Italian food industry there, many of which specializing in Calabrian food traditions. The participants I met ranged from chefs, food bloggers, and other members of the local Italian food industry. I also attended food events which promoted Italian food culture in Canada and a food conference where Eataly's founder presented a lecture on the company. My intention for this portion of the fieldwork was to initiate the dialogue between myself and other Calabrian diaspora to gain insight on their relationship their ancestral homeland and culture, specifically within the frame of gastro-tourism, and also to gain information on the larger international Italian (and specifically, Calabrian) gastro-tourism markets outside of Italy. The incorporation of a transnational analysis to my research also enabled me to examine Calabria and its culture not as fixed and site-specific (which has been incorrectly done in past research on the region) but rather as fluid, malleable, and dynamic (Harney 2002).

The second portion of my fieldwork in Calabria was the main ethnographic backbone of my thesis and prioritized participant observation. Massimo and Alessio both were main access points to the network of people I met and interacted with. Across the duration of my time in Calabria, I conducted my own semi-structured interviews and informal discussions with local entrepreneurs who worked in the food and tourism industries there (this included food producers, a food organization member, a food academy director, and tourism business founders). All interviews and discussions I conducted in Calabria were in Italian as I became fluent in conversational Italian and was able to translate and transcribe my recorded

interviews with the help of Alessio who was fluent in English. Alessio also accompanied me on the majority of my interviews and visits to various places in Calabria as he was able to provide the main source of transportation. My base location was Cosenza, one of the largest main cities in Calabria located in the province also by the same name, but I was able to travel around conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews in other places, some of which included Morano Calabro, Rende, Tropea, Sila, Acri, and Zagarise (in the neighbouring province of Catanzaro).

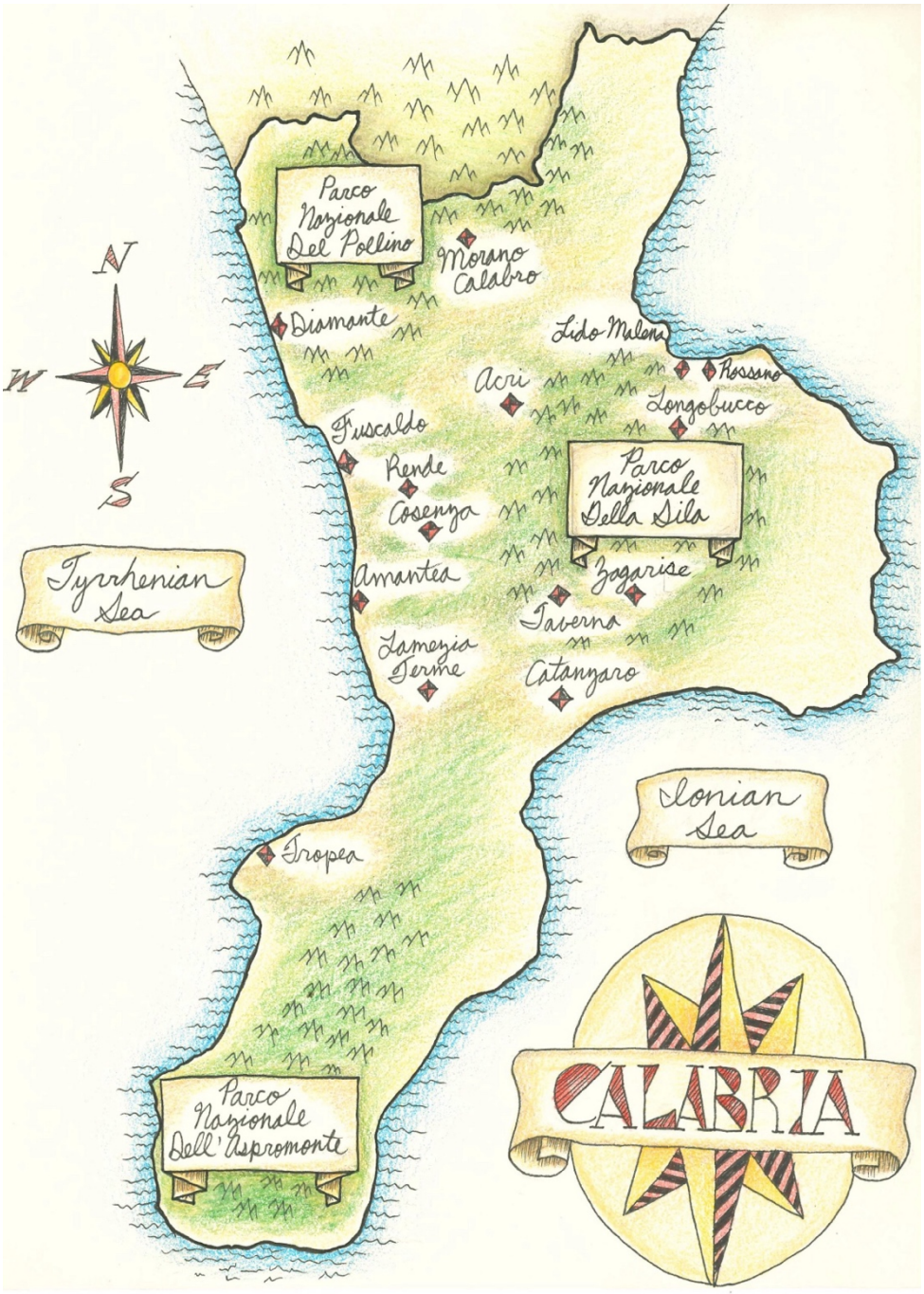


Figure 2. Map of Calabria and some of the main locations I visited (personal drawing, 2024).

Understanding *location* not as static or bounded but as an itinerary of experiences and translations (Clifford 1997: p.11), the intention of this portion of my fieldwork was to gain insight into the everyday realities, aspirations, problems, and solutions local independent entrepreneurs and artisans faced working in the Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, while trying to sustain and grow their own successful businesses. Participants ranged from approximately 30-60 years of age, and most if not all were university educated, and had in some ways left the region physically (for study or work in other Italian regions or countries), or worked in other industries not related to Calabrian gastro-tourism, only to return back and specialize in the gastro-tourism industry of their cultural origins. The majority of the participants featured in the main ethnographic vignettes were men and it is important to clarify that this was not an intentional framework of my thesis but occurred by random through snowball sampling and the informal contacts made during my fieldwork. It seemed that this may also be a result of having a higher percentage of men working in the agricultural and gastro-tourism sectors in Calabria (and in some cases continuing family-run businesses passed down through patrilineage). Statistical reporting also showed that in 2023, 61.8% of men in Calabria were employed compared to 35.2% of women in the region.[21]

In addition to conducting fieldwork in both Toronto and Calabria, I scheduled time to travel up north to Florence, Milan, and Bologna to visit Eataly locations in those cities and more specifically visit FICO Eataly World in Bologna. This portion was to see first-hand what the market for Calabrian food and drinks was in major northern Italian cities and gain more understanding on the politics and culture of the Eataly brand. In addition to the methods listed so far, I also utilized any publicly accessible source materials for further data (i.e., news reports, pamphlets, maps, websites, tourism information materials etc.). As in all fieldwork, there were obstacles and limitations which affected the nature of my fieldwork, my data collection, methods, access, and in turn final thesis. For a number of reasons including financial limitations and the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to pause my studies from 2020 until 2022, after which I resumed work on my thesis again.

[21] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/regions-2024#High%20employment%20rates%20for%20recent%20graduates%20in%20several%20Dutch%20and%20German%20regions .

Regarding the final output of my thesis, since gastronomy and tourism both consist of and rely heavily on material and sensorial based cultures, forms of engagement, and knowledge exchange, I also utilize drawings and photography with my written texts. Having completed an Honours Bachelor of Fines Arts in Visuals Arts at York University in Toronto previous to my studies in Oxford, I have incorporated my formal training and creative skills into using drawing as a processual method during the writing up process rather than an ethnographic method at the outset of my fieldwork. Drawing is used both as a phase of the analysis process and as a method of disseminating forms of knowledge to the reader which text would not sufficiently do in the same way. Lastly, each chapter of this thesis opens with an ethnographic vignette based on interviews and the daily writing I conducted in personal journals throughout the entirety of my fieldwork, with the aim of creating a flow of narration for the reader which in turn becomes its own form of updated travel writing on Calabria. This enabled me to provide more nuance in my analysis while critically engaging with the genre of travel writing which Calabria's history and depiction have been so deeply entangled with. In this way, I utilize my ethnographic journeying as an epistemological frame, a methodological tool, and a stylistic approach for my thesis.

My positionality is an important mention when preparing for my fieldwork, conducting it, and completing the analysis and writing of this thesis. I embody both the identity of 'member' as a son of two Calabrian parents, and of 'outsider' having been born and raised in Canada. This state of liminality is not static or fixed, and social anthropologist Andrea Pelliccia argues that, 'the "in-between" position can also be interpreted by following the situational approach, in the sense that the oscillation between tourist and local varies according to different situations and contexts' (2018: p.2116). Paul Basu argues that the in-between or notion of liminality,

> …provides a way to escape the methodological essentialism that continues to dominate Western logic; the relentless search for the singular and true nature of things; the desire for certainty, for dividing the world into this or that (2017: p.2).

On her positionality as an Istanbuli of Jewish descent married to a well-known writer in Cyprus, Yael Navaro-Yashin was able to develop an intimacy, deeper understanding, and more proximate access with Turkish-Cypriots than she would have otherwise had if being an anthropologist of an unrelated cultural background (2012). She states,

> …being "related" meant being affectively attuned to the environment and history that Cypriots (both Turkish and Greek) had experienced, if only vicariously. Being a non-Cypriot who had married in allowed a good inside-outside position, an ability to "relate" as well as to "reflect" (Ibid: pp.xi-xii).

As a researcher in her field of studies, she continues that, 'being an anthropologist (who thought through comparative analytical and theoretical frameworks) entailed a methodological distancing, as well, which any healthy research would require' (Ibid: pp.xi-xii). This relates to the advantage of my relationship with Calabria and my in-betweenness of identity and positionality. I was able to both connect to locals better and quicker than I otherwise would have, and was able to immerse myself in their internal discourses while also acknowledging how the 'outside' has viewed and still perceived Calabria. My non-membership to both identities as local and outsider created a space of detachment where I could analyse observations and data with a higher probability of objectivity but also access nuanced understandings through my subjective entanglements to Calabria. Relationship building and cultural proximity, or at least a shared familiarity between anthropologist and the participants that collaborate in their research, is important. It should be noted that my gendered positionality as a man interacting with a majority of male participants was not an intentional correlation nor one that I examined in significant depth at the time of fieldwork, but it is important to acknowledge it. Although the environments and communities I accessed were often mixed-gendered, and my gender may have affected the ways in which my interactions with other male entrepreneurs occurred, I would argue that my cultural affiliation with Calabria as my ancestral background played a noticeably more significant role in my ability to access spaces and build relationships during fieldwork than my gender did. John Berger argued that building connections with people requires a certain degree of deconstructing and reconstructing of the world in which a person exists in and their ontological view of that very world, what forces drive actions, by whom, old or new, hidden or seen (2010: p.108). More importantly this process is relational between anthropologist and the communities they collaborate with and not the dynamic of the past where people and places were objects for the field to study (Naravo-Yashin 2012: p.xii).

This can be a metaphor for my approach to this thesis project; my humble attempt at initiating a critical understanding and unpacking of Calabria, aware of its stereotypes and stigmatizations but not prisoner to them. Aware of my positionality as a hybrid English-speaking, Canadian-born Calabrian anthropologist writing about Calabria and its

communities, as both a visitor but a cultural member, with the aims of providing more nuance on how the region has been depicted thus far and showcasing the lived experiences of Calabrians with greater prioritization. My aim is less a case of communicating a directive of concrete answers and solutions to issues the region continues to face (as they are complex, systemic, and multifaceted), but instead to expand the discussion around Calabria and its stigmatization, with the hopes of bridging a stronger connection and dialogue between non-Calabrians and the region, as well as Calabrians to their own culture (both diaspora communities and communities of origin). It is about creating a more nuanced proximity of understanding on how to engage and examine systems of stigma, which can then be applied to other places, communities, and cultures who have fallen subject to the same forms essentialism.

Cultural stigma is often politically driven and created to contrast aspects of larger positive representational forms of nation-state identity and belonging. Although Herzfeld's concepts of *social poetics* and *cultural intimacy* in relation to the nation-state were published in the late 1990s, this coincided with a surge of anthropological literature on Italy which embarked on the revision of the Southern Question discourse and many of his arguments remain relevant today. At that time, Herzfeld explained that 'social poetics' were the creative display of an individual person, which was different from the 'national or collective self' and described 'cultural intimacy' as the private 'collective space' of a nation, similar to how ethnographers and anthropologists of qualitative research inevitably intrude on the privacy of individual people or communities (1997: p.x). He went on to expand that cultural intimacy was a sharing of commonalities which both 'define insiderhood' and were 'disapproved by powerful outsiders' (Ibid: p.94). Since there is little research that exists today on contemporary Calabria in relation to the Southern Question or gastro-tourism studies, and what has been done in the past has often only focused on Italian nationhood in relation to a 'problematic' South and the blanket definition of a collective identity of southern Italians, my thesis in some ways explores the *social poetics* of the local entrepreneurs and people I met with, in relation to the *cultural intimacy* of their collective groups and the gastro-tourism industry they work in, set against the essentialized discourses about Calabria which still circulate. In order to properly engage in these discourses, the last body of literature featured in this introductory chapter which will be explored, is the anthropology of the state and territorial stigmatization.

Stigma and the State

Territorial stigmatization is not static or neutral, but instead a collective labelling of a specific place (Wacquant, Pereira, and Slater 2014: p.1271). It is 'nationalized and democratized,' universal around the world, each country having their own versions of problematic places understood to be the cause of their own 'destitution and depravity' (Ibid: p.1274). This extends across spatial and class categories, circulates in political, academic, and everyday discourses, and reinforces these disparaging representations from the highest classes in society, the popular masses, and the minority communities who live in or were expelled from these marginalized places (Ibid: p.1274). Another important aspect Loïc Wacquant, Virgílio Borges Pereira, and Tom Slater point out is that the 'racialization through selective accentuation or fictive projection' frames these stigmatized places as 'darker and more exotic' than they may otherwise be, and that this regularly combined with sensationalized reports of violence or deviance is then used as evidence that these communities hold these innately negative traits (Ibid: p.1274). This dynamic of race is also particularly important in the context of southern Italy and its marginality, and will be expanded on more in chapter two (a companion introductory chapter to this one) on academic and travel writing. Much of the work in the past has focused on the communities of the South and how they may be the source of their 'backwardness,' but focus should be placed on the institutional mechanisms which have defined marginalized communities, relegated them, and how they have defined the places they reside in (Wacquant 2016). Hegemonic systems of power are often the root of problems, whereas local communities who have been stigmatized can in fact offer nuanced understandings and solutions to those problems.

Wacquant also argues that there are cases where how a place is defined and stigmatized can negate how locals of that place see themselves (2016). He created a concept out of a fusing of Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic power (1992) and Erving Goffman's dealings with spoiled identities (1968, first published in 1963), on how the negative perception of a place influences self-perception, the actions of local people and the state, and their mutual relationship (Wacquant 2016: p.1083). He continues that the tainting and subsequent disintegration of a place forces its communities to develop coping mechanisms such as disengagement with each other and public institutions, reduced self-confidence or increased inclination to protest, and a reduced ability to enact collective action (Ibid: p.1083). There are problems with this particular argument in the ways it implies the inability for local

communities to exercise autonomy or heterogeneity, and it is important to point out how this understanding of stigmatized communities in some ways parallels the historic essentialized discourses which depicted southern Italy. Where Wacquant differs though, is that blame is placed on hegemonic stigmatization whereas essentialized discourses of the southern Italy placed blame on the innate cultural predispositions of their communities. Wacquant revises this understanding within the contemporary contexts of comparing American ghettos and European working-class peripheries, and that systems of power and the stigmatization of place both have a consequential effect on said place's development and functioning, and also 'contributes to class dissolution in the lower regions of social and physical space' (Ibid: p.1083). Not only do popular depictions of southern Italy negatively affect how outsiders view the regions, but also how some (but not all) local communities of those regions view themselves, which can in turn unintentionally reinforce those same negative stereotypes oppressing their communities. Wacquant argues, 'spatial stigma robs residents of their ability to claim a place and fashion an idiom of their own; it saddles them with a noxious identity, imposed from the outside' (2016: p.1083). Other academics argue in this same light that narratives are powerful constructs and are closely connected to identity and notions of the self, and they contribute to the construction, implementation, and circulation of individual and collective identities (Higginbotham 2012: p.194). But it is important to point out that just because a region or community has been historically stigmatized does not mean those local communities have fully internalized these stigmas.

Sociologists Sune Qvotrup Jensen and Ann-Dorte Christensen argue that through an interactionist lens via the influence of early works also by Erving Goffman (1968), the notion of *stigma* is an ambivalent internalized awareness that 'others see one as being less worth' but not necessarily that one such person feels worthlessness or internalizes this pejorative outsider's view of them (2012: p.77). Geographer Melissa R. Gilbert critiques Wacquant's main text *Urban Outcasts* (2008) where he theorizes 'the ghetto, the welfare state, and advanced marginality' through his qualitative and quantitative data analysis of marginalized communities in Chicago with the *banlieues* of Paris during the late 1980s towards the early 1990s (2010: pp.148-149). Gilbert argues that Wacquant's research had obvious limitations, three of which included essentializing place and space, not enough focus on the local state, and overlooking the agency of poor classes as well as the diversity and heterogeneity of places and communities of marginality (Ibid: p.149). Through his research on two housing estates in Nîmes in the South of France, Paul Kirkness (another geographer) examined the

stigmatization of these communities through the experiences and views of locals within them and how they did not fully internalize these pejorative stigmas (which the opposite is often argued to be the case with marginalized communities), but that their relationship with their stigmatization was more so 'ambivalent' and they were more connected to the place they lived in (2014: p.1281). He found that residents had developed a strong and profound connection to where they resided in the Pissevin and Valdegour neighbourhoods even though both were heavily stigmatized, and in some cases after leaving to move to the city centre, they moved back and resettled, even opening their own businesses in some cases (Ibid). Kirkness concluded that these acts, 'challenge the everyday understandings that life in Pissevin and Valdegour *must* be difficult' and that locals left immediately once the 'cultural or economic capital' they accumulated created the ability for them to do so (Ibid: p.1289, original emphasis). It would be too simple to place a misunderstanding on Calabrian communities that they have internalized their territorial stigmatization, and this approach would fall victim to the same historical essentialization of Calabria that it is a region host to homogenous communities that are prisoners to their cultural codes and stigmas. What my fieldwork was able to reveal is the heterogeneity of Calabrian locals and that they were both aware of the regional and socio-cultural stigmas forced on them, but at the same time, were engaged active autonomous individuals working through these webs of power to overcome them. Many Calabrians even left the region for work or education, only to move back to Calabria out of a desire to improve, promote, and destigmatize the region through their work in the gastro-tourism industry. They did express a sense of hopelessness and frustration at times, whether it was in regards to failures of collaborative projects with other locals or the chronic failures of the state to serve communities, or even how the rectification of problems facing Calabria continues to be slow, but they always expressed a presence of mind that actively strategizes, navigates, and proactively works towards solutions to these problems with determination and resilience.

The dynamics and relationships between local communities, the regional and wider Italian state, and the circulation of regional stigma withing popular, commercial, and political discourses are important to note. During my fieldwork I made multiple efforts to establish contact with Cosenza's municipal tourism organization but unfortunately with no success, receiving no reciprocal contact about my research queries. Where this may be perceived as a disadvantage in my fieldwork since I am focusing on Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, it presented (as most unintentional fieldwork developments do) an opportunity to focus on local

networks and communities in the industry as they were more willing to participate. Through her research on the everyday function and running of the Indian state, social anthropologist Nayanika Mathur intentionally avoided the 'hegemonic corpus that focuses on corruption and bad implementation' and instead on the everyday workings and operation of the Indian developmental state (2016: p.20). She explains that she puts,

> …aside the normative, morally laden baggage around the concept of corruption, that not only has a disturbing colonial history in India but is also deeply entangled with the primitivism of the international development apparatus (Ibid: p.20).

She concludes that this development apparatus depicted 'states in the global South' as 'lacking and aberrant' (Ibid: p.20).

This approach can also be seen in sociologist Javier Auyero's research in which he examined the everyday waiting patterns of the urban poor in Argentina for services and resources provided by state institutions and governing bodies (2012). It is through my focus on the everyday workings and problems faced by local entrepreneurs in the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry where I was able to move away from reaffirming assumptions of the region as being developmentally stagnant because of its state corruption or its resistant local communities, and focus more on the everyday realities locals faced, their relationship with the state, and the creative ways in which they moved through these issues to grow their businesses and promote the region. The relationship between 'the state' and local communities is an important one to interrogate further. Philip Abrams (sociologist) argued in the late 1970s that the state was, 'the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is,' and was more so a *system* and *idea* rather than an *entity* (1988: p.58). In more contemporary iterations of this research, Auyero explains that the state is, 'both an abstract, macro-level structure and a concrete, micro-level set of institutions with which the urban poor interact in direct and immediate ways' (2012: p.6). Through her research of public and political life in Turkey during the 1990s, Navaro-Yashin argues that by viewing 'public life' as unbounded fluid entities comprising of the state and of people, 'the notion of the public in public life enables us to analyse people and the state, not as opposition, but as the same domain,' and framing the state as a 'sited entity,' as done in the past by anthropologists studying 'the political' through institutions, in fact limits analytical discovery (2002: p.2). She argues, in line with early works by Abrams (1988) that the state does not exist and is more of a concept than an entity in and of itself (Ibid: pp.155-156). She continues that

analysing ‘resistance’ does not have to follow existent binaries of ‘power or resistance, state or civil society, state fetishism or the lifting of false consciousness’ (Ibid: p.159). She found that a more important phenomena in the context of the politics of contemporary Turkey in the 1990s was ‘cynicism’ which incorporates both the fetishization and critique of the state and concludes that, cynicism does not achieve ‘emancipation from the chains of statism, but to remain forever (foreseeably) locked into it’ (Ibid: p.159). In the case of the Calabrian entrepreneurs I interviewed and the numerous locals I encountered, there was a similar expression of cynicism in the sense that they were critical of the state and aware of socio-cultural stereotypes of the region and some concluded that there was no foreseeable way forward since change and improvement had been so gradual and impermeant. This was similar to Navaro-Yashin’s interactions with Turkish intellectuals she spoke to in the late 1990s. She explains that she observed a full awareness by this social group, of the state of things in Turkey, along with an expression of apathy that things would ever change, and a prioritization of self-protection (for themselves and their immediate families) in order to get by day to day (2002). They were fully aware of the state of corruption but their indifference to it was not a submissive giving up to it, instead being an expression of a higher level of agency (Ibid: p.164). It is this last point on agency which is particularly key in my research and will be explained further within the different ethnographic vignettes I present in the following chapters. Even though cynicism exists in various forms amongst Calabrian communities, they did not express a full ‘giving up’ on bettering their lives and their communities. If anything, they pushed further in creative and alternative ways to have agency over their business and lives, going beyond socio-political and economic roadblocks of stigma and the often ineffectiveness of political leaders, in order to grow their businesses which would in turn improve the region’s gastro-tourism industry.

Chapter Summaries

The thesis is structured in four main sections, beginning with an introductory section consisting of two companion chapters (the first of which is this current chapter) outlining the historical and theoretical debates that will be engaged with and examined. Following this is a trio of ethnographic sections categorized as *place*, *food*, and *people*. These ethnographic sections each consist of two complementary chapters which are meant to be read together in their related sections, combining their ethnographies and analysis together. The ethnographies

in each are centred on a food item or company, which compare and contrast the findings and arguments mutually presented in each chapter pairing. The thesis then ends with a concluding chapter summarizing key finding, reiterating its contributions, and presenting possible future opportunities on the topics addressed. Further detail on the contents of each ethnographic chapter will now be explained to provide an overview of the thesis.

The second introductory chapter will provide a brief outline of key arguments and developments in the anthropology of tourism, expand on my use of transnationalism as a theoretical framework, and the ways in which southern Italy and the Mediterranean have been understood, researched, and depicted in the field of anthropology and the social sciences. It is important to understand the relationship between places like Calabria and the academic fields which have studied them as they influence global politics and state governance, but also social trends and cultural shifts, which in turn affect tourism markets and other industries. Written documentation on the South by non-Italian academics and writers had significant prominence around the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, and these texts which included ethnographic accounts, research case studies, and travel writing were published and circulated not only across the wider continent of Europe, but North America as well. With these discourses in circulation, essentialized understandings of southern Italy in the fields of anthropology, political and social sciences, economics, literature, and popular culture (to name only a few) became further cemented. These discourses cross over into tourism, and the narratives and images created through these texts often times have the potential to be more potent than the effects of economic or political policies. Many Calabrians both in Calabria and in Toronto often expressed their cynicism and ethno-orientalist views towards their own communities and this chapter will demonstrate how these everyday discourses can often be traced back directly to similar ones produced and disseminated in the past by academics and non-Italian travel writers. Lastly in this chapter, I will present contemporary examples of travel writing on Calabria by Calabrian anthropologist Vito Teti (2018), in which he fuses anthropological discourses and travel writing to create an intimate, nuanced, hybrid depiction of his own region, through the frameworks of memory, place, migration, belonging, and identity. References will also be made to other examples of contemporary travel writing by Calabrians to show how the region and its cultural experiences are defined by Calabrians themselves, and how this shifts the region's existing landscape of narrative and stigma.

In the second section on *place*, chapter three begins with an ethnographic vignette centred on a specific Calabrian cheese called *caciocavallo Silano DOP* and a producer named Vittorio who specialized in agricultural, dairy, and livestock production on his farm in the countryside of Sila. This section is a journey through roads and infrastructural development issues in relation to the challenges the intense natural landscapes and consequences of climate change pose on these systems. It documents Vittorio's experiences of transitioning from studying science and returning back to his ancestral region to continue his family's artisanal business, working on the farm and developing the business more, combined with the experiences from another cheese producer named Giuseppe, other locals I met, and my personal experiences traveling across Calabria. Through these experiences, I examine how these factors fundamentally affect Vittorio's and Giuseppe's businesses, tourism access to the wider countryside, and the movement of people and products throughout the region. Chapter four continues this examination of infrastructure and begins with an ethnographic vignette of a traditional Calabrian honey cookie called *mostaccioli* which was sold during the Fiera di San Giuseppe, an historic annual festival. This was celebrated along a major roadway in Cosenza called the Viale Giacomo Mancini, which had undergone a seemingly never-ending construction project to become a wellness park. Through this chapter and drawing from the previous one, I will examine how sites of unfinished construction like the country roads in Sila and the city's viale influence and affect the relationship between locals and state governing bodies, the cynicism felt by locals towards development and infrastructural projects, and the disconnection between state desires for Calabria as a tourist destination and the needs of local communities, specifically the entrepreneurs who work in the gastro-tourism industry.

In the third section on *food*, chapter five begins with an ethnographic vignette centred on a specific heritage breed of pig indigenous to the region of Calabria called *suino nero di Calabria* and a local breeder named Nicola who raised this type of pig and produced specialty salumi from it in the mountain town of Acri. Through his experiences switching careers as an economist to become a breeder and food producer, and building his own business from the ground up, this section will be a journey of exploring the nature of the regional gastro-tourism market and the realities locals like Nicola face when growing their business within the larger Italian gastro-tourism markets in Italy and abroad. It also examines the dynamics of *inclusion in* and *exclusion from* markets of heritage gastro-tourism in Italy and reasons as to why local entrepreneurs like Nicola are present in some and absent in

others. Chapter six continues this interrogation of gastro-tourism markets in Italy and begins with an ethnographic vignette on my encounters with the fast-expanding high-end Italian food company called Eataly. This included attending a conference talk led by its founder, visiting Eataly locations in northern Italy, and visiting its food theme park in Bologna called FICO Eataly World. Drawing analysis from the previous chapter, I will examine the relationship between local Calabrian gastro-tourism markets, national markets, and international ones. The analysis of these various markets (their approaches to the labelling, buying, selling, and circulation of regional products) will shed light on the possible reasons why Calabria is noticeably underrepresented in many national and international projects and companies, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion when it comes to Calabria, large-scale expanding companies like Eataly, and the creation and marketing of a nationalized 'Italian foodscape' comprised of specific regional identities in which Calabria is under-represented.

In the fourth and final section on *people*, chapter seven begins with an ethnographic vignette of a meeting and discussion I had with a local baker named Michele who specialized in traditional Calabrian breads and baked goods in the small mountain town of Acri. It was during the tour he gave me of his independent bakery, where he opened up about the pervasiveness and dominance of 'Ndrangheta in Calabria. The topic of mafia in southern Italy is widely known and there is a significant amount of anthropological and academic research already written on it. My focus will aim at examining the current political and economic difficulties facing Calabria caused by the existence of mafia and the clandestine relationships of collusion and corruption between mafia organizations and some state governing bodies. With this being said, there is much more to Calabria and its communities than its history of violence and oppression, and although the reality of mafia corruption cannot be ignored, it can also be over-emphasized, which can overshadow and influence the understandings of other phenomena and realities at play in the region (both positive and negative). Mathur argues that in the case of her research on Indian state bureaucracy, 'an excessive focus on corruption detracts from the core issues of how the Indian state actually functions, what it does, when, how, and why' (2016: p.17). Instead of reiterating what has already been written about, my aim is to embark on a journey through the notion of *narrative*; both acknowledging the reality of Calabria's history of 'Ndrangheta activity but more importantly the 'reputation' and 'stereotypes' created for Calabria as being a dangerous region with dangerous people. I will explore how this narrative controls and prevents positive growth for local businesses and

projects related to gastro-tourism, and how this negative association affects both how locals see their communities and how outsiders view them as well, influencing their willingness to visit the region. In the final ethnographic chapter of this thesis, chapter eight centres around my time with a local tourism business founder named Antonio and his team who specialized in guided walking tours within the region of Presila and retailing local products they produced and ones made by other local producers. Two products in particular which they sold were their own branded extra virgin olive oil and organic honey from a local beekeeper named Pasquale, all of which was based in a small village called Zagarise in the neighbouring province of Catanzaro. Antonio was another case similar to many of the local entrepreneurs I interviewed and spent time with, where he went to the north of Italy to complete his education, only to find himself compelled to return back to his family's local village and grow a tourism business there. Through their experiences, as well as interviews and discussions I had with Calabrians living in Toronto who also had returned to their cultural roots to promote Calabrian food and heritage culture, this final ethnographic chapter will be a journey of migration in two ways. Firstly, how some local Calabrians have returned back to their home region after working or studying in other parts of Italy in the effort to improve and grow Calabria's gastro-tourism industry. Secondly, I will explore the growing industry of roots tourism and how Calabrian diaspora in Toronto have 'returned' in their own ways, to promoting and celebrating the food, cultural traditions, and histories of Calabria. Drawing from the previous chapter, this analysis will shed light on how Calabrians today are taking control of their own narrative. They are redefining the region of their ancestors in nuanced and accurate ways through the sector of gastro-tourism and creating processes of destigmatization through their work in the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry.

The conclusion chapter of this thesis will summarize the main findings and draw larger conclusion and possible pathways for further enquiry into the understanding of Calabria as a region today. It will also reiterate and clarify the potential contributions of this research project and its importance to the various fields of study it relates to.

Through these journeys I have taken to *places*, *food*, and *people* in Calabria, I hope to expand academic discourse on Calabria in a less biased more nuanced way and contribute to contemporary anthropological research on the region of Calabria (which still remains sparse). I argue that the themes I have chosen to examine add different and original angles to understanding and recontextualizing the Southern Question, travel writing on southern Italy,

and southern Italian stigma, by filling existing gaps in its discourse which can provide more comprehension and nuance. Through my analysis of different aspects of the gastro-tourism industry in Calabria and their diaspora in Toronto, and the everyday interaction with local entrepreneurs in the industry in both sites, I hope to go beyond the initial *dismantling* and *reassembling* of Calabria in Berger's sense, while keeping the region and its communities at the central focus. Adopting Berger's questioning in his book *The Seventh Man*, I would rewrite: *'what has been and is being done to Calabria and its communities, from external forces and systems but also from within? More importantly what 'new' is being done?'* (Berger and Mohr 2010: p108). Much is being done, by the local entrepreneurs I interacted with, and through our journeys and stories, hopefully in turn, by this thesis project.

Chapter 2: Expected Journeys: Contextualizing Stigma in Academic and Travel Writing on Calabria and Southern Italy

Although the issues the region faces are nuanced and complex, the noise of Calabria's recycled stigmatization is often the most amplified and circulated in pop culture and political discourse. This gains the most political traction, which in turn has a greater negative effect on the region when looking at its tourism industry. To an industry like tourism, this is consequential because it is fundamentally based on the desires, curiosity, and fantasies of people visiting a perceived place outside of their own regular quotidian life. Edward M. Bruner argues that the relationship between 'expectations and experience' is foundational to tourism but also 'at the heart of the ethnographic method, and extends to the practices of everyday life' (2011: p.196). Ethnographers prepare for the field and research their topic prior to fieldwork which creates a certain degree of open-ended expectations (meaning that they have the ability and are even encouraged to change after fieldwork). Then during and after fieldwork, their experiences change and reframe their expectations. Discrepancies between expectations and experience present the opportunity that Bruner argues 'is the only way to learn something new about the culture' (Ibid: p.197). Wacquant argues the advantages of ethnography as a methodological tool 'of rupture and theoretical construction, rather than a simple means for producing an experience-near picture of ordinary cultural categories and social relations' (2016: p.1084). My project is precisely this, through examining its gastro-tourism industry, my intention is to understand the accurate and inaccurate expectations and stereotypes of Calabria, and the discrepancies that arise from what is discussed and believed versus what exists and is actually happening.

Social anthropologists Jonathan Skinner and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos also state that, 'expectation is critical and fundamental to tourism, a motivating force that inspires economic activity, movement in space, social change and reorganization in particular local settings,' and is crucial in the successes and failures of experiences in tourism by 'motivating local communities or tourism practitioners to adapt or explore new possibilities across cultural boundaries' (2011: p.3). Not only are expectations a fundamental aspect in tourism, but also in the field of anthropology, albeit in different ways. Expectations that are unfulfilled are understood as valuable in anthropology, and for ethnographers they are often encouraged in the sense that unmet expectations after conducting fieldwork challenge assumptions, generalized status quos of systems and phenomena, and more importantly stigma and

stereotypes. This rupture between expectations and realities then encourages critical observation and thinking. In the case of tourism, unmet expectations can be viewed as undesirable when observed through the lenses of capitalist markets and global consumerism (i.e., when affecting investments, profits, services for tourists, reviews, commercial values, etc.). When examining Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, it was important for me to be critical of any expectations and assumptions placed on the region and its culture at the outset of fieldwork and to interrogate where they originated from and why they persisted still today. An important aspect that is a strength of ethnographic research is its ability to engage with the everyday phenomena of communities and the lives of individuals in nuanced and reflexive ways. It is in this way that my thesis aims to amplify the voices of locals in the industry, similar to Herzfeld's point about the strength of anthropology as a field of research in that academic analysis of the local and global for the exposure of hegemonic powers active in micro quotidian phenomena (2015: p.18). My thesis will provide a greater understanding of what contexts and factors are at play that affect the development and growth of local Calabrians running their businesses and in turn, the region at large, and what new alternative ways and approaches are being used by them to combat these realities. Skinner and Theodossopoulos continue that expectations within tourism are directly correlated with the social context which helped create them and these expectations are not static, but dynamic, malleable, changeable, and improvisational, by tourists and host professionals alike who work in the tourism industry (2011: p.5). This is an important point because Calabria's stigmatization is a heavy cultural weight to bear, and the idea that expectations shift and are changeable liberates the potential for local communities and entrepreneurs in tourism to break free from these stereotypes and re-define the framed expectations of their region on their terms. The next section will contextualize these ideas further through an overview of the study of tourism in anthropology in relation to my thesis topic.

Anthropology of Tourism

The early focus of sociological research on tourism was on authenticity (MacCannell 1973) but this shifted due to the effect of 'the post-modern turn in Western tourism and the rise of non-Western tourism' (Cohen and Cohen 2012: p. 2179), in which later works on the concept of the tourism gaze developed (Urry 1990, Urry and Larsen 2011, Cohen and Cohen 2012). Tourism, being one of the major industries in the world, became popularized in

anthropology during the late 1980s to 1990s when the industry grew exponentially, coinciding with the 'reflexive turn' in anthropology when anthropologists were reconsidering their relationship with the previously assumed 'boundedness' of field sites and their communities, and when research began focusing on the phenomena occurring within globalization (i.e., urbanization, media and popular culture, environmental issues, communication expansion, socio-economic disparity, etc.) (Boissevain 2002). This also coincided with an increase in re-examining discourses on the Southern Question and southern Italian stigma. In contemporary post-modern discourses, tourism research began focusing on 'diachronic' analyses across time, notions of flux and agency, processes of social phenomena, mobilities, and a dismantling of categorical and conceptual binaries (Cohen and Cohen 2012: p. 2180). Complimentary to their arguments, anthropologist Simon Coleman and geographer Mike Crang explain that in the context of tourism phenomena, tourist sites should be understood as 'fluid and created through performance' (2002: p.1). It is this focus on mobility and movement in tourism studies that has become fundamental to the fields of anthropology, sociology, and geography, or as Elsa Soro (scholar of communications and language studies) explains as the 'new mobilities paradigm,' which consists of 'the large-scale movement of people, objects, capital, and information,' and is fundamental to the development of 'place formation and transformation processes' (2016: p.186).

Although the field of anthropology has come a long way from its essentialized primitivist focused colonial legacies, Noel B. Salazar argues that tourism industries and the stakeholders and material cultures that come from them often fall into the same essentialized tendencies of early anthropology where people, places, and material cultures are imagined, co-constructed, and authenticated based on market values and trends (2013: p.672). He continues that not enough critical awareness has been placed on the reality that,

> …archaic anthropological models and ideas are used in the lucrative multibillion-dollar tourism business to provide simplified and historically fixed versions of local natural and cultural heritage (Ibid: p.673).

The role of anthropologists has also changed in tourism, in that they have now become tour guides or planners to places and cultures they may or may not have studied (Ibid). Salazar explains that, 'tourism, not unlike anthropology, mobilizes a series of metaphors for the "reading" of foreign cultures,' and for the consumptive nature of tourism, the simplification of culture has to occur, transforming it to 'iconic visuals and accompanied

by standardized ethnographic information presented on tour' (Ibid: p.674). Salazar and anthropologist Nelson H. H. Graburn both argue that key components to anthropological research on tourism are intangible and tangible qualities of both imaginaries and heritage (2016: p.5). They explain that 'tourism imaginaries' of locations and their communities are not simply 'commoditized or commercial representations with an interpretative or symbolic content,' but are inherited tropes and stigmas based on 'myth and fantasies' (Ibid: pp.7-8). They argue that compared to other social sciences which have focused on the tourist's perspective in tourism imaginaries, the field of anthropology has a unique advantage in also comprehending and examining the views of host communities and 'host imaginaries,' giving them agency over their own self-construction as places and communities (Ibid: p.13). My thesis will demonstrate this and particularly how my positionality and the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork can achieve this. One other example (not necessarily in anthropology but in the context of tourism studies) can also be seen in the research of Francesca Forno and Roberta Garibaldi on the *Addiopizzo Travel* tourism industry in Sicily developed by local anti-mafia groups (2016). In order to gain more nuance in tourism studies, Salazar and Graburn conclude that focus should be prioritized on how 'values, meanings, and forms of knowledge can be altered, changed, and renegotiated at all points,' and these knowledge constructions are either, '(re)constructed or, as often is the case in tourism, do not change at all' (2016: p.17). This is evident in Salazar's research on local tour guides in Java, Indonesia, and the influence essentialized anthropological discourses on the country had on the local guides who were exposed to them (2013). This can also be seen in Silvio Carta's research on his own communities in Sardinia and how essentialized travel writing about the island influenced locals' self-perception of their own culture (2014). The next section will go in further detail on my interrogation of southern Italian stigma and how it has manifested specifically in the context of Calabrian communities.

Calabrian Stigma and the Transnational Experience

The transnational component to my thesis is an important theoretical framework in researching Calabria, acknowledging its relationship with migration and journeying, unpacking the stigma that has surrounded it, understanding its history and culture, and exploring the reciprocal relationship the region has with its diaspora and what this might mean for the future development of the region. Scholars of Italian studies Elisa Segnini and

Gigliola Sulis argue that Italy's national identity is comprised of, 'tensions between the national dimension and longstanding regional loyalties, and further complicated by outward and inward transnational connections' (2021: p. 249). Diasporic communities and their political importance to their home regions grew after the Second World War due to mass populations of labour migration which circulated outside their respective home countries (either by force or choice) along with significant developments in transportation flows and communication technologies of that period (Danforth 1995). Anthropologist Loring M. Danforth explained in the late 1990s that, 'although members of diaspora communities no longer inhabit their national homelands, these homelands still play an important role in shaping their sense of collective identity' (Ibid: p.80). Italy's comprehensive history of emigration makes the phenomena of transnationalism fundamentally important to its nation building processes and identities, and it is estimated that from 1876 to 1976, around 26 million Italians emigrated from Italy to other countries (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2014).

The relationships between migration, transnationalism, and nation-state identities is particularly relevant to my thesis in the case of gastro-tourism and how food and drink cultures as mediums are used in forming and representing expressions of Italian regional and national identities. Scholar of modern and contemporary literature Emma Bond also argues the importance of a transnational and post-colonial framework in Italian studies because of the ways Italy can be conceptualized as, 'a hyphenated, in-between space created by the multiple crossings that etch its geographical surfaces and cultural depths' (2014: p.421). She continues that the hyphenated dimension of 'trans-national' facilitates the communication between the temporal and spatial frameworks of 'here' and 'there,' 'local' and 'global, while considering their points of subjectivity (Ibid: p.422). Anthropologist Nicholas Harney argues that past anthropological research which examined cultures and peoples as place-based or place-dependent was, 'linked to Western nationalist discourses that binds nations to defined spaces or territories,' whereas more contemporary research incorporates the understanding that culture and identities are unbounded and malleable through ever shifting phenomena such as globalization, markets, and migration (2002: p.43). Through his research on Italian-Canadian diaspora in Toronto during the late 1990s, Harney argued that transnationalism in relation to Italian-Canadian diasporic identity and global capitalism consists of the circulation and consumption of commodities, labour, information, and capital which, 'cross national boundaries to create contradictions, confluences,' and, 'ethnocultural, symbolic significance' (Harney 1998: pp.6-7). He concluded that, 'Italianess, therefore, is continually remade and

reinterpreted as a result of the movement of migrants, media images, and cultural objects' (Ibid: p.6). This theoretical framework can be used as a starting point in which to examine how *Calabrian-ness* has been defined in the past and how it is being redefined today transnationally through the dialogues between its home communities in Calabria and its diaspora in Toronto, via the cultural and commodification practices and processes of the gastro-tourism industry.

Reflecting on my own transnational lived experience, the stigma of *difference* was ingrained in me as far back as I could remember during my upbringing in the Calabrian diaspora communities in Toronto. Aunts and uncles (*zias* and *zios*), and others from that first generation of immigrants would make joking comments such as, 'Calabrians are pig-headed' which meant to express their innate stubbornness, in some cases 'stupidity,' or difficulty to work with. In his book *The Italian American Table: Food, Family, and Community in New York City*, Simone Cinotto documents and explores the first wave southern Italian migration to New York in the late 19th century and states similarly that,

> At the turn of the century, southern Italian immigrants had been racialized as a primitive, irrational, and suspiciously dark people; men were hard working but quick tempered and dull witted; women were submissive, superstitious, and hyperprolific (2013: p.28).

Although regional pride is strongly held in Italian diaspora communities, many Calabrians within them also have tried to disassociate from these stereotypes and their cultural roots, and integrate into North American culture as best as possible. It was common for some southern Italian immigrants who settled in Canada during the post-World War periods to anglicise their names from *Gianni* to *John* or *Maria* to *Mary* for example, in order to integrate into an Anglo-Canadian cultural society founded by British colonialism. These transformations were a way for some with agricultural peasant or *contadino* roots, to ascend their socio-economic class by disassociating from this identity, and thus avoiding various levels of cultural discrimination. Fast-forward to more recent decades, although cultural discrimination of southern Italians in Italy and internationally takes on different evolving forms, stereotypes of the 'South' and the people from there still pervade the zeitgeist of popular culture, media, and political discourses. Drawing from a personal anecdote, as recent as 2015 when I was a fresher at Oxford studying my MSc in social anthropology, I recall a college social event where I met an Italian-American who had ancestry in northern Italy. After sharing that my family was from Calabria, he jokingly said (paraphrased), 'oh, you're

one of them.' Although this likely came from a place of humorous intent, essentialization of southern Italians as separate and negatively different from central and northern Italians remain in these ways, whether as small light-hearted jokes or arguments in large-scale political speeches from Lega Nord or Fratelli d'Italia.

This binary of difference between North and South in Italy extends deeply across its history. It is present in the discourses which circulated within and outside of the South before the Unification of Italy (Risorgimento) in 1860 up to the 20th century where southern stigma and stereotypes assisted in the nation-building project (Dickie 1999a) and early discourses published in the social sciences on southern Italy by non-Italian academics. Most notable in the latter example and often referenced was Edward Banfield's *amoral familism*, which argued that southern Italians were prisoner to cultural codes that were innate to them (1967). Though it is important to note that essentializing discourses did not only exist within the academic and political circles of anthropologists, social scientists, economists, Italian intelligentsia, or political administrations. It was also produced through travel writing by British and other non-Italian visitors or exiles, one notable mention being Norman Douglas and his book *Old Calabria* (1915) whose depictions of the Calabrian region (at times describing it as dangerous and backward) circulated amongst readership across Europe and North America who had never dared to travel there before.

Another point to be made is that beyond this binary of difference (i.e., North vs South), discrimination and essentialization has also been perpetuated and circulated by southern Italians about their own histories and communities. More recent examples of this form of Calabrian 'self-criticism' were present in many discussions I had with Calabrians during my fieldwork for this thesis. One particular exchange was from a local Calabrian food academy president named Giorgio, near the end of our discussion about the many systemic structural problems that made economic and tourism development difficult on a regional level. He was explaining that local mobilization of initiatives and projects for food tourism already existed locally (such as his academy), but when it came to larger regional projects they never worked. Although the region had a number of high-quality food products such as garlic from Laino Borgo (*aglio di Laino Borgo*), pork lard from Colonnata (*lardo di Colonnata*), or lentils from Casteluccio (*lenticchie di Casteluccio*), there were no infrastructural systems in place for people to easily locate or access these places and their products, and the regional administration did not develop remote areas. The conversation had

a tone of frustration and hopelessness. I added that as an anthropologist my hope was to collaborate with Calabrians like Giorgio who were experts in their own fields of work, involve them in the discussion process, and hopefully find answers and solutions to these systemic problems in a collaborative effort. He answered in a humorous tone,

> …definitely. If you will be able to do an anthropological profile of the characteristics of Calabrians…(everyone laughed) the result would be exceptional…I gave you some suggestions about the characteristics of Calabrians.

Although Giorgio acknowledged the larger infrastructural, economic, and political failures outside of local Calabrians' control to develop the region's food tourism in a sustainable and beneficial way, this statement draws on the larger historical discourses that centre around the misassumptions of Calabrians as being a 'type' of people, with a set of negative behavioural traits, specific and innate to them. In this chapter I aim to further contextualize the origins of southern Italian stigmatization in academic and travel writing, the complexity of its pervasiveness, and new alternative ways in which both genres are being combined to create contemporary nuanced depictions of southern Italy and its communities.

Southern Italian Stigma Through an Academic Lens

During the period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the founding of criminal anthropology by Cesare Lombroso (who also wrote about his time during the post-unification period supporting the national military campaign against brigand groups in Calabria) and fellow socialists who followed in his line of research (Giuseppe Sergi, Alfredo Niceforo, and Enrico Ferri) produced highly damaging arguments which claimed biological and racial determinants linked to the racial inferiority of southern Italian communities and the inferiority of their culture (D'Agostino 2002). In the case of Alfredo Niceforo (who was a Sicilian born intellectual who worked in the University of Naples), he published his *L'Italia Barbara Contemporanea* in 1898, which was initially viewed as evidence to justify racist and regional understandings of the unified country at that time, arguing that the South along with the islands of Sicily and Sardinia were at an evolutionarily inferior level compared to the socially developed societies in central and northern Italian regions (Dickie 1999a).

Migration also played a significant role during this period of Italian history in circulating southern stereotypes internationally, specifically in North America. Nelson Moe explains that *la grande emigrazione* was the first notable wave of southern Italian migration which occurred during the early 1890s, and this period was significant to note because it formed cultural and racialized representations of southern Italians in the 'New World' (i.e., America), bringing with it the anti-southernist discourses that had already been in circulation in Italy and Europe before and after the Unification, and combined these with academic discourses and research in America (Moe 2010). With the presence of southern Italian migrants in America while these discourses circulated, this helped create and combine 'racialist discourse on immigration within scholarly, political and administrative discourse' (Ibid: p.3). Anthropologist William Ripley published *The Races of Europe* in which he invented three racial categories in Europe, two of which he claimed to exist in Italy: the 'Mediterranean' type in the south and 'Alpine' in the rest of central and northern Italy (Ripley 1899). Now understood as a work that is highly problematic, racist, and politically dangerous, Moe explains that Ripley's work influenced American immigration policy in the same year of its publication where they enforced classification on the registration documents of immigrant Italians from Italy and other European countries to Ellis Island (2010). He continues,

> Next to the names of passengers and his or her nationality was written either an "N" (signifying "Italians of the north") or an "S" (signifying "Italians of the South"). It is important to note that the Italians were the only immigrant group to be divided into two different "races or peoples" in this way (Ibid: p.2).

The two post-World War periods were particularly significant in the ways in which countries outside of Italy viewed and attempted to examine the South. After the First World War, Italy suffered politically and economically, and the difficult conditions in the South and across the peninsula contributed in part, to the rise of Fascism (Sereni 2014). In the late 1990s, historian Gabriella Gribaudi also explained that the Fascist regime in particular 'halted political and economic development' in the South, but also re-galvanized old southern stereotypes and prejudices (1996: p.80). The Fascist reclaiming of land for the 'generation of energy and industrialization' was in actual fact a land reclamation program for 'ruralisation' (Ibid: p.80). This, combined with the economic crisis at the end of the 1920s, further weakened southern economies and increased the economic power of the North, and Gribaudi continued that Fascism established a dynamic to which the North further modernized (industrially and ideologically) and the Regime fed to the South ruralist and populist

propaganda (Ibid). In general, the chronic negative effects caused by the economic and political changes experienced by the South can be seen when looking at the 20th century. John A. Davis summarized this aptly explaining that,

> …Italian governments and the Italian political systems—from the tariffs of 1889, to the entry to the European War in 1915, to the revaluation of the Lira in 1927, to Mussolini's policy of economic autarky, and the debasement of the program for special investment in the South after 1950 into a gold mine of political clientism—have failed to take account of the particular economic and social needs and interests of the South (1998: p.220).

Immigration restrictions within Italy during Mussolini's reign made it illegal for Italians to leave the country and even after the Second World War, Canada initially restricted Italians from immigrating, based off nativist sentiments that southern Italians were backward, not Anglo-American enough, and were more conducive to communist dictatorship governance than democratic systems (Iacovetta 1992). But this opened up eventually because of the shortage of labour in Canada combined with an influx of population leaving Italy as a consequence to Mussolini's reign as well (Ibid). By accepting immigrants from southern Italy, this not only provided 'hard working' unskilled labour to the eyes of Canadian policy and government officials, but also helped Canada campaign as an international middle power, peacekeeper, and European ally to combat the rise of Communism at that time (Ibid).

Between the 1940s and 1950s during the Second World War period, Gribaudi explained that the same Southern Question debates which originated back to the Enlightenment period resurfaced once again (1996). Old colonialist policies were in a state of turmoil and dominant countries defined as 'developed' or 'advanced' for that time focused on 'developing international markets by stimulating internal demand through credible development plans' (Ibid: p.81). As a result, a strong presence of American state intervention established in southern Italy and 'old images' of it being at a state of 'zero level' development requiring intervention, depicted the South as 'once again a land without history, in a state of nature' (Ibid: p.81). Social scientist Luigi M. Solivetti explains that after the end of the Second World War with the collapse of Fascism and the beginning of the Cold War era, the United States again became preoccupied with Italy's Mezzogiorno as it had the largest Communist party in the West at that time and posed issues with its post-war economy and perceived underdevelopment (2022). As a result, America sent academics to the South of Italy to examine it, many of these scholars having scholarships funded by Rockefeller and

Fulbright to conduct their state-led research (Ibid). Solivetti continues that Fascism and its idealism had destroyed almost all aspects of the social sciences in Italy except for 'population studies and clinical criminology,' and so when these American social scientists came over to Italy during the 1950s, their research (both the productive and problematic ones alike) quickly filled those spaces and gained traction (Ibid: p.4). One American political scientist part of this group was Edward Banfield, who wrote the now infamous *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (first published in 1958), which remains an important example of research on the South in how it contributed to reinforcing inaccurate essentialized analysis of southern Italian communities. With the help of an Italian student (since Banfield and his wife were not literate in Italian) they spent nine months during 1954-55 in Montegrano, a small village in Lucania, Basilicata, where they conducted an interview-based study (70 in total) without any observational notes or participant observation methods (Banfield 1958). Any Italian academics or people who assisted Banfield and who he acknowledged, were from central and northern Italian cities such as Rome or Perugia, and the project did not involve anyone from the South who studied the regions there (Ibid). Through his study, he coined the phrase *amoral familism*, which he argued was the inherent cultural code and fundamental world view which the Montegranesi were naturally prisoner to, and which most other if not all other southern Italian communities lived by (Ibid). For amoral familists, Banfield explained that,

> …one who follows the rule is without morality only in relation to persons outside the family—in relation to family members, he applies standards of right and wrong; one who has no family is of course an "amoral individualist" (Ibid: p.83).

Amongst the 17 aspects of amoral familism which Banfield outlined in exhaustive detail, some of the main components outlined were that amoral familists were self-serving and had no interest in the betterment of the wider community unless they themselves and their nuclear family unit solely benefited, were suspicious of any larger group or party in power (such as the state) which operated separately from them, and they did not collaborate or encourage collective action (Ibid). Early criticism of Banfield's concept of *amoral familism* argued that in fact, the southern Italian Montegranesi community were not prisoner to the ethos of that concept but rather were prisoner to the oppressive agricultural systems they inherited (Silverman 1968). I would also add two important points not often mentioned but should be noted, which add further context to the positionality and personal prejudiced Banfield potentially held when completing this research. Early in his book, when addressing reasons as to the current state of Montegrano at that time, Banfield stated, 'the peasant is as

ignorant as his donkey and the artisan is hardly less so' (1958: p.35). This choice of metaphor equating people's intelligence to that of animals, regardless of if they were poor or proletariat class, reveals the prejudice which Banfield carried, so much so that he chose to write and publish these sentiments. Visual metaphors of this nature are often more powerful and lasting than any quantitative data. Secondly, in a telling footnote addressing his hypothesis of amoral familism, he admits that his hypothesis,

> …does not depend upon the possibility of showing that all, or even any, of the people of Montegrano consciously follow the rule of action set forth there. For the hypothesis to be useful, it need only be shown that they act as if they follow the rule' (Ibid: p.103).

Thus, the validity or accuracy of his findings did not matter, and according to Banfield himself, what made his findings true was if they appeared to be true and in line with his beliefs. Banfield's case is one of many which became consequential in the continued stigmatization of southern Italy because of their lack of objectivity, sensitivity, reflexivity, or rigorous accuracy. They simply unearthed old essentialized misunderstandings of the South and recirculated them *en-masse* within their contemporary period of political and social discourses. Works like Banfield also did not acknowledge the sense of community and friendship demonstrated and valued in peasant communities such as ones between women, support networks demonstrated during agricultural work, and expressions of *campanilismo* or village loyalty (Iacovetta 1992).

Along with the obvious mention of Banfield's academic misleadings, Jane Schneider also made reference in the late 1990s to a consequential work *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Putnam *et al.* 1993) by another American political scientist named Robert D. Putnam, as it was wildly popular during its time of publication and circulated amongst academic and political circles (Schneider 1998b). Putnam's 20 year research study examined the political institutions of regions across Italy (beginning with six selected regions[22] and then incorporating all 20), with the aim of understanding how democratic institutions develop, what factors and conditions enable this, and why some succeed and others fail (Putnam *et al.* 1993). It was a highly popular work which circulated extensively after its first publishing in 1993, and although it was rich in data collection and analysis, it had obvious issues in its design which undermined the analysis of the work and

[22] Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Puglia, and Basilicata.

ultimately reaffirmed historical essentializations of the South. In the late 1990s, political scientist Sidney Tarrow aptly criticized Putnam's study of these Italian regional governments, finding a balance between what can be applauded from Putnam, but more crucially the pitfalls of his work which reaffirmed political arguments on the South's inferiority and incapacity for stable development and political civility. Tarrow pointed out that Putnam's comparative study on the political development of democracy in northern Italy versus southern Italy successfully combined quantitative and qualitive data, demonstrating the varied nature of the practical application of institutional development, how institutional function is 'not policy-specific or idiosyncratic but is coherent among policy sectors and stable over time,' and how the same institutional development could exist and settle differently in different social, cultural, and economic contexts (Tarrow 1996: pp.389-390). Tarrow argued though, that Putnam's study reaffirmed essentialized stereotypes of the South through combining a selective reading of Italian political and economic history to 'fit his model of social capital' (Ibid: p.389). Putnam referenced the late medieval period in the North and its city-state political system as the origins of a northern political tradition of civic, democratic, collaborative, and horizontal governance innate to them (Ibid). Criticizing Putnam, Tarrow stated,

> …in focusing on the golden age of the city-state, he treats the five or six centuries that followed somewhat cavalierly, trolling rapidly through a long and turbulent stretch of history for analogues of the cultural patterns he found in the earlier period without specifying the links either theoretically or empirically (Ibid: p.393).

Tarrow continued that it was important to question why this specific late medieval period was focused on as the origin of the North's 20th century 'civic superiority' and not the negative effects of 16th century monarchical rule, southern conquest of the 19th century, period of Fascism, or the economic corruption of the 1980s (Ibid: p.393). Tarrow criticized Putnam's reference to a selective Italian history as justification to the 'innate capability' of a region's potential for civic or democratic political development, and argued that, 'with far more theoretical sophistication and more systematic data, Putnam's treatment of the relations between state and civic capacity in the South resembles Banfield's logic' (Ibid: p.395). Both Tarrow (1996) and Schneider (1998) pointed out that Putnam did make brief (but not sufficient) reference to the fact that all of the foreign rule throughout southern Italy's history was 'governed with a logic of colonial exploitation' and this was a causality to the region's

issues in civic state development (Tarrow 1996: p.394). This is an important point to the potential of Putnam's work if these historical references were factored more into his project.

Upon my reading of Putnam's work, right at the outset in the first chapter, Putman makes a point to outline the stark differences between the political institutions of Pietrapertosa's Basilicata and Seveso's Lombardy, describing the former as 'ranked with countries of the Third World' and the latter 'already becoming postindustrial,' with no emphasis or even brief mention on what factors caused these realities, or the contexts in which they existed in (1993: p.4). Instead of a nuanced introduction which could have communicated analytical awareness on what created these political and economic differences and why these differences occurred (and persisted), he simply stated the superficial realities of these two regions. As a result, this positioned readers at the outset of this book in alignment with the existent North-South binary, and subjectively framed his 20 year research project as proof of what is now known to be an essentialized understanding of Italian regional development. When describing his journey from the North to the South, he stated, 'from the perspective of public governance, to travel from Seveso to Pietrapertosa in the 1970s was to return centuries into the past' (Ibid: p.4), which reiterated the historical 'backwardness' of the South, as if it somehow evaded the laws of time and remained an untouched example of a pre-democratic pre-civil society. Continuing on in that same paragraph describing men of the southern town of Pietrapertosa, he stated, 'many local men had sought temporary jobs in northern Europe, and the success of a few was marked by the German license plates on several automobiles parked just below the village' (Ibid: p.4). Once again, this observation reiterated the existent hegemony of northern Europe without being critical of it, associating 'success' with both Germany and the act of 'leaving the South.' In providing a general conclusion to his project he wrote, 'some regions in Italy, we discover, are blessed with vibrant networks and norms of civic engagement, while others are cursed with vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a culture of distrust (Ibid: p.15). Choosing to use words such as 'blessed' and 'cursed' only created an assumed reality where regional development was contingent on outside intangible forces, or that socio-political and economic realities existed outside the actions and consequences of people, institutions, and hegemonic hierarchical systems. Examples like these of southern Italian essentialization in academia connect to larger trends of how the wider Mediterranean region has been constructed and represented in the past within the field of anthropology.

Anthropologists Naor Ben-Yehoyada, Heath Cabot, and Paul A. Silverstein explain that the development and categorization of 'Mediterranean anthropology' and the defining of what that geographic area consisted of originated at an academic conference in 1959 which was later published as a volume entitled *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean* Society in 1966 by John G. Peristiany (Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein 2020). At that time, academics at that conference defined the Mediterranean as 'Southern Europe (Italy, Greece, Spain, and the Balkan regions) into the same analytical framework as Western Asia (Turkey, Lebanon, Israel) and North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria),' and argued that those countries all shared the same cultural phenomena of a gendered honour and shame value system, patronage and hierarchical social structures, and kinship systems (Ibid: p.5). Mediterraneanists believed the Mediterranean to be 'distinct from larger, more "complex," "urban" societies of the northern and Western Europe,' host to small, isolated villages of liminality, not modern but not fully primitive and savage, relating it to the growing field of peasant studies of that time (Ibid: p.5). Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein argue that a benefit to the emergence of Mediterranean anthropology was that it caused a reflexive shift in anthropological studies towards 'questions of cultural intimacy and geographical proximity' when examining the West (Ibid: p.5). More recent work in Mediterranean anthropology has moved away from identifying shared cultural patterns in the region, and instead towards examining the dynamics between those communities and the political and economic structural violence they are subjected to (Knight and Stewart 2017).

A key academic figure in research on southern Italy and one who challenged the ethnocentrism of the field, was Neapolitan anthropologist Ernesto De Martino. At that same time in the 1950s when the American social scientists like Banfield were conducting their research in the South, Ernesto De Martino was conducting research in similar or neighbouring areas, but interestingly enough they rarely crossed paths and nothing came from this temporal and spatial overlap (Solivetti 2022). This period was important in the anthropology of southern Italy because it revealed the notion of 'culture as a key factor of change and development' and more importantly, De Martino's significant contribution was demonstrating through his research, the use and importance of history in anthropological and social science studies in avoiding and combatting ethnocentric analysis (Ibid: p.2). One of his most influential publications was his book *Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism* (1961). First published in 1961, his work examined *tarantism*; its beginning and existence within the time of Christian belief systems, how 'Catholicism, natural magic,

Enlightenment reason and positivism all reacted to it,' and how we respond to it within the 'historicism and humanism' of remorse (De Martino 2005: p.xxi). He wanted to contribute to the history of southern culture and religion from which he came from, in the prospect of adding a new dimension to the Southern Question, and argued that *Land of Remorse* was a wider metaphor of southern Italy (Ibid). Annalisa Di Nola, an historian who has extensively analysed De Martino's body of work, argued that one of his greatest contributions was his concept of 'ethnographic humanism' or 'critical ethnocentrism,' which rejected relativism and emphasized the importance of acknowledging historical contexts and cultural forms of judgement and value formation (Di Nola 1998: p.158). De Martino called for a turn away from positivism and towards what would now be considered a precursor to reflexive anthropology (which the 'turn' only occurred approximately twenty years after De Martino published this book) (De Martino 2005). He argued that,

> …objectivity is based on the commitment to tie one's journey to the explicit recognition of a current passion, linked to a vital problem of the civilization to which one belongs…and based on relating how one's "suffering" was laboriously objectified in the course of ethnographic exploration through subsequent use of the techniques of historical-cultural analysis' (Ibid: pp.1-2).

Di Nola explained that between 1940 and 1950, political and intellectual debate on the Southern Question resurged with land occupation and revolts, triggering political repression by the government and weakening left-wing political parties (Di Nola 1998). At the same time, American anthropologists and sociologists like Banfield, as well as Italian agrarian economists and social workers who conducted work in the South, argued for industrial capitalist-driven economic reforms for southern regions, and advocated for American investment to aid in this perceived modernization and development of the Mezzogiorno (Ibid). De Martino wanted the communities he both studied and was culturally part of, to be economically and socially free and self-sufficient (Ibid). His approach in contrast to American academics was to highlight the historical hegemony that affected the Mezzogiorno, providing a Marxist framing of working-class peasant alliances during periods of social change, and arguing that what he deemed the 'traditional "economist" approach' of assessing the South ignored 'cultural phenomena' (Ibid: p.165). Connecting this to my thesis project, this past focus on economic and political systems and less nuanced analysis on socio-cultural and historical aspects, in ways relates to the context of Calabria and still remains today. De Martino argued western ethnologists could not prevent themselves from defining the South

through the value system they were raised in, and it was impossible to remain neutral and not project their definitions nor categorizations onto the things, places, people, or phenomena they studied (Di Nola 1998). Through his critical ethnocentrism, he advocated for a nuanced and critical comparative analysis of categorization and cultures across history (Ibid). Di Nola stated his argument was 'a matter of reciprocal transformation, in which the supposedly more advanced civilization is challenged by the other to test its own viability and dogmatic assumptions' (Ibid: p.163). This relates to how hegemonic forces have developed their own understanding of the South, how they reaffirmed their own 'non-southern' identities through these processes, and formed their relationship with the South off of this understanding and positioning of comparison and difference. This can be seen in examples of the early conceptualizations of 'modernity,' 'development,' and 'societal civility' within European Enlightenment, the rise of capitalism and neo-liberal globalisation in Italy and Europe at large today, and in the specific case of this thesis, replicated approaches to tourism development used across other European countries.

What I argue through this thesis is not that the assessments from past academics like Putnam have no academic value (when viewed with a critical eye), nor that the consequences of a southern history which included Feudalism, poverty, corruption from the highest and lowest levels, and a difficult natural landscape never existed, but one cannot overlook the power of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of *places* and *peoples*, which have often been constructed out of *systems* and *structures of power,* and their misuse of *historical events*. Wacquant argues that critical focus should move away from marginalized groups and places and instead towards the 'institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce and transform the network of positions to which its supposed members are dispatched and attached' (2016: p.1078). In the case of southern Italy and Calabria specifically, history has shown the opposite approach where people and places of the South have been viewed as the source of their problems. They were then analysed and interrogated by institutions and other larger systems of power in ways that would relegate the South and create either temporary solutions or if longer lasting, ones that mainly benefited those same systems of power instead of southern region or their communities. Institutional and state mechanisms are often the source of these problems and require critical interrogation. In turn, the communities and the places being essentialized under those powers should be incorporated and researched in nuanced ways, providing the opportunity for solutions to be discovered.

Within the development of Mediterranean anthropology, the 1980s and 1990s brought a focus on 'nation, state, and political economy,' specifically on cities and new reflexive analysis on problematic methodologies used in early primitivism in anthropology (Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein 2020: pp.5-6). This time period also saw a refocus and revision on Southern Question discourse (Schneider 1998a) which coincided with a shift in the study of development in anthropology from applied forms to more detached ones where anthropologist studied 'processes, relationships and dynamics by which development (or, inversely underdevelopment),' was understood, towards a focus on 'the very institutions and knowledge through which ideas of development were produced' (Yarrow and Venkatesan 2012: p.3). Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein argue that this 'world-systems approach' did not eliminate the marginalization of the Mediterranean, nor its hierarchical ordering under the hegemony of Europe's northwestern regions (Ibid: p.6). James G. Carrier made a suggestion in the early 1990s on a hesitant solution to essentialization in anthropology related to *Orientalist* and *ethno-Orientalist* works, which although seemingly has no direct evidential inspiration from De Martino's 'critical ethnocentrism,' feels in ways complimentary to it. Carrier argued that one could find a solution to this issue through a more theoretical focus on structures (i.e., social, political, etc.) and concepts (i.e., identity, agency, etc.) instead of communities and places as distinct static identities (1992). He did make it clear that this approach also had pitfalls. Solely analysing social structures may not always consider 'political and epistemic problems' and although this approach may counteract essentialism, it might inadvertently reaffirm the 'essentialism of concepts' (Ibid: p.205). Carrier argued for a comprehensive relational approach to the study and analysis of social phenomena, and the importance of descriptive and detailed ethnography (Ibid) which De Martino's research approach followed as well. One can see this even through the introduction and epilogue of *Land of Remorse* where De Martino reflected on the pitfalls of his fieldwork design, or the sensitivity and care he considered when engaging and working with the people who participated in his project. From both these examples, I would also add the importance of reflexive awareness on the part of the ethnographer, and the importance of ethnographic detail provided by participants and their communities, combined with the contexts they exist in, so that their voices and contributions are showcased equally with other forms of data.

Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein's historical analysis of the European Union and the Mediterranean demonstrates that the European Union's relationship with the Mediterranean has always been, at its outset, one that saw the Mediterranean region as a

'governmental problem,' which could either include its southern and eastern areas into 'its vision of freedom of movement' or excluded from 'Fortress Europe' (2020: p.10). They continue that the European financial crisis which began in 2010 has been 'framed as a Mediterranean problem,' with austerity funding and loans restrengthening the stereotypes of North/South and East/West divides (Ibid: p.10). This can be seen in the case of Italy. Adding to the solutions to combating essentialism offered by Carrier, De Martino, and Herzfeld (1987), Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot, and Silverstein argue that one way to understand the Mediterranean and unpack it without simply repeating the historical essentialism and problematization which has been forced upon it, is to understand the 'Mediterranean as an object of study while critically examining the history of its various objectifications,' and he simplifies it as critically examining the 'Mediterranean and Mediterraneanism' in tandem (Ibid: p.12). In a similar way, my thesis uses this approach to understanding and unpacking Calabria's stigmatization; through its history, communities, and environments, in tandem with its labelling as the Italian 'South' under the umbrella of the 'Southern Question' by the systems and hegemonic forces which have defined it as such.

'Regional labelling' is unavoidably obvious in the fact that there is an entire discourse developed called 'the *Southern* Question,' which in some ways becomes a generalization of regions south of Rome all forced into this same singular frame of the '*South.*' Herzfeld argued that 'social life consists of processes of reification and essentialism as well as challenges to these processes' (1997: p.26). Essentialism to an extent is unavoidable in collective and intimate sociality, and the process of conducting ethnographic research is not fully immune to this, but the latter half of Herzfeld statement is key, and I argue that in the case of Calabria there has not been enough nuanced or viable challenging and criticism to these processes of essentialism. For continuity and to keep topical references simple and identifiable, I have continued to use the term *South* when addressing this history and regional topic, but I am aware of the nuances of southern regions and the diversity of place, people, contexts, and dynamics existent in the different provinces which make up this geographic area.

Diversity and nuance are important frames in which research on southern Italian regions should be examined (or any 'othered' or essentialized community for that matter). Davis's research places emphasis on the diversity amongst southern Italian economies and the varying historical factors which greatly affected the functioning (and failures) of those

economies (1998). He explained that research conducted on southern economic systems during the late 1980s and early 1990s by Italian academics revealed two often overlooked aspects: the first being the fact that the South had distinctly diverse economies across the expanse of the region, and the second was that historically, southern regions saw constant, negative, disruptive, and widespread economic change (Ibid). Davis explains that the Unification of 1861 destroyed the South's political and economic strength, causing its diverse economies to communicate less with each other, and shifted their economic relations and migration outward from the region (Ibid). The South had dynamic economies based on cash-crop olives and citrus and other regional products as well as processing industries, but these were integrated into volatile uncertain markets which negatively affected their survival (examples include the agrarian crisis of the 1880's, grape blight on Southern wine production, the agricultural price crashing Depression, and 1930's Fascist policies) (Ibid). Southern regions relied heavily on overseas exports of their cash-crops and regional products for their main economies after the Unification up to 1914, even though it posed high risk and uncertainty in how they, through subordination, integrated into larger more powerful international markets with a lack of 'effective controls' or secure financial infrastructures (Ibid: pp.209). Davis expands that,

> Before the 1880's the southern economies offered many windows of comparative advantage that could be successfully exploited—olive oil, wines, and citrus fruit being the most obvious. But after that date, the changed structure of world markets and the changed structure of the industrial economies as they entered the Second Industrial Revolution heavily reduced those spaces.' (Ibid: p.214)

He continues that these realities (amongst others), combined with weak political party structures and lack of supportive trade unions forced southern communities to rely on kin-group relations for protection, which as a consequence, 'created the basis for clientist politics and the primacy of sectoral and partisan interests in ways that inhibited collective political values and organization' (Ibid: p.216). Through acknowledging and understanding the nuanced history of the South, Davis argues that this revisionist work which focused on examining the social and economic realities of southern Italy post-Unification also revealed that 'the South existed simply as an "otherness" that served to define identities after Unification, thereby again reducing the historical experience of the South to a series of metaphors' (Ibid: pp.208-209). These generalizations of analysis have also been examined by

Gribaudi where she argued that the South was transformed into a myth, without reference to any geographic or historical complexities. She stated that it is an,

> …imaginary and mythical entity, associated with both hell and paradise: it is a place of the soul and an emblem of the evil which occurs everywhere, but which in Italy has been embodied in just one part of the nation's territory, becoming one of the myths on which the nation has been built (1996: p.73).

Although this is in reference to research conducted in the late 1990s, this historical essentialization exists and continues to circulate today, within the discourses of Italian and international politics and media, but also Calabrian communities in their 'homeland' and abroad. That is why my thesis, although aims at addressing these larger systemic and structural contexts, focuses on individual encounters with Calabrians in order to spotlight their voices, opinions, grievances, experiences, and aspirations. This is one way to contribute to southern Italian anthropological and political discourse which would have more success in achieving understanding, objectivity (in its most possible forms), and an ability to document the micro systems of endurance, resilience, creativity, and promise in which Calabrian entrepreneurs work to create for their businesses and the region at large.

Anti-southernist sentiments unfortunately still remain, and this can be seen from the right-wing political discourses of Lega (Nord) and the newly appointed coalition government of 2022 led by Georgia Meloni to the jargon used in popular culture and media depictions of the South (more so Calabria). These discourses often connect back to the essentializing language (i.e., metaphor, textual imagery, false equivalences, etc.) used by academics, travellers, intellectuals, and politicians to describe the region and local communities. Addressing the changing of history and politics in relation to representations of the South, Ouditt wrote in 2014,

> The images change, the maps are redrafted, but there remains something about the South–of Italy and of Europe–that is repeatedly depicted as abject: morally debased and ripe for expulsion, yet historically irrepressible; inextricably a part of the whole (Ouditt 2014: p.4).

In some ways, I argue that this statement remains true today. In addition to the ways in which academic research of the Mediterranean and southern Italy contributed to these forms of essentialism, another genre of writing (often overlooked in academia) which was

crucial to the formation and sedimentation of southern Italian stigma was that of travel writing.

Travel Writing and the Production of Misrepresentations

Metaphor, myths, and misrepresentations can be starkly seen in the tradition of travel writing by non-Italian elites and exiles on southern Italy. These accounts have held cultural weight in contributing to the circulation of southern Italian stigmatization and romanticization amongst non-academic readership across North America and continental Europe. International travellers visited Italy throughout its history and prominently in the period of the 17th century, but it was the 18th century which transformed travel to Italy as a rite of passage for European aristocrats and artists (Marrone 2010). Gaetana Marrone states, 'the ancient Norman word *Tour* acquired a new meaning especially among English travellers; it became a scholarly experience. The *Grand Tour*, however, ended in Naples; any further south was considered Africa' (Ibid: p.2) She continues that the origins of the Grand Tour stemmed from,

> …a combination of the Gothic tradition of *vers sacrum*, a necessary journey for a young man crossing over into adulthood, and the *peregrination academica*, concentration on the importance of studying in major cultural centers. It means to form the complete gentleman. The *Tour* is undertaken during the ages of 20 to 25, and it lasts between 6 to 8 months (Ibid: p.2, footnote 5).

Historical travel writing of the 18th century onward written by affluent northern European voyagers on their Grand Tour to southern Italy (who studied classics in Germany, France, or England), documented their 'witnessing' and reengagement to what they perceived as an untouched antiquity found in the South of Italy and Greece (Herzfeld 1987, Schneider 1998b, Congiu 2012). Often times, the Grand Tourist went to Italy to admire its culture, landscape, and history, and at the same time to express contempt for 'its population, its politics and its religion' (Ouditt and Polezzi 2012: p.99). In some cases, these affluent travellers were in fact exiled from their countries (like the case of Norman Douglas from England), charged with criminal offenses, and sent away from the 'civil' and 'moral' societies of northern and central Europe. Wacquant explains that the notion of relegation (its etymology of the late Middle English word *relegaten*, meaning to banish), 'is to assign an

individual, population or category to an obscure or inferior position, condition or location' (2016: p.1077). The South's assigned role as a geographic location to banish people, where these writers, intellectuals, or upper-class elites lived out their periods of exile, also assigned a wider understanding that the South was inferior to the rest of Europe, appropriate and in kind with the banished who were sent there. Wacquant argues that, 'relegation is a collective activity, not an individual state; a relation (of economic, social and symbolic power) between collectives, not a gradational attribute of persons' (Ibid: p.1078). Similar to early ethnocentric works of anthropology on southern Italy, these visitors and exiles examined southern Italy from their point of view as a time capsule of archaic savage societies and made a point to emphasise the correlation between the difference of climate and environmental topography to the 'character' of the communities in the region (Schneider 1998b). From their perspective, everyday life for these affluent travellers in their home countries unfolded within private indoor spaces, whereas for the warm country communities they travelled to, life occurred more outdoors in public, which further shocked them and only reaffirmed their 'difference' and 'otherness' (Ibid).

Geographer Maria Kaika argues that although there are disputes on the founding of the term 'modernity,' it was the period of 17th century Enlightenment where this term was defined as being 'characterized by a new, forward looking world view and a new set of social expectations. The taming of nature became a major project within modernity's broader aims' (2005: p.12). The control of nature and humanity's dominance over it established the definition of the 'modern society' and by consequence the 'modern citizen.' Italy's South comprised of regions rich in natural and primary resources and a deep agricultural history, but this dominant presence of nature also presented problems to northern European Enlightenment's modernity project. Southern regions like Calabria were a wealth of resources for the rest of the peninsula. At the same time, the powerful presence of nature made those same richly resourced natural landscapes 'dangerous' and 'barbaric,' which through the lens of Enlightenment required intervention and domination. I argue that this strong presence of nature in the South, and particularly Calabria, contributed to the development of the region's stereotypes by hegemonic critics of that time. In addition to its weakened socio-political and economic systems, Calabria was 'primitive,' 'backward,' and a 'threat' to the larger Italian Unification and European Enlightenment projects. Kaika continues that,

> …this double coding of both nature and the city as, on the one hand ecologically and morally superior and on the other hand barbaric and uncivilized, has prompted (and still prompts) many debates as well as conflicting spatial and social practices (2005: p.14).

From the late 18th century onwards, these travellers, artists, and Italian bourgeois class from northern-central Italy, were entranced and fascinated with the South as *la terra vergine* (the picturesque untouched natural and cultural world of Italy) (Moe 2002). Moe states that, 'the south therefore became both "Africa" and *terra vergine*, a reservoir of feudal residues, sloth, and squalor on the one hand and of quaint peasants, rustic traditions, and exotica on the other' (Ibid: p.3). He expands that during the decades of the 1860s and 1870s (specifically 1874), an increased interest in the Mezzogiorno occurred simultaneously in political, academic, and cultural circles (Ibid). The Southern Question was re-established in political and intellectual discourses on a largescale through three political figures; Pasquale Villari, Sidney Sonnino, and Leopoldo Franchetti, all of whom emphasized the corruption and poverty of the South (Ibid). In contrast within this same time period, there was an increase in writers, folklorists, and artists who further identified how different the South was to the rest of Italy, but through more 'aesthetic and cultural terms' (Ibid: p.188). There was a growing middle and upper class in Italy at that time, and for them the South became an 'imagined geography' of nostalgia for customs and traditions that the progressively modernized nation was feeling divorced from (Ibid). This then coincided with a massive expanse of the Italian publishing industry originating in Milan during the 1870s, which further disseminated and circulated these ideas, with one important magazine aimed at an Italian bourgeois readership called *Illustrazione Italiana*, founded in 1875 (Ibid). Non-academic publications like travel literature and other forms of knowledge exchange such as popular media, are important to the interrogation of cultural stereotypes, because they often are more influential in the development and maintenance of widely shared social sentiments than academic research. This is not exclusive to the Italian context and can also be found in other countries. Ian Littlewood argued in the late 1990s that in the case of Japan, academic research on the country had less influence on popular conceptions of it when compared to the influence of popular media, literature, and commerce (1996).

One well known travel writing book on Calabria published in 1915 that had this level of influence on depicting the region was *Old Calabria* by Norman Douglas. Educated in Germany, France, and England, he worked in diplomatic service in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1894, but because of a series of personal scandals, within a few years was forced to settle in

Naples and Capri as an exile for most of his life (Douglas 1915, Keates 2001). From that period onwards when he moved to Capri at the beginning of the 20th century, he began his writing career and went on to publish *Old Calabria* in 1915 (Ibid). A controversial literary figure due to his sordid personal life, the main reason for analysing his book in this thesis is because it was the only comprehensive book on Calabria at its time of publication. Naples and other parts of the South were being written about in higher volume across the disciplines of creative and academic writing, and still to this day, Calabria remains underwritten about in comparison. Ouditt has published extensive research on the travel writing of southern Italy and argues that Douglas' work is still the best-known travel writing of southern Italy and remains in print today (Ouditt 2014). To its cultural impact, I would also add that an *agriturismo* (restored farm estate) I visited during my thesis fieldwork, created a tourism itinerary program in collaboration with Fondazione Napoli Novantanove[23] which was directly inspired by Douglas's book, as well as other of his contemporaries of travel writing such as Edward Lear. The framework for these tourism initiatives interestingly enough were to follow the travels and stories of these writers and engage with the same sites and landscapes they visited. Also, some local Calabrians whom I spoke to asked if I had read Douglas's work and occasionally referenced *Old Calabria* as a way to locate the region in a wider global context of popular international discourses.

Ouditt explains that historically, there were two strains of travel writing done on southern Italy by non-Italian travellers: the first were subjective conclusions and impressions of the South based on stereotypes and preconceptions, and the second were accounts that contrasted established hegemonic structures and criticized northern European values and systems (2014). She places Norman Douglas's *Old Calabria* in the second account and argues that the importance of revisiting and analysing British travel writing of this period (specifically work by Henry Swinburne, Craufurd Tait Ramage, and Norman Douglas), was that 'their writings have not yet been studied in detail and their impressions of lands they visited enable a reconsideration of Southern Italian stereotypes' (Ibid: p.3). For these writers who could speak in Italian and informed themselves on the everyday realities and contexts of peasants, the South was not a way to reaffirm their superiority by way of othering or differentiation, but rather a vibrant topic of curiosity to discover and learn from (Ibid). I do

[23] A non-profit private cultural organization founded in Napoli in 1984, with the aims of promoting and conserving the cultural heritage of Naples and the South of Italy.

not fully agree with this argument because one cannot remove the affluent backgrounds and socio-cultural upbringings of these writers, and in Douglas's case, that his move to Italy was not fully out of choice and curiosity, but because of his exile from diplomatic service. She also argues that Douglas viewed the South not as 'backwards' to the North, but was in its own form of superiority, 'an alterity which will not be subsumed into a capitalist, Protestant hegemony no matter how far the tentacles of globalization might reach' and that their alterity is mythologically rooted in 'the sun, the soil, and peasantry' (Ibid: p.5). I argue that this is another form of essentialization, labelling a large expansive geography (southern Italy) and the communities who live there, as blind followers of cultural codes which they have no individual autonomy over. It is an approach similar to the negative essentialist labelling of the South which centred on cultural, biological, people-centred analysis to generalize a typology for communities (or 'races') as opposed to conducting nuanced analysis of the systems and regimes which have colonized their lands and paradigmatically affected their societies in consequential ways.

When one reads *Old Calabria* today, there are passages of writing where Douglas criticizes his fellow 'Englishmen,' northern European propriety, repression of the 'human spirit,' and even corruptness. At the same time, there are many notable examples which cannot be overlooked or minimized where Douglas's choice of words to describe the region and local inhabitants of Calabria remain extremely pejorative and racist. Even in contemporary reprints of the book, one can still find similar language used to describe Calabria in the additional texts added to it. One example of this is the 'Introduction' written by English writer Jonathan Keates in the 2001 reprint of the book. At the outset of his introduction where he describes the established reputation of Europe in widespread discourse which define it as being sophisticated in culture and intellectualism, Keates makes a point to mention that the 'modern dream' of Europe has an almost now buried 'savage' past, 'a place in which the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were unknown and whose inhabitants cared nothing whatsoever for philosophy, cafés and *haute couture*' (Keates 2001: p.7). Keates is clearly implying that he is referencing the Italian South in this categorization (since the book he is introducing is about Calabria) and this repetitive and damaging generalization is factually inaccurate. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was a hive of cultural, political, and intellectual activities, filled with highly engaged societies and groups. Through the simple re-instatement of these historical stereotypes of the South as a 'savage' Europe which Keates claims has been buried by European modernity, Keates exhumes these tropes and prejudices

for contemporary readers of this 2001 edition of Douglas's book and if not read critically, frames the ways in which readers engage with this travel writing at its very outset. Even though later in his introduction, he accounts Calabria's history in slightly more nuanced ways, he still chooses to describe Calabria as,

> …lonely, intractable, often impenetrably strange, sheltering the oddest of paradoxes, the weirdest of survivals and the darkest of secrets…sullenly defiant of our modern mania for systems, connection and universal openness (Ibid: p.8).

When he describes the historically 'wild' and 'feral' parts of Europe as 'darker continental shores' (Ibid: p.7), he recycles the tradition of using explicit, racially charged tropes when describing southern parts of Europe not categorized as 'northern' or 'white.' When he writes, 'Calabria has always been among the areas of Europe most resistant to the Europeanizing process'(Ibid: p.8) he frames the issues of Calabria for readers as being results of their intentional resistance to development into the favourable 'utopian' ideal of Europeanization, laying the blame on them instead of explaining the neo-colonialism and oppressive occupation the region has historically faced, which has been the root to many of its systemic problems.

In the opening chapter of *Old Calabria* where he describes his time in Lucera (Puglia), Douglas encountered a local at a religious festival for Saint Espedito. Interestingly, Douglas states that from the perspectives of these locals, the 'English' were savages in their own ways, but because of their wealth they could endure this (1915, 2001). Making a reference to the savagery of upper-middle class people from England and criticizing them in this way is a rare admission from travel writers such as Douglas, but one cannot overlook the next paragraph directly following this, where he writes,

> …as for myself, wandering among the crowd of unshaven creatures, that rustic population, fiercely gesticulating and dressed in slovenly hats and garments, I realize what the average Anglo-Saxon would ask himself: Are they all brigands, or only some of them? (Ibid: p.21).

Yes, Douglas addresses the prejudice of Anglo-Saxon people have towards Calabrians, but Douglas' choice of words describing locals at this festival as 'creatures' and a 'rustic population' does not exempt him from carrying these same prejudices. In a chapter titled 'Into the Jungle,' where he outlines his time after visiting Taranto (Puglia), Douglas travelled to the forests of Policoro and describes this journey (although seemingly being a

positive relief from the 'all-too-human' experiences in Taranto) as a 'plunge into the jungle' (Ibid: p.108). Even though it might not explicitly read to have negative intent from Douglas in how he describes this landscape since it was to him a relief from a previous place, the use of 'jungle' as textual imagery would unavoidably connect to the rhetoric of the past and of the time Douglas' first readers of *Old Calabria*, where southern Italy was framed more alike to continental Africa and South America than its own country's north-central regions and wider Europe. In his chapter 'Byzantium,' while in Rossano (Calabria), Douglas describes at length the townspeople and more broadly the 'Calabrian race' in a pejorative dehumanizing light, and it is important to show this paragraph in its entirety. He writes,

> They call themselves Calabrians. Noi siamo calabresi! they proudly say, meaning that they are above suspicion of unfair dealing. As a matter of fact, they are a muddled brood, and considerably given to cheating when there is any prospect of success. You must watch the peasants coming home at night from their field-work if you wish to see the true Calabrian type–whiskered, short, wiry, and of dark complexion. There is that indescribably mark of *race* in these countrymen; they are different in features and character from the Italians; it is an ascetic, a Spanish type. Your Calabrian is strangely scornful of luxury and even comfort; a creature of few but well-chosen words, straightforward, indifferent to pain and suffering, and dwelling by preference, when religiously minded, on the harsher aspects of his faith. A note of unworldliness is discoverable in his outlook upon life. Dealing with such men, one feels that they are well disposed not from impulse, but from some dark sense of preordained obligation. Greek and other strains have infused versatility and a more smiling exterior; but the groundwork of the whole remains that old *homo ibericus* of austere gentlemanliness (Ibid: p.122).

Through this excerpt one can see how Douglas was very much influenced by the belief of racial categorizations of humans common and well circulated within European academia and politics of that time, stemming from works like William Ripley's *The Races of Europe* published earlier in 1899.

Ouditt argues that there are beneficial contributions which Douglas's work made, and these should be noted. She explains that Douglas's book was the first to bring emigration into the discourses of the South at that time, and how it significantly affected the region (2014). She references that Douglas mentioned that in 1906, 780,000 emigrated to America and Argentina in that year alone (Ibid: p132), and that he viewed emigration as a consequential factor in how it altered the economies, political landscapes, and family structures of southern Italy (Ibid). Douglas also highlights how the regional history of malaria that plagued Calabria contributed to the ontological view of southern Italians (Ibid: p.133). Even through his example of the brigand figure of Musolino, 'a notorious assassin or folk hero,' depending on

subjective opinion, Ouditt argues that he aimed at showing there were many 'Musolinos' in the South but, 'not because its people are intrinsically lawless, but because corruption is too deeply embedded to allow trust or faith in justice' (Ibid: p.132). Even with the arguments Ouditt presents in favour of Douglas's writings, one cannot relax their critical engagement of his work and take for granted his membership to a northern European upper middle-class upbringing, reasons for moving to southern Italy in the first place (and his activities there), and most importantly the choice of words and metaphors which have unavoidable links to those historically used to essentialize the South.

It is also important to mention Marrone's point about the South being considered part of a completely different continent (2010). This racialized depiction and labelling of the South as 'not part of Italy' or even Europe for that matter, and closer in membership to the continent of Africa was common throughout the history of Italy. It is a sentiment that has still circulated within contemporary Italian politics (mainly right-wing discourses). Anthropologist Mariella Pandolfi's work in the late 1990s demonstrates how historically, visitors to the South (i.e., missionaries, travellers, academics, intellectuals, and other elites not from the South) associated the region and its communities closer in likeness to those in the African continent and not of the rest of Europe. She explained,

> Southern Italy was to them what the formerly colonized peoples of Africa, Asia, and the Americas were to the anthropologies of the former colonial powers: England, France, and the United States. Already in the seventeenth century, Jesuit missionaries had defined the Italian South as *indias de por aca* ("our own Indies"), only marginally less savage, pagan, and ripe for conversion than the *indias* of the European empires across the ocean. In treating the South as a dominated and colonized land, Gramscian anthropologists in the postwar period reiterated a similar theme, although without the stigmatizing labels of savagery and paganism (1998: p.286).

These historical references cannot be overlooked when researching contemporary southern Italy today. No matter the increase in volume of important objective research done on the South to destigmatize it and reframe it in a nuanced more accurate light, these histories of essentialism linger and can resurge if critical engagement becomes stunted or overwhelmed by political radicalization and ignorance. A more contemporary example of the lingering influence of essentialized travel writing on the representation and self-conceptualization of southern Italian communities is research by anthropologist Silvio Carta on his own region of origin, that being the Island of Sardinia. He took a Saidian analytical frame in looking at how historically Sardinia was documented and defined by essentializing

orientalist travel writing and how Sardinians themselves in turn engaged in perpetuating an ethno-orientalist view of their communities and culture (2014). Carta argues that the discourses of essentialism and western forms of orientalism on Sardinia were derived from, 'the politics of representation of European storytelling' which depicted the island as a distant hinterland alien to European civilization (Ibid: p.680). Within the context of tourism, it is even more important to acknowledge these histories of misrepresentation. There are cultural shifts that are happening which are beginning to change the ways in which southern Italy and specifically Calabria, has been understood and continued to be viewed, and the next section will provide more insight on the ways in which the South's representation is being challenged and improved.

New Representations in Academic and Travel Writing

A precursor to new and more nuanced representations of southern Italy in academic and travel writing can be seen in the works of Italian writer Carlo Levi, who was writing and publishing around the same time as Ernesto De Martino, and who followed in the path forged by Antonio Gramsci mentioned in the previous chapter. Levi was an intellectual, writer, artist, and doctor who originated from Turin and was exiled to the south of Italy in Lucania (Basilicata) for a year (1935-1936) due to his anti-fascist activism, and it was there where he began writing *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (*Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli)* (1945) (Congiu 2012: p.164). Congiu explains that his influential book 'tackled the unresolved question of effective national unification and helped to re-open the discussion on how to reconfigure the process of nation-building in the newly democratic Italy' (Ibid: p.164). Levi's last book *All the Honey is Finished* (*Tutto il Miele è Finito*) (1964), addressed these same issues within the new Italian modernity of that time (Ibid).

It is important to explore the relationship between travel writing by Italian authors and non-Italian ones when addressing the topics of representation and misrepresentation in travel writing. Joanne Lee, a specialist in Italian studies, explains that travel writing on Italy has predominantly been authored by Anglo-American writers and has contributed to the ways in which Italy has been represented in the 'European imaginary,' and in turn influencing the ways in which Italians shape their sense of self (2012: p.203). She continues that there have been many Italians authors across history who wrote about Italy and even their own regions

within the country, but they were not categorized as travel writers per se, rather 'they were already established novelists, poets or journalists who had been commissioned to write about their journeys' (Ibid: p.204). She concludes that there has been a surge in domestic travel writing by Italian writers evident in the founding of the *Contromano* book series in 2004, which focuses mainly on the representations of Italy through the perspective of Italian authors, with an additional focus on urban travel writing and journeys through cities (Ibid). The title literally translates to 'in the opposite direction or against the flow,' which embodies the series' aim of countering how Italy has been historically depicted, making way for new perspectives and unconventional stories through a new genre of fiction, non-fiction, and autobiographical writing (Ibid: p.205). But what of the context of Calabria and its versions of contemporary travel writing? I will now provide examples of these and the exciting future of this genre of writing.

Vito Teti is key contemporary Italian academic figure in the study of social anthropology whose work focuses on his home region of Calabria, its history of migration, and its diaspora in Toronto. Being that his research has aspects of cultural self-reflection and incorporates the phenomenon of migration (which is a significant aspect to Calabrian communities historically and contemporarily speaking), I argue that Teti offers a new form of academic travel writing of Calabria. One that combines reunion, migration, memory, loss, and nostalgia. I argue that this is a growing genre of southern Italian travel writing, where Italian writers and academics connected to the South (either directly as their birthplace or that of their ancestors) document their travel 'back home.' In a way my thesis aligns with this categorization: my intellectual and personal journey back to my cultural roots. The advantage of works like Teti's, is that they bring liminality to the depictions and perceptions of the South, specifically Calabria. This combines more objective understandings of place, experience, contexts, and people, with equally subjective understandings of these same things. I argue these subjective experiences of southern Italians writers about their reunion or relation to their own region, allows readers to access the interiority of their memories and first-hand experiences. From this develops an intimacy of analysis rare, if not completely absent, from both historical travel writing and anthropological research on southern Italy. Being neither an 'outsider' nor 'local,' Italian writers who return back to their region to document, experience, or study, create for themselves a unique access point into local communities and their histories.

An example of this is Teti's book *Stones into Bread* (2018) which is an anthology of travel stories between Toronto and Calabria from his point of view and the experiences of Calabrians he knew. Teti's membership in this culture demonstrates how he can depict the region and its communities in more nuanced ways. While describing the experience of a Calabrian named Franco who returned back to his home village in Calabria after a lifetime in Toronto, Teti explains that Franco recounts a road him and his friend Nicola were familiar with, while Nicola was driving Franco to the airport at the end of his visit to Calabria:

> They decided not to take the highway but the *stradella*. It was the secondary road where as young men they would buy figs and *zibibbo* grapes, peaches and melons, from where people would make their way towards the beaches and the wooden shacks on the beaches. Today in those same stretches of sea there were the mega-villages put up by speculators and the destroyers of the landscape, all of them yearly welcoming German or Northern tourists not all that aware of which part of the world they find themselves in. Water, sea, sun, ice-cream is what counts; the place itself is really irrelevant (2018: p.26).

It is through Franco's perspective that the reader is presented a form of analysis that people unfamiliar with this locality would not be able to access; the changing of time on a place, the relationship it has with visitors and tourists, and how a local like Franco related to this place now that he was separated from it through his emigration. Scholar of Italian and Italian-Canadian literature Francesco Loriggio (also one of two translators of Vito Teti's *Stones into Bread*), argues that Teti's *Stones into Bread* presents an alternative and truer account of remote Calabrian communities, the experiences and effects of migration, and Calabrian diaspora communities in Toronto that undermines the popular stereotypes of the culture which remains in circulation even today (Loriggio 2018). He states that Teti's book,

> …bears little resemblance to the Calabria most frequently in the news these days, the Calabria of organized crime, of the '*ndranghetisti*. Neither is it the Calabria where codes of honour and/or amoral familism are pervasive (Ibid: p.220).

Loriggio also argues that Teti's research has not been as well known outside Calabria (or Italy for that matter) because he focuses on researching his own culture and his field sites are the communities he is personally connected to in some way (Ibid). He claims that this is due to the fact that anthropology has been more fascinated with 'exotic' communities or places (implying non-western ones since the field of study developed in Europe) and Teti's research does not fall under this categorization, and as a consequence his work has less appeal (Ibid: p.215). Loriggio then links his argument with Ernesto De Martino's work who

is a key figure in Italian anthropology but is less known outside Italian circles since he researched his own culture (Ibid). I do not agree with this argument simply because it is slightly dated to still be claiming this about the field of anthropology in 2018, when Loriggio translated Teti's book. Anthropology has progressed with ethnographers studying their own communities, writing auto-ethnographies, and the concept of the traditional 'field site' has been greatly expanded through urban and digital anthropology. 'Exotic' non-western communities as historically described in the field of anthropology are no longer its pervading focus. With this being said, anthropological research on Calabria remains sparse compared to work done on other Italian and European regions.

Another example of a recently published work which fuses academic and creative writing on the topic of Calabria and southern Italian diaspora is *Celebrating Calabria: Writing Heritage and Memory* edited by Margherita Ganeri (scholar of contemporary Italian literature) and Maria Mazziotti Gillan (an Italian American poet) (Ganeri and Gillan 2020). This book was a result of a writing seminar created by the Italian Diaspora Studies Association and the University of Calabria's department of Humanities. Participants related or connected to Italian diaspora communities, met with each other and visited places in the southern provinces of Calabria and Basilicata to spark creative writing pieces (in their mother tongue of either English or Italian) centred on their personal experiences of migration through the lenses of place, heritage, memory, and material culture (Ibid). This project not only explored different forms of experience-based learning and immersion, but its main aims were to explore Italy as a colonized space and investigate places as texts and narratives of experiences (Ibid). In using the travel writing genre as both a method of analysis and stylistic approach to my thesis writing, I aimed at translating my ethnographic experiences into narratives of journeys across Calabria and through my experiences with Calabrians. As demonstrated in Teti's example previously mentioned, travel writing combined with anthropological analysis expands the possibilities of expression and knowledge exchange, both for the anthropologist writing their ethnography and for the wider, more diverse readership that would be able to engage with it better. Travel vignettes can expose contradictions, present truths, and express intangible meanings which may not be fully possible or successfully articulated through the limitations of academic writing standards and jargon.

Although travel writing has often been undervalued and overlooked in anthropological discourse as a source of critical data, I argue that it is an important addition to the analysis process when examining places, communities, and social phenomena, especially within the themes of tourism and stigma. Calabria in particular, along with the rest of southern Italy, has a deep history of travel writing which has affected how places and communities have been perceived and how they have perceived themselves (as outlined in this chapter). When compared to anthropological research published in and for academic circles, travel writing has a wider readership which in turn increases its efficacy in influencing and maintaining cultural shifts, sentiments, stereotypes, labels, and other processes of categorization. In the case of Calabria specifically, the same territorial and cultural stigmatization that exists today can be directly traced back to the examples of early academic research and travel writing that I have expanded on in this chapter. Engaging in these discourses on Calabria which are often overlooked, provides the necessary contextualization to understand the complexity of its stigma and how it has been able to endure over time. Looking to the future, it is exciting to see the potentiality of combining both travel writing as a methodology and stylistic framework with anthropological research, as seen in the ways Calabrian academics like Vito Teti have done, to provide more nuance, understanding, and reflexivity when examining places, people, and culture.

Within this growing field of academic travel writing on Calabria and other parts of southern Italy, my thesis is an important contribution to the study of the Calabrian region and its communities, following in line with this new form of anthropological research, in the hopes to continue to fill the gaps and expand the range of anthropological literature on Calabria. These two introductory chapters have laid out the historical and theoretical frameworks of my thesis and the current academic debates it engages with. Now I will embark on my return journey to Calabria. The next section will begin the first of my three themed journeys for this thesis. Along the country roads of Sila and Morano to meet two cheesemakers and agriculturalists, and to the urban city of Cosenza and its tourism development projects, the next chapter will examine how road infrastructure, regional planning, and nature intersect and pose both problems in reaffirming regional and cultural stigma, as well as possibilities for the strengthening, function, and stability of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry.

Section 2: Place

Chapter 3: Cheese Routes: The Taste of a Place



Figure 1. *Caciocavallo* cheese Vittorio gifted me (personal drawing, 2024).

During my first visit to Calabria in 2016, Massimo and Alessio insisted at the outset that I meet and interview a fourth-generation cheese producer and farmer named Vittorio. He ran his family's dairy production Caseificio Lagarò and farming business Azienda Agricola Serravalle, located in one of Calabria's three mountain ranges called the Parco Nazionale della Sila. He supplied his high-quality hand-crafted cheeses at Massimo's shop in Cosenza and this was where I first saw and tasted his delicious products. All rooted in the primary production of stretched cheese curd (*pasta filata)*, Vittorio produced many traditional Italian cheeses, one of his most popular cheeses being *caciocavallo Silano* DOP. This particular cheese is territorially well known in Sila where Vittorio lives and works, but it is also linked to other southern provinces of Italy such as Campania, Molise, Puglia, and Basilicata (Tigiani Sava *et al.* 2014). Roughly translated, the name of the cheese *caciocavallo* means horse (*cavallo*) cheese (*cacio*), a name attributed to the way it was formed into elongated spherical shapes and aged suspended by string (sometimes within a net), which enabled them to be hung over the saddles of horses or mules for transportation. Journeying and transport were built into the very design of the cheese, enabling it to be mobile and transportable. It is a semi-hard cheese that can be eaten fresh after 15 days or aged up to six months or more, starting with sweet complex flavour profiles and maturing into a spicier pungent cheese.[24]

I wanted to reconnect with Vittorio on my return to Calabria, not only because he was a wealth of knowledge and had become a friend of mine but also because I was interested to see how things were going with his *caseificio* since we last spoke. I first attempted to organize a trip to visit around late winter/early spring at the beginning of 2019, but heavy snowfall made it very difficult to access. This reality of heavy winter snowfall is not as known to outsiders or visitors who have not visited any of Calabria's mountain ranges, in part because it is the southernmost region on the peninsula and there is often a general assumption that it mainly has hot 'Mediterranean' type coastal weather. This is not the case, and during fieldwork many locals mentioned to me how heavy the snowfall could be in its areas of higher altitude. Vittorio's farm was a 30-40 minute hilly and coiling drive into the mountainous countryside from where I was living in central urban Cosenza and I was advised by my cousin Alessio who drove me to most of my fieldwork sites, that it would not be a good idea to go when the weather was bad like that. Eventually, he and I were able to visit Vittorio later in August on a clear warm summer afternoon.

[24] https://www.aziendaserravalle.com/?s=caciocavallo&post_type=product&dgwt_wcas=1&v=b773ad615374 .



Figure 2. Natural spring water fountain (personal photo, 2016).

As we drove up to Sila on the day of our departure, reminders of my first trip flashed like a montage as Cosenza's cityscape transformed into a mountainous countryside, streaking across the windshield of Alessio's car: how beautiful and present the landscape was, where one could drive from the rocky Tyrrhenian coastline and within an hour or less, pass along hilly mountainsides of figs and olive trees, wild flora of broom, fennel, and poppies, and arrive deep in the dense coniferous canopy of forested Sila. On many occasional trips there, locals I spent time with would often anecdotally mention that '*la Sila'* was known to have the purest air in all of Europe.[25] In fact, this remote area of the Sila National Park (situated in the southern area of the Apennines) has an elevation of approximately 1796 m above sea level, which makes it an ideal location for the Environmental-Climate Observatory of Monte Curcio (run by the Institute of Atmospheric Pollution of the National Research Council) because 'local anthropogenic influence is almost completely absent' (Castagna *et al.* 2021: p.3). This

[25] This merit was also included in the information booklet created by the tourism business I spent time with in which they cited research conducted in 2009 by scientists' Antonietta M. Gatti and Stefano Montanari on pollution and nanopathologies.

does not mean that there is no human impact in this countryside and that it is an idyllic 'untouched' natural environment, but rather speaks to its altitude and topography allowing it to have cleaner air compared to lower altitude urban centres in the region. This minimal 'anthropogenic influence' or minimal human impact on Sila's natural landscape can also be seen in its natural spring water. Along the country roads one would pass numerous small water fountains dispensing clean ice-cold spring water from the mountains. Cosenza's urban water and septic system was outdated during my fieldwork there, and in need of repair. Tap water was not drinkable in the city and I was strongly advised to only drink bottled water while living there. In contrast when I visited Sila, I was encouraged by locals to enjoy the 'purity' and refreshing quality of Sila's water, and that there was nothing else like it. During the hot summer months and Italy's summer break (when Sila was more populated by visitors), it was common to see groups of people at these roadside fountains filling up their large bottles and plastic containers with spring water.

Massimo and Alessio greatly respected Vittorio both as a person and artisan, and this was mutually felt by Vittorio when I first met him. Vittorio and his family were generous, kind, and welcoming. Driving along the country roads that August looking forward to our reunion, I recalled a vivid memory of our first meeting when, upon our arrival to his farm, he immediately ushered us up a hill towards a fenced portion of pastureland where his dairy cows were; basking in the sun and grazing the rich vegetation on the ground. He went over to one seated cow and sat beside it, who was relaxed and calm, familiar to his presence. They sat peacefully together. He said in that moment, without this; his reciprocal connection and mutual respect with his animals, he had nothing, the farm and cheese production would cease to exist all together. A stressed cow would produce inferior quality milk because of the stress hormones that would release into the milk and negatively affect its structure and taste. Even before I was able to ask questions about him and his work, he diverted the attention away from himself and towards the cows he raised. True farming and cheese making was not about the maker but was about the natural landscapes and the animals that enabled the practices to exist in the first place (Sisca 2016, Vittorio 2016).

As we drove through these Silano country roads, partly rough in patches, I continued to recall Vittorio had a small building onsite where he made his cheese by hand, which consisted of two small rooms. The entrance had a door with a plastic cord fringed curtain which kept flies and insects out. As you entered the first room, it had a display fridge and

hanging rack full of the various fresh and aged cheeses he made with a small cash register stationed beside it. He sold some of his cheeses from there in addition to supplying small shops like Massimo's. The second slightly larger room housed the large stainless-steel vat where he heated the fresh milk, a sink counter to form the cheeses on, and more metal racks to drain, store, and age the cheeses in. The clean room had a pleasantly fresh and sweet dairy smell. No muskiness in the air and not a fly in sight. Initially, Vittorio was studying biology at the University of Pavia in Lombardy but then decided to return home and continue his family's artisanal business. All of the knowledge he acquired on how to raise animals, operate the farm, and produce the cheese was passed through four generations of men. His passion and motivation to continue this work was not only to preserve and continue this legacy and the traditions of his family, but also the history and traditions of the region of Sila. He combined these traditional skills, methods, and equipment with his personal knowledge of science, modern approaches, and technologies which made his cheese production more accurate, while following contemporary sanitary regulations (Sisca 2016, Vittorio 2016).

We continued our drive up towards Vittorio's farm, and while scanning the arrival of rolling pastureland by my passenger seat window I knew we were approaching our destination, reminded of the field we all sat atop when I had conducted my first interview with Vittorio. It was a hill which looked out across the expanse of the Silano countryside, which consisted of alpine forests, rolling pastureland, and large manmade lakes created many decades ago.[26] Every inch of that field was covered with different types of wildflowers and plants, teeming with insects and wildlife which hovered and moved around them. What impacted me the most was the power and presence of the landscape and the living things which resided and coexisted there. It brought a smile to my face weeks later while transcribing the audio recording of that meeting in a silent Oxford library, struggling to hear Vittorio's speech through the buzzing of the insects and sounds made by other wildlife that were present. This rich biodiversity was fundamental to his cheese production. It was the combination of the dairy cattle and the five different species of grasses he fed them which created the high quality of his cheeses, but also the bacteria and microorganisms that were in the area which were integral to the aging and curing processes. He made the point then that even if he sold his milk to another cheesemaker in another city, it would taste completely

[26] Many lakes found in Calabria were man-made over the course of the region's history to provide irrigation, fresh water, and fish farming.

different than the cheese made by the same milk, but made here in Sila. The landscape was a co-producer of his products (Sisca 2016, Vittorio 2016). On many occasions at Massimo and Loredana's house, I tasted Vittorio's caciocavallo Silano DOP cheese. It was shaped very large, the size of a small beef roast or large tenderloin. Loredana and Massimo would cut one inch slices and place them in a slightly deep-set serving dish in order to collect the rich cream that would leak out. The flavour was intensely herbal and grassy throughout, combined with a slight natural acidity, and rich dairy flavour, almost overwhelmingly rich at times to a palate like mine which was not used to milk and cheese that fresh and rich. Compared to its fresh version offered to me to try at the farm, this partially aged version was completely different. Without sounding too trite, one could taste the fields, the complexity of all of the wild herbs, flowers, and plants the cows grazed. Vittorio's caciocavallo was the *Silano landscape*; was made and shaped by it. It reflected the flavours of the landscape but also through its name and design, connected back to its origins of movement and transportation, as a cheese transported on horse or mule. Our reunion would reveal that this same natural landscape and environment also played a fundamental role in the mobility of his cheeses to circulate markets and visitors' ability to access them and the landscapes they came from.



Figure 3. A slice of Vittorio's caciocavallo cheese from Massimo's shop (personal photograph, 2019).

Alessio and I finally pulled onto the dirt path leading to the main central area of the farm where Vittorio's house was. We had returned. An older woman stood at the door's entrance of the main house and my cousin explained to her we were meeting with him. As we waited, Vittorio's father came to greet us with the same good-natured spirit from when I first met him, and I asked if he remembered who I was. He eventually did and was very happy and excited to see us again. He then said that Vittorio was waiting for us in that same little building where he made his cheeses, and we could meet him there. We walked along the dirt path towards the building as his farm dogs and a few stray kittens watched attentively and made their presence known. Walking up to the doorway covered with that same clear plastic cord fringe curtain, we called out his name and entered. Ecstatic to see us with a big grin on his face, he could not shake our hands because he was in the midst of finishing up the last production of the fresh *mozzarella*. As he had done the last time I visited, he immediately handed us each a small ball of the soft warm cheese to eat. It was the same deeply rich and complex flavour I remembered, full of cream, firm and elastic in texture. As he finished his work we caught up, asking each other how we were, how life was, and how things were going with my new research project.



Figure 4. Vittorio holding freshly made mozzarella and a close-up of me holding a piece (personal photos 2019).

Once he finished, we headed back to his house and into a new expansion of a building he recently renovated and furnished. He explained that the room was for the workers on the farm, which had increased in number since our last visit. Before we stared discussing, he said he wanted to show me a video of an Italian television show which did a feature on his farm where they filmed onsite and interviewed him. It was exciting to see, and he told me that after the program aired, their online orders (which were only within Italy) exponentially increased. Business was going well thankfully. In addition to their cheese production, he said that in 2017 they were able to become an officially certified organic potato producer. Their online store was going strong, and he said he was open to selling internationally as well, but focused on retailing to small shops like Massimo's in Cosenza for now. He explained that Massimo never took him for granted when pricing his cheeses. He always respected his business and the work he did. Talking about how other retailers value his products, Vittorio said, 'they take it for granted. In general, you're either born with some things (respect) or you can't become so.' He turned to Alessio and said, 'your father is precise. I have high esteem for him. In fact I say, "I am always available for everything, Massimo. Always." Vittorio's business had grown to the point of being stable and he explained that this was the point at which to stop expanding because then you would have to increase spending and both him and Alessio added the point of the risk expansion could bring to lowering the quality of the products. With the growth of his business now having more workers employed, he explained how consequential the region's infrastructure was to any business here, particularly because of the natural landscape and extreme weather conditions of the region. He said, 'regarding the potential of the products, it is immense. But you live in a territory that is extremely difficult. Why? In winter there is the snow, and the snow creates disorder…' After not being able to visit him earlier in the year due to heavy snowfall I agreed, acknowledging how much there was that winter. Explaining how difficult deliveries and transportation of his cheeses could be in the area he continued,

> To arrive here, the roads are a disaster, so the tourist has difficulty. Both for the roads and also for the services. There is nothing. From Camigliatello (a popular tourist area nearby) to here, there is nothing. From Cosenza to Camigliatello there are some, but on Sunday there is nothing when people want to come up. So, you understand. It's the territory that is sick.

I responded saying how other people I spoke to also mentioned infrastructure as a major problem. He agreed saying, 'a huge problem. So if…the region now approached on the levels of local development…all of these things here… but if they don't drastically intervene,

in sync with us, all sitting at a table where I show you my problems…you will never change this territory.' He continued with further examples using the metaphor of a car,

> The core is this. You can have a Ferrari but if you do not have the petrol, you can't get anywhere. You can push it until you can't. Then you have to stop. You think…here we have the lake. Lake Cicita where there are all of the branches (extensions) up to here. You have to make it navigable. With the boats, do something for tours, to do panoramic travel. You attract people, but before you do this, you have to adjust the streets, put Pulman busses, put the airport…

I added, 'maybe Wi-Fi…' but Vittorio responded, 'but this I can even do. Free at the disposal of everyone…If you do not intervene in the large things, you do nothing. If someone comes, and they lose the car there (it gets broken)…they won't come again.'

The topic of our conversation moved at one point to food tourism markets in Italy, but Vittorio brought the conversation back to discussing the failures of government and development in infrastructure, and in many ways how more consequential this was to the difficulties the gastro-tourism industry and producers like him faced. He re-emphasized the example he used about a person damaging their car on one of the potholes in the roads in Sila. 'I told you a small thing, about the car…it lets you understand the instability that is here. If I'll destroy my car I won't come.' Alessio also added that when driving to his girlfriend's ancestral property in the countryside not far from Vittorio's farm, '…there are some paths that I have to stay on the left… drive "English" because you cannot stay on the right. Rightly so, if you ruin your car…you won't come. If you have to come, you come, if not…you go elsewhere.' Vittorio added that if one did not have a car and did not know this area where he was, they would not be able to come. I agreed saying that it was because of Alessio that I was able to visit him. 'For me the difficulties are these,' Vittorio said. 'I have shown them also to the politicians, nobody gives a damn about anything. They don't have an interest, that is it.'

I mentioned to him that there was a tourism forum that was held by Cosenza's city council earlier that January and how they focused on museums, art, and developing a narrative of 'myth and legend' for the city (which were approaches successfully used in northern Italian regions), and less on Calabria's rich gastronomy or its regional infrastructural development. There was not even mention about the challenging natural environment and climate change, and how these affect tourism and the region as a whole, or plans to make the countryside more accessible through improved transportation infrastructures. There also

seemed to be a lack of collaboration with local people who could bring up more of the real issues they and the region faced, and how these could be improved. The approach to 'development' was more so one of emulating other regions in Italy or Europe and how their tourism industries were built and functioned (one direct example used was Venice), and less on accounting for the realities and specificities of Calabria and designing a development program around those. Vittorio responded, 'yes, it's this. Chris, it's this, the problem. There fundamentally is not the willingness. '*Volere è potere*' (*to want is to be able to do*). More than willingness is the interest, because no one will move for anyone. It is for this that the place is not known, there is no interest to do it.' He continued that things could not move forward if you were not part of a plan that was moving forward like a 'wheel,' and people did not contribute to make it work. He added that in the case of the region, there was not even this metaphorical 'wheel' to begin with, and so there was no established route to follow, unless one initiated something on their own. 'In your opinion, the future, what is it? Is there hope?' I asked. He said,

> Let's hope that we can do it. Not to always talk against the politics and always saying the same things… I cannot put busses if there is not an agreement with *Ferrovie* (the transportation sector in Calabria) of whom has competence (Alessio added that Vittorio could not fix the roads himself. It had to come from the top).

He added that the region had to invest properly, to provide a guarantee and a serious development plan for people, because if that was done, he would be the first to support it. He concluded,

> But no one does it, there isn't the person who promotes. The saying is '*cane che si morde la coda*' (*the dog who bites its tail*). It works like this. We've tried for years, we talked, we do, but concretely they don't do anything. And this is the problem. Welcome to Calabria.

After our discussion, we went outside to his potato fields and he discussed the prospects of his organic potato farming further while showing us the land. As we ended our visit, Vittorio packed me a full caciocavallo to sear on a hot griddle pan (*alla piastra)* which was a typical way of cooking the cheese, and a container of fresh ricotta as a gift. Alessio and I headed back to Cosenza following a Google Maps recommended route, dodging potholes and slowing down during rough patches in the roads.

Landscape: Problems and Promise

Often described as the 'toe' of the 'boot' of Italy in popular discourse (which includes many cookbooks, food programming, travel writing, and tourism on the region), Calabria is the most southern mainland region of the Italian peninsula with a total land cover of 15,222 km², over 740 km of which comprises of coastline (European Commission 2022). It is flanked by two seas; the Tyrrhenian Sea on its left and Ionian to its right, and houses three mountain ranges; Parco Nazionale del Pollino at the very north which physically cuts the region off from the rest of Italy, Parco Nazionale della Sila just south of that and nearer to the centre of the region (where Vittorio is based), and Parco Nazionale dell'Aspromonte at the region's southern end. Calabria comprises of 42% mountains (over 500 m above sea level), 42% hilly landscape (between 50-500 m above sea level), and 9% of land under 50 m above sea level (Caroletti *et al.* 2019). As a whole, the region is categorized as comprising of 96% rural and intermediate areas, over 93% of which is categorized as 'Less Favourable Areas,' meaning land with natural constraints (i.e., mountainous area as one specific example) (European Commission 2022).

Because of these extremes in topography and its location at the centre of the Mediterranean, Calabria experiences warm air currents from Africa which move towards its Ionian coastal area causing hot temperatures with short but heavy rainfall, and milder air currents from the west which move towards its Tyrrhenian coastal area causing more intensely heavy rainfall (Caroletti *et al.* 2019: p.3). As a result, Calabria is host to hot Mediterranean coastal weather, pastureland, mountainous microclimates, and temperate alpine forests that even experience heavy snowfall during winter seasons. This climate and environmental diversity have allowed a wide range of high-quality food and drink products to be grown and produced in the region, but because of this there is a complex relationship between the natural richness and diversity of landscapes in Calabria, and the changing variables these environments pose to people, processes, and built systems. In any gastro-tourism industry, especially one that includes an 'eco' component (i.e., nature tours, sightseeing, etc.), natural environments and landscapes are fundamental actors in the development and outcome of these industries, and in the case of gastro-tourism, the products they end up selling. The varied and extreme geographic and environmental aspects of Calabria's natural landscapes play a role in the challenges locals face in working and living within the countryside. This also extends to how these landscapes mitigate the access of

visitors and tourists (local, national, or international) to spaces and products, and the access and circulation of local food products and experiences.

Calabria has a history which includes many difficulties presented by its natural landscapes, and although the region has a deep history of antiquity, its physical landscapes compared to the rest of Italy are young in their development which is a reason why its geology is unpredictable and prone to volatility (Worster 2010). Italy's landscapes are unique to other European countries (excluding Iceland), especially the southern regions, because it has four active volcanoes on both its mainland and islands: Naples' Vesuvius, Sicily's Etna, and one each on the islands of Stromboli and Vulcano (Bevilacqua 2010). Because of this concentration of volcanoes, earthquakes are very common due to the earth's crust in these geographic areas being so geologically 'young' and active (Ibid). Similar to the Apennines in the North, the mountain ranges in the South carry flows of rivers which carve and erode the landscape (along with massive deforestation in the mountainside which contribute to this as well), and these waters historically have flooded and settled into swampland, which most devastatingly created stagnant mild environments ideal for mosquito-spread malaria to thrive in the past (Ibid). In fact, Italians even invented the word *malaria* because of its historical pervasiveness in the country (Worster 2010). In the specific case of Calabria, areas that were once swampland caused outbreaks of malaria in the region, until improved land irrigation was developed and implemented. Several significant earthquakes have also occurred over the centuries which have caused destruction of towns, landslides, and tsunamis. Compared to the rest of Italy, Calabria has one of the highest concentrations of seismic activity, experiencing earthquakes during the 17th and 18th centuries; one in 1908 and another (being one of the worst earthquakes in its history) occurring three years prior in 1905 (Loreto *et al.* 2013). During my fieldwork, while transcribing fieldnotes and working on my data collection in my flat, I distinctly recall on two occasions feeling low tremors for a period of seconds. Although not strong enough for any serious safety concern, they were strong enough to rattle my flat's furniture and were also felt by my relatives when I asked if they felt anything after meeting them for lunch.

The three national park mountain ranges of Pollino, Sila, and Aspromonte, and the levels of annual rainfall experienced in the region, are also essential mentions. The mountain range which encompasses the Parco Nazionale del Pollino is found at the very northern border of Calabria and spatially 'cuts' the region off, in a way that physically demarcates it

from the rest of the country's peninsula. This not only creates a geographic separation from the rest of mainland Italy, but also creates a spatial perception of Calabria being more removed, remote, and isolated than it physically is from the rest of the country, as if being a socio-cultural 'island' within the mainland peninsula. Historical deforestation in the mountains has been the catalyst of landslides, and heavy rain and snow fall have caused flooding in villages, blocking access to them and making them progressively more isolated. Along the Tyrrhenian coastline, annual rainfall can reach up to 2000 mm per year, whereas the Ionian coastline can experience minimum of 500 mm per year (but these are short and heavy bursts of rainfall none the less) (Coscarelli *et al.* 2021). A research study conducted on the effects of climate change on Calabria concluded that over a 29 year period (1990-2018), it was recorded that the region experience 5022 landslides and 1584 floods (Ibid). In contrast, high temperatures in the summer periods mixed with dry climate air make wildfires common place in the wild countryside, as well as land owned and tended by people. Thousands of hectares of land are burnt as a result of wildfires every year, and the summer of 2017 was particularly devastating for Calabria, seeing the largest wildfire spread in the past 11 years, a period from 2008-2019 (Castagna *et al.* 2021: pp.1-2). In this one year alone, a total of approximately 27243 hectares of land burned, which encompassed 7440 hectares of deciduous forest, 5774 hectares of sparse vegetation, 5665 hectares of bushes and shrubs, and 4609 hectares of pastureland (Ibid). A *Guardian* article in 2021 reported an increase in high temperature alerts, wildfires, and extreme weather conditions across the Mediterranean, and Calabria was called out as one Italian region hit hard with extreme heat and wildfires.[27] More recently *Politico* reported in 2023 that Sicily and Sardinia were forecast to hit temperatures of 48°C, which was part of a wider record heatwave warning issued for southern Europe that same summer.[28] During my fieldwork, I often witnessed many accounts of wildfires in the countryside. Dark grey streaks of smoke could often be seen in distant hills or mountains while I spent time at beaches and travelled the region with friends and other locals. A number of times while driving through the mountains, we would pass scorched land, sometimes still smouldering with embers still visible. One specific time, we were forced to close the car windows as we drove through a portion of land that was on fire, breeching a wall of dark smoke with our car as flames burned on either side of the paved roadway. Another time later

[27] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/13/summer-of-fire-blazes-mediterranean-more-extreme-weather-forecast .
[28] https://www.politico.eu/article/southern-europe-italy-spain-suffers-heatwave-with-record-high-temperature-forecast/ .

in August of that year when my two cousins and I were in the city beach town of Fuscaldo visiting relatives of mine, we saw in the distance towards Diamante (another coastal town) that there was a fire ablaze on the mountainside.

With these historical and contemporary records of severe climate and environmental phenomena which Calabria has experienced, these conditions have not only made development and stability difficult at times to implement and maintain, but these natural phenomena also have affective potency and have been used in other cases incorrectly and insensitively to reinforce the stereotypes that label Calabria as a backward and difficult region to inhabit. One specific historical example Emilio Sereni gave in his documentation of Italy's agricultural history was that of a Calabrian cliff side at the Straits of Messina (2014). It was deforested in 1782 and experienced significant erosion in addition to an earthquake occurring in that area in the following year, and all of this culminated seven years later in a massive landslide on 24th March 1790 (2014: p.245). He explained,

> Certain elements in the agricultural inferiority of the South had already appeared that would become more serious in the course and as a consequence of capitalist development. And what after Italian unification became "the Southern question," the agricultural inferiority conditioned by processes already underway in this period…would become a lasting and decisive factor in the complex limitations imposed by capitalism (Ibid: p.193).

Stavroula Pipyrou has also researched the region of Calabria and explains that natural disasters such as flooding, landslides, and water-based diseases were chronic to Calabria since Italian unification, and this not only eroded the trust and confidence of locals in the Italian welfare state, but also brought to light the government's mismanagement and lack of support for Italian southern regions (2016). She continues that, 'on many occasions the cause and effect of environmental disasters were pinned to the "naturally backward" South' (Ibid: p.53), which only conflated its stereotypes with the region's geographic realities.

In addition to Vittorio's experiences, another moment during fieldwork which exemplified the extreme nature of Calabria's topography and some of the challenges local producers faced because of it, was a drive north to Morano, Calabro (with Alessio, Loredana, and Massimo), to a town built within the Pollino mountains. It was there where I met another cheesemaker named Giuseppe who specialized in traditional goat and sheep's milk cheese production. One specialty cheese he made and was sold at Massimo's shop was called

felciata (*a filicèta* in dialect or *pane degli'angeli* which translates to *bread of angels*), a traditional Morano product deeply connected to the sheep and goat pastoralism of the area.[29]



Figure 5. Morano and the surrounding landscape (personal photo, 2019).

Morano's historic city centre (*centro storico*) from afar looked like a lone mountain comprised of buildings stacked onto each other set within steep cliff faces, and its ancient castle crowning the pinnacle of this monolithic 'city mound.' Giuseppe's dairy farm and cheese production Dolci Pascoli Formaggi Biologico was located in a rural part of the mountainside just off of this main city area. He had inherited his work in pastoralism and cheesemaking from his parents and grandparents. His father's parents initially owned the land of his farm and the animals on it (sheep, goats, and cows), but it was his father who became a pastoralist and developed the farm more. Giuseppe explained that in the late 1990s, he was able to acquire European funding for young entrepreneurs, and it was through this that he was able to start his business. At one point during our visit, we went outside to the rainy overcast

[29] https://www.fondazioneslowfood.com/en/ark-of-taste-slow-food/felciata-2/ .

day, and he was telling us that the mountainside which overlooked his property caught fire a while back which destroyed all the land. There was speculation that this was possibly a result of people who lit fires for the fun of it, but Loredana added too that the land was so dry in the summer that even embers from a cigarette butts could ignite a wildfire. As a result of the mountainside near him being burnt, Giuseppe was prevented from letting his animals graze there for ten years. He argued that it was a crazy restriction and did not make sense because by having animals graze on the new growth enriched by the scorched ground, the animals would obtain those nutritional benefits and their excrements would further fertilize and encourage faster regrown of the land. I asked him if he practiced transhumance and he said that he did 'vertical transhumance' meaning that he let his animals grazing upwards along the accessible parts of the mountainside.



Figure 6. The mountainside on Giuseppe's farm and some of his cheeses (personal photographs, 2019).

Through Vittorio's and Giuseppe's examples of the extreme weather conditions they face in their line of work, they not only relied on the natural landscapes for the basis of their cheese production, but their businesses were also negated by these same landscapes which dictated their work, the circulation of their products, and the people who purchased them and accessed their rural countryside locations of Sila and Morano. In addition to the existing historical relationship Calabria has with the powerful presence of nature and climate, nature is an actor or force which I argue is overlooked and less prioritized in its inclusion with infrastructural development projects and tourism programs, and factoring it in more could have a positive effect on the region's economy and sustainability. The under-prioritization of nature in this way, serves only as a detriment to the function and maintenance of infrastructure and development programs. The next section will explore this complex relationship between nature and infrastructure further.

Nature and Infrastructural Entangled

The notion of landscapes can be understood as a human-made 'cultural construct' which incorporates its natural qualities and aspects (Agnoletti 2014: p.67). Italian environmental historians have never separated the country's general history from its environmental one, and in fact have combined the two as 'landscape and humanscape, natural and artificial' (Armeiro and Hall 2010: p.5). I argue that one should maintain this approach when looking at the relationship between nature and infrastructure, when creating development plans and infrastructural systems for a region or place. Nature should be equally as prioritized as the humans using these infrastructures, and all should be integrational and adaptable.

The delineation between nature and infrastructure has been blurred through anthropological research of the last couple of decades and both systems coexist and interact constantly with each other. Ashley Carse's research on the Panama Canal has demonstrated how nature is and can transform into infrastructures, and if managed correctly, can provide services which support economic and developmental growth which in turn, support communities of people (2012). In the case of my thesis, Calabria has a rich and deep history of agricultural development. Its swampland which previously bred pandemics of malaria was drained overtime and enriched through human irrigation systems and practices. Many of the inland lakes seen today, like the ones I saw in Sila and the one mentioned by Vittorio, were human-made as well. Regarding the introduction of crops, flora, and fauna not indigenous to the region, the colonizers and settlers who brought them from their homelands and others they colonized, also brought with them the agricultural practices and technologies which enabled these newly introduced species to grow and integrate into the Calabrian landscape over time. Even the tradition of transhumance practices of livestock grazing patterns altered and improved the region's landscapes. To Carse's point above, one could argue that these landscapes are in fact landscapes of natural infrastructures, thus removing the separation between these two entities (nature and infrastructure) and bringing them together in a more complexly integrated way. With this being said, the reality is that nature as an independent force separate from humans, can still have a significant effect on infrastructural systems. The last chapter of Carse's book *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal*, examines weed maintenance of the backwaters of the Panama Canal, specifically the invasive plant water hyacinth, and how infrastructures and the boundaries

between the 'technical, social, and environmental' are 'porous and in flux', and argues that this is an example and a reminder of the reality that infrastructures are situated within the natural landscape (Carse 2014: p.23). If neglected, infrastructures like the roads in the Sila landscape, revert back to nature, create blockages and disruptions, and these can facilitate socio-cultural and political triggering, irrespective of the economic consequences from lack of mobility and access for local businesses in these rural areas. Carse states,

> …without maintenance, infrastructures crack, rust, and crumble and the political projects, promises, and aspirations that they carried dissipate as formerly connected places are disconnected (2014: p.219).

The research of scholars Andy Pike and John Tomaney (development studies) and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose (geography) on what constitutes conceptualizations of local and regional development, emphasize the importance of place and space in these programs and projects. They state, 'phenomena and processes that may seem somehow "external" or beyond the control or influence of particular localities and regions can have profound impacts' (Pike *et al*. 2007: p.1259). When it comes to infrastructural development, nature is one of these phenomena. This is not to say that nature is not affected by human action and intervention, and anyone can see this with the 'Anthropocene' and the escalating global climate crisis of our generation. Specifically in the case of Calabria, what makes it an important field site for research on climate change and geography is its central location within the Mediterranean basin, making it a highly sensitive and reactive region to climate change phenomena (Coscarelli *et al.* 2021, Castagna *et al.* 2021). Nayanika Mathur's research on predatory cats intersecting into urban and rural residential areas in India demonstrates how shifts in climate change, anthropogenic damage to mountain ecosystems, and failed state policies created the conditions in which predatory cats (such as the leopard) were forced to move into residential areas in search of food, which increased the occurrence of fatal attacks by the cats on humans and other animals (2021). Penny Harvey echoes this through her research on roads in Peru by stating that roads, as an infrastructural process, connect the 'unpredictable energy of state agency' to the 'powers and demands of a sentient landscape' (2018: p.86). In effect, nature and natural forces like weather are still independent actors which humans and human-made systems inevitably are secondary to. In the case of Sila and the cheese producers I spoke to, natural forces like climate and weather patterns disrupt the flow of people and products to and from their rural areas, further damaging the already weakened infrastructure of roads and transportation services which are vital to

facilitating those flows. In the case of the frequency of wildfires that occur in the region, whether they are ignited by natural causes or human intervention (intentional or not), the increasing hot summer temperatures and dry heat conditions create the ideal conditions for fires to start and spread widely. For the roads that Vittorio relies on for his livelihood, it is the inaction of the state agencies and action of the natural landscape that causes these ruptures and tensions to occur. Southern Question discourse and stereotypes of Calabria omit these environmental difficulties and the particular realities and natural conditions of Calabrian landscapes.

Analysis on the region is often placed on the social, political, cultural, and the economic. The only time 'nature' has been prioritized historically has been for the extraction and exportation of Calabria's rich natural agricultural resources. Serenella Iovino, a scholar of Italian studies and environmental humanities, argues the importance of considering landscapes as *texts* in that through our analysis and understanding of them, we obtain 'embodied narratives of social and power relations, biological balances and imbalances, and the concrete shaping of spaces, territories, humans, and nonhumans' (2016: p.3). But with this being said, anthropologists Christopher Tilley and Kate Cameron-Daum importantly contrast this and alternatively point out that landscapes cannot 'solely' (my emphasis) be understood and represented as texts alone, and that maintaining focus on the materiality of landscapes emphasizes their realness and their everyday material 'messiness' without overshadowing it with representation (2017: p5). Through their research on the East Devon Pebblebed heathland of south-west England, Tilley and Cameron-Daum demonstrate the importance of experiencing landscapes through the senses of the body in person as a research tool (Ibid). I argue that in the case of Calabria, visiting the place in person and considering the realities of its natural landscapes, climate change, and the region's landscape history, are vital to its understanding. These aspects of the region have to be accounted for when planning development projects and in particular, a sustainable gastro-tourism industry.

Scholar of landscape and cultural heritage Mauro Agnoletti argues for a 'landscape-based approach' for sustainable development which prioritizes 'landscapes as a possible new paradigm for a development model that would harmoniously integrate social, economic, and environmental factors in space and time' (2014: p.66). Not only would this approach achieve more nuanced development planning that would take into account the dynamics and influence of nature as a consequential force in the success of these projects for both local communities

and their environments, but this approach would also allow for a better reading on the Southern Question discourse and the factors which the region has faced when it comes to its development. Sociologist John Urry and geographer Jonas Larsen argue that humans have had a tendency to de-materialize landscapes and places, and that they 'take control and possession of, and derive pleasures from, "nature." It is a specific way of relating to "nature" that fuses "reality" with images and representations' (2011: p.110). The dominant landscapes and climate in Calabria resist this de-materialization process and reinforces realities of the conditions of *places* in the region. The Calabrian landscape does not exist as merely a romantic, picturesque, exotic, or sublime passive backdrop to visitors as it has historically been portrayed in some ways, but rather leads directly with its presence in a more autonomous, confrontational, and unavoidable way.

The sentiments of local Calabrian entrepreneurs I met (like Vittorio and Giuseppe) expressed that there often was a disconnect between what their municipalities thought their communities needed for positive growth and development, and how resources should be prioritized and spent, versus the actual everyday realities and needs of local businesses and those communities. The European Commission has created funding for agricultural and rural development plans for Italy and its individual regions, and one recent iteration of this was their National Rural Development and Network Programmes for 2014-2020.[30] This aid in rural development was the second focus of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) founded in 1962, which provides resourcing and support for the agricultural industries and food security of European member states.[31] For the specific case of Calabria, its rural development program for 2014-2020 was adopted on 20th November 2015 with an updated two year extension to 31st December 2022, and focused on ecosystem protection and restoration, strengthening the sectors of agriculture and forestry with a 7+2 year budget of €1.45 billion of public funds (approximately €903 million from the EU and €119 million from Italian co-funding) (European Commission 2022). Even though this is an extensive source of funding and planning support for Calabria, and has most likely allowed for partial development in these sectors, local Calabrians expressed to me that there often remained a disconnect between obtaining investment resources for the region and the use of these resources for positive long-term regional development. To have experienced first-hand the

[30] https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/rural-development/country/italy_en .
[31] https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-glance_en .

grievances and frustrations of locals with their municipalities' approach to local development (where they felt that not much had changed or improved in the problems that require the most attention), and for me to have physically visited places and encountered problems using roads and other transportation systems for the duration of my fieldwork, demonstrates this disconnect between obtaining large-scale EU resources and how they filter down to regional and local municipalities for targeted affective use.

So where does one look for possible ways forward? How can connections be made where ruptures currently exist, and how can longer-term solutions be maintained where they have not historically existed? Kirsten Hastrup explains that anthropology has moved away from the dualism of nature and culture/society, and that the entangled worlds and intersectional relations that emerge when studying an 'anthropology of nature' is what she argues is 'edgework practice,' which resists 'institutional calculation and conceptual routinization in the interest of exploring new possibilities of being' (2014: p.2). Tilley and Cameron-Daum argue that landscapes are both internal and external to people, and there should not be a clear-cut dualism between us and the landscapes we are enmeshed in (2017). They continue that a landscape 'forms a material medium in which we dwell and move and think,' and that 'it is a part of ourselves' (Ibid: p.5). Maria Kaika also argues that, 'urbanization is a process of perpetual socio-ecological change,' and she emphasizes the importance of reframing natural environments and urban cityscapes, 'not as static things categorized as either good or evil, but as processes and flows that embody a dialectics between good and evil' (2005: p.13).

In the case of Calabria's history of dominant autonomous natural landscapes and the consequences they present to the inhabitants who have settled and lived in the region over time, it is more important than ever to include nature into infrastructural projects and tourism development plans in clearly direct ways. Kaika points out that what constituted the physical and social aspects of the city 'is the result of a historical geographical process of the urbanization of nature. Excavating the flows that constitute the urban would produce a political-ecology of the urbanization of nature' (Ibid: p.25). In the case of Calabria, Kaika's argument is valid in the way that the region's urban cities, countryside, and coastlines alike are all the result of this historical process of the urbanization of the region's natural landscapes. Deriving from the work of black feminist scholars, anthropologists Sarah E. Vaughn, Bridget Guarasci, and scholar of marine research Amelia Moore, use the term

‘intersectional ecology’ as a way to examine the relationship between anthropology and the environment, and how academics represent the ‘environment within shifting planetary arrangements of bodies, sites, texts, practices, and technologies’ (2021: p.276). They continue that the environment ‘is a malleable and historically contingent concept’ (Ibid: p.277) and the importance of intersectional work is that it examines how questions are formed through expansive and diverse reading, with ‘reflexive observation of emergent environments across diverse social contexts and scales’ (Ibid: p285). The potential problems gastro-tourism faces today stem in part from an exclusion, lack of prioritization, or lack of intersectionality with nature, local communities, and site-specific needs and contexts as the top priorities for infrastructural development plans (even more so within the contexts of climate change). This is then further exacerbated by the very real issues surrounding the mismanagement of funded projects and their development aims, which are often disconnected from the needs of local communities and the landscapes they live and work in. The same way Vittorio and Giuseppe acknowledge the importance of nature and landscapes through thoughtfully prioritizing and incorporating them into the production of their products and businesses, Calabrian gastro-tourism and infrastructural development should do the same. Planning should place the realities of nature and the needs of local communities first, in order to develop a tourism infrastructural system customized to Calabria that is sustainable and long-lasting.

The effects of nature are only a few contexts which disrupt the mobility and economy of local producers living and working in the countryside, and contribute to the failure and breakdown of infrastructural systems like roads in Calabria. In a way, these are endogenous contexts of local and regional development, and to focus solely on these would ignore more crucial and consequential exogenous ones (Pike *et al.* 2017), like wider popular trends in tourism and infrastructural development that influence and prioritize development approaches that are not always customized nor contextualized properly to Calabria and its needs. Calabria and the rest of the South of Italy has historically been known to be the sites of failed or abandoned rural and urban infrastructural projects such as roads, transportation lines, public leisure spaces and facilities, tourist sites, and others. The next chapter will examine the reality of infrastructures such as roads, both in the countryside of Sila, as well as a road development project in the city of Cosenza, and the exogenous factors which play a part in their failures, which in turn increase the tensions between local communities and the state.

Chapter 4: A Cookie Not for Eating, a Roadway Not for Using



Figure 1. Different forms of *mostaccioli* (personal drawing, 2024).

Mostaccioli[32], *mastazzola*, or *mustazzoli* (as they were called in the dialect of older relatives in Toronto) are a traditional Calabrian cookie made from a base recipe of honey, eggs, and flour. The nature of all traditional recipes or foods is that their names vary in dialect and pronunciation as much as their recipes do, often distinctly different even between two closely neighbouring villages. Calabrian journalist and writer Domenico Zappone wrote about mostaccioli in his book *Calabria Nostra* (1969) where he explained that the cookie (which mainly originated from Soriano Calabro in the southern Calabrian province of Vibo Valentia[33]) has deeply ancient roots originating from the period of Magna Graecia, where they were used as offerings to pagan gods (Zappone 1969, Battaglia 2017). They were traditionally made with a stiff dense dough and baked until dark brown and hard, which made them practically inedible, but this density enabled their intricately sculpted forms to maintain

[32] For the purpose of consistency, I will use this name for the cookie.
[33] Although it can be found across the region of Calabria.

their shapes while being baked. These forms depicted animals, people, stylized forms, hearts, and other symbolic designs that were often adorned with coloured foil decorations, serving the purpose of being objects in houses more than cookies for consumption in the typical sense (Ibid). Within the Toronto diaspora community I grew up in, mostaccioli were either brought back from trips to Calabria by older relatives or homemade and put out during espresso visits. They were also often featured on more formal cookie trays during celebrations. The traditional versions were so stiff and stale to eat that a common course of remedy which one of my aunts exercised was softening them via microwave. In contrast, the homemade versions were usually softened with rising agents, variations in ingredient measures, and different cooking processes to increase their palatability and edibility.

During fieldwork, these cookies (amongst other things) were sold at an annual springtime five day festival called the St. Joseph's Fair (or *Fiera di San Giuseppe*) which historically marked the beginning of spring and had a deep history with the region as being an important event which facilitated trade and networks within and outside its regional boundaries. The fair was originally the *Fiera della Maddalena* which was commissioned by Frederick II in 1234 and later became Fiera di San Giuseppe in March of 1564, which was all part of a wider collective initiative of seven fairs created across southern Italy by Frederick II to promote trade within and to the east of those southern regions.[34] I remember my cousin Alessio explained to me that even though San Giuseppe was not really the patron saint of Cosenza, the fair was still celebrated every year. It was an important tradition to continue but in reality, it often brought chaos to the city through the congestion of people and traffic caused by significant road closures and re-routing. My relatives and other locals warned me that there were not many Calabrian vendors featured anymore, adding that there were Italian vendors from Puglia, Bari, Naples, and Sicily, and many migrants from outside Europe had stalls there selling food and cheap goods that where not connected to any local or seasonal traditions originally associated with the fair. The main site of the fair was located on the major roadway Viale Giacomo Mancini which was at that time also partially blocked off due to ongoing construction for a new development project the city council proposed called the Wellness Park (*Parco del Benessere*). This roadway which consisted of blocked off spaces

[34] Information referenced was taken from an official document issued by the Comune di Cosenza on their website entitled 'Edizione speciale dei "Cinque sensi di marcia" per la Fiera di San Giuseppe' on 13th March 2019.

with construction disruptions now also had to host the five day fair which added an influx of people and cars to contend with.



Figure 2. Traditional mostaccioli bought at the fair (personal photo, 2019).

I first encountered the mostaccioli at many of the stands which featured companies specializing in baked goods, Sicilian desserts and confections (including *torrone* which is a form of nougat and marzipan-based cookies), nuts (such as candied nuts, seasoned nuts, and brittles), dried and candied fruits, and other baked desserts labelled 'traditional.' Sold alongside these products by the same vendors were industrially produced candy (many being from the Haribo company). After walking the entire way of the main areas along the roadway, moving around closures and fluorescent orange construction mesh, my impression of the fair was that of a large-scale flea market and carnival instead of the traditional market featuring Calabrian producers and artisans of traditional crafts, filled with flowers, as the city council made it out to sound in an official promotional video they released to promote it.

The mostaccioli were sold either on trays or on their own, sealed in airtight sheets of plastic. They were sculpted into horses, fish, 'S' shaped designs, people, and even large hearts featuring the phrase 'Auguri Papà' (congratulations dad). I bought three to take back to my

apartment and upon opening one in my kitchen and attempting to cut off a piece, I realized these were as difficult and unpalatable to eat as my relatives and other locals had warned me they would be. It was not until later that year in the autumn during fieldwork while I had a repeat visit to Sila near Vittorio's farm (mentioned in the previous chapter), that my cousin's girlfriend insisted I could not leave Calabria without tasting real mostaccioli baked at one of her favourite local bakeries. The bakery had a small counter featuring their fresh breads and baked products in a single room with a single cash register. The mostaccioli were piled high in a wicker basket lined with paper. These had no elaborate shaping or decoration, but were instead simple rhombus shapes, toasted at the edges with a soft, moist, and chewy interior. The bakery made two types, one with a light wildflower honey and the other with a dark treacly fig honey which I was told was more traditional. The lighter version was bright and floral in flavour and the darker version slightly bitter and richer.



Figure 3. Mostaccioli from Sila (personal photo, 2019).

Where the highly decorated traditional versions of the cookie linked more to a history of devotional paganism and sentimentality, these present day simplistic geometric versions seemed to have a stronger engagement and relevance with people today and the local landscape. This is not to say that Calabrians did not continue the tradition of purchasing and gifting the traditional sculptural versions for their symbolic or affective meaning. Rather, the

simpler versions I encountered in Sila demonstrated how traditions are malleable and can be updated to have a stronger connection to the regional *terroir* of today (i.e., the local high-quality ingredients used such as traditional fig honey). Through updated techniques, they can also obtain a transformed relevance and utility complimentary to the contemporary needs, tastes, and desires of the communities who engage with them.

The perceivable disconnection between appearance and meaning versus local specificity of place and functionality of a cookie for eating (even though the early traditional version of the mostaccioli may have only be used for ceremonial practices and not necessarily for eating), in ways parallels and reflects the many disconnections, tensions, and blurred intentions or functions between the spring fair they were sold in, the actual roadway the fair was located on, the local communities who live in and frequent those areas, and city council governing bodies who organize these types of developments. The ruptures and disconnections that sprung from these dynamics act as access points into the existing tensions between local communities and the state governing bodies who control and propose tourism and development initiatives. Anthropologists Martin Holbraad, Bruce Kapferer, and Julia F. Sauma explain that although ruptures can make consequential changes to existing states and conditions, they can also have a more creative and positively constructive effect 'towards escape, redirection, reconstitution and sometimes renewal' (2019: p.1). They continue that instead of focusing on whether ruptures or discontinuities are positive or negative, what is more important is how the people that are entangled in them, evaluate these ruptures (2019). Through discussing the topic of the mostaccioli with relatives and locals, more complex relational issues and tensions surfaced between the needs of locals (some of which included functional roads and reliable transportations systems, drinkable and consistent running tap water, reliable garbage collection, and the restoration of the historic city centre to name a few) and the often misguided desires and approaches of municipal and regional state governing bodies (for tourism programs, city events, regional funding allocation, development projects, and infrastructural investments).

This was the case in the previous chapter where I spent time with and spoke to two different cheesemakers and agriculturalists: Vittorio in Sila and Giuseppe in Morano Calabro. Although the initial topic of discussion for both was to focus on their traditional cheesemaking businesses, what surfaced from our encounters was the importance and often neglected inclusion of weather, climate change, and the very present natural landscapes in

infrastructural development and tourism, and how crucial roads and transport systems are to enabling the circulation of their products, locals, and visitors through the remote mountainous countryside where they based their businesses. Tourism is dependent on transportation systems, both for its enabling and disabling, making it a complementary cause and effect relationship (Pellegrino 2021). In the case of roads in particular, they are consequential infrastructural systems that negate the mobility, access, and desires of tourists to and through Calabria. More importantly, they affect the movement and agency of local communities who rely on them on a daily basis, and this will be explored more in depth in this chapter with the analysis of the roadway that hosted the springtime fair in Cosenza.

That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles: Roads, Infrastructure, and the Chronic Degradation of Materiality and Relationships

The first historical development of what is largely considered a highway today in fact had its origins at the beginning of the 20th century in northern Italy and was closely affiliated with fascist and European totalitarian ideologies of that period (Dalakoglou 2017). Infrastructures like roads and transportation services are physical and non-physical systems which are consequential in mitigating tourists' access, movement, and experiences in Calabria, as well as the daily lives of locals and their businesses. This definition is similar to Brian Larkin's where he states that infrastructures are 'built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space' and that they transform the materiality, movement, resilience, and the timescale of the networks they engage with (Larkin 2013: p.328). Ashley Carse explains that infrastructures are an 'ongoing process of relationship building' with their construction, degradation, and maintenance all interacting with capital, labour, people, and nature (2014: p.5). Unlike other infrastructural systems, roads in particular take on a more 'archetypal social' significance through their categorical links to 'mobility,' and connected to 'human experience, imagination, and language' (Dalakoglou 2012: p.584). They obtain the ability to 'enchant' through their perceived potential or promise in achieving a level of societal modernity (Harvey and Knox 2012: p.522). When perceived as landscapes in their own right, infrastructures can also create their own 'political ecologies with winners and losers' (Carse 2014: p.6). In the case of anthropologists' Penelope Harvey and Hannah Knox's research on roads in Peru, they analysed how roads signified three potential promises: that of 'speed and connectivity,' of

'political freedom,' and lastly 'economic prosperity' (Ibid: p.523). Roads have been in recent decades a focus of important ethnographic research in that they 'provide new perspectives on the simultaneity of global circulation and local lifeworlds of (im)mobility, speed, motion, frictions, tensions and journeys' (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012: p.463). They can act as interfaces which form and negotiate boundaries, as well as ascend these boundaries in their potentiality for connectivity (Ibid: p.461). In this way, a road's connectivity can act as a public good of progress which increases circulation of commercial products, primary resources, ideas, and people (Harvey 2012: p.81).

What these preliminary descriptions initially omit (but which is later critically examined by the same academics referenced above), is the ability infrastructures and roads have in preventing flows and connections, creating blockages and disruptions through their interaction with environments and their own material breakdown. Other actors such as humans, nature, other living organisms, and time (to name a few) form physical and non-physical relationships with these systems and how they exist and function. Carse addresses this and argues that even though infrastructures are globalized, it does not mean places and people are as well, instead they can be 'connected and disconnected, integrated and bypassed' (2014: p.5). Harvey and Knox also address these ruptures in their ethnographic work and argue that, 'it is through an articulation with the lived, material encounters of stasis, rupture and blockage that infrastructural promises become reinvigorated and recast,' and that even though individual people's faith with the governing bodies who lead and manage these failed project is weakened, their 'desire' for these infrastructures (i.e., roads) is reinvigorated that 'sometime soon they will appear and life will change for the better' (Harvey and Knox 2012: p.534).

In the case of locals I interacted with across Calabria (particularly in the urban setting of Cosenza with the roadway project), they often expressed to me a sense hopelessness and cynicism towards the chronic failures of developmental management by the state, even though they simultaneously did not give up on improving their lives and communities. Despite the chronic development issues they faced, locals displayed a resounding strength and resilience. Based on the sentiments of many Calabrians I interacted with, the failing roads, unfinished multi-million euro urban development projects like the roadway which hosted the spring fair in Cosenza, or the fraught relationship they had with some of Calabria's governing bodies who were elected to serve their communities, did not 'reinvigorate' their

hopefulness and optimism in the way that Harvey and Knox (2012) have argued, and locals still had to get on with their everyday lives to navigate and exist within these fraught systems.

Historically speaking, Calabria has experienced various levels of long-standing oppressive rule, occupation, and mismanagement, in addition to the social and political weight of the Southern Question, which is a discourse (as explained in the first introductory chapter of this thesis) that examined the perceived political, social, cultural, and economic 'backwardness' of southern Italy. Contextualizing these histories specific to Calabria, ruptures and failures of infrastructure only reiterate the chronic existence of current problems and the fraught hegemonic dynamics of political and economic hierarchies between Calabria and the rest of Italy, and internationally as well. Although my research attempts to unpack this to a certain extent, almost every local I spoke to expressed that things never changed in the region. The failure of roads in Sila and other unfinished urban development projects like transforming the city roadway into a 'wellness park,' do not reinstate hope for locals but rather reemphasizes the reality of their fraught relationship with governing bodies and the state's inability to improve the region for them and visitors. The omission of regional environmental phenomena and climate change in development projects and planning as mentioned in the previous chapter, reduces long-term success by becoming structural constraints, which further exacerbates these contentious relationships between locals and the state, and reinforces how a blanket approach to tourism development (i.e., things that work for one region in Italy or Europe are then generically applied to a completely different region) does not guarantee long-term success in Calabria for local communities and visitors.

Anthropologists Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta and Hannah Appel explain that infrastructures like roads, highways, subways, and trains 'extend spatially over time' and this influences the creation of heterogeneous spatial forms and social patterns, which in turn directly influences understandings, experiences, and expressions of time and space (2018: p.17). In terms of products like the ones Vittorio produced and sold, weather and failing transportation systems (i.e., roads, vehicles etc.) dictated the efficiency, reliability, and possibility of their movement in fulfilling orders and supplying retailers. Infrastructures like these must be robust in order to function within the extremes of the natural environments and climate forecasts of the region. Others have argued that roads have a larger significance in the 21st century for circulating commodities of labour and goods in an information-based society, while also supporting extractive economies of production and reproduction of developing

countries (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012: p.459). Due to the nature of their artisanal businesses (being in remote mountainous locations and the hours of commitment and skills required), both Vittorio and Giuseppe relied on hard infrastructure like roads and transportation in order to sell and physically circulate their products. In turn, these infrastructures also would allow locals and tourists to visit their farms and other parts of the region. Soft infrastructure such as their online shops help in promoting their products and circulating information, but to Vittorio's point regarding the fulfilment of orders, those still required transportation systems and accessible routes for delivery. Vittorio reiterated the importance of a stable useable road and transportation system, over other things like a stronger Wi-Fi connection which I had brought up during our discussion. His point was a shared sentiment amongst other local entrepreneurs I met. During my time on the opposite side of Sila in the neighbouring province of Catanzaro, this topic was raised while in a car ride with a young tourism business founder named Antonio. While driving through the winding mountain roads near the village town of Zagarise, Antonio asked if I was ok with all of the sharp turns. I reassured him that I was fine but that these roads were obviously different from the roads in Oxford and Toronto, mainly because the land was flatter there. He explained that many local city councillors in Zagarise said that these roads and their poor quality were a main reason why people did not visit the town and was a reason as to why it would be hard to develop tourism in that area.

To this point, Harvey's ethnographic research in Peru expands on the relationship between local communities, the state, and road development projects further. Upon the impending expiry of the Inter-Oceanic highway project, locals protested on a bridge close to Cusco, demanding the completion of the project, which in the end was successful (Harvey 2012). Harvey explains that for locals, the road represented 'a bid to change their conditions and expectations of life, to reconfigure how they connect to others,' and that they believed the road project would be 'their specific solution of geographic isolation and marginality,' making them equal to other developed areas and enabling them to join a nationalized 'imagined generic standard' (Harvey 2012: pp.81-82). This case is different to that of locals in Sila because for the Inter-Oceanic highway project, it was part of Peru's 1999 Forest law which aimed to promote oil and hydropower development (Ibid). Although these were not necessarily the specific needs and desires of local communities, there was a shared understanding by all parties involved (local and global) that road building programs were one connecting solution to achieving economic and political progress and that 'networked

connectivity, economic progress, and democratization are understood to be mutually constitutive' (Ibid: p.81).

In the case of Sila's country roads and transportation infrastructures, there seemed to be a disconnect between regional bodies, locals, and development plans. Developing tourism and access to smaller remote villages like Zagarise or to meet local producers like Vittorio and circulate their products, was not to my knowledge or to the locals I spoke to, a clear strategy organized or prioritized by the region, and this was evident in Cosenza's tourism forum presented at the beginning of that year in January 2019. As mentioned in the previous chapter during my visit with Vittorio, a greater focus of the forum was placed on developing the museum and art sector in a bid to prioritize the creation of cultural desire and narrative (notably successful in northern Italian regions), instead of focusing on Calabria's already existent rich gastronomic histories and the prioritization of infrastructural development for the region. During one session of the forum, a presenter who worked in tourism development used Venice as a success story and argued for an emphasis on promoting the myth of Cosenza being the alleged site of the buried treasure of King Alaric, instead of developing site-specific needs for the city, like restoring its historic city centre which was dilapidated, or promoting the already existent rich gastronomic heritage of Calabria. To the presenter, what was more important was not that the myth of the king was even true, but that it created mystery, intrigue, and notoriety, and these was the 'key' to drawing tourism to the city. When examining infrastructure, this relates to Larkin's arguments around the image and meaning of infrastructures separate from their function, and how they are 'semiotic objects' which can be fetishized, objects or concepts of desire, and have affective qualities separate from their technical functionalities (2013: p.329). These poetics of infrastructure are the distancing of infrastructures from their technical systems, transforming their representations into 'social facts' (Ibid: p.335). This is often deployed by the state as a form of bureaucratic auditing or superficial box checking of projects conceptualized as requirements for a modern forward-thinking society through the lens of enlightenment values (Ibid). But disconnections between state agenda, funding resource usage, and local demands and needs manifested in the deterioration of the road systems I examined and the breakdown of relationships of trust and expectations, which furthered the isolation of these rural spaces.

The majority of locals I met in Cosenza and other parts of Calabria, expressed their frustration with many politicians and a disbelief that development projects would be

completed, whether in remote countryside areas or in larger urban cities like Cosenza. Even in the case that some projects were completed, many did not fulfil the everyday needs of local communities. Political scientist Simona Piattoni's past work on clientelistic patron relationships in southern Italy can be used as one possible starting point to understanding the failures of infrastructural projects and the disconnection between the desires of the political classes who govern municipalities and the needs of local communities. She stated,

> True enough, private and public investment, even of an apparent public nature, can be used for clientelistic purposes. Thus highways may be built not because of their potential effect on economic growth, but because their construction creates numerous occasions for clientelistic exchanges. Similarly, firms may be attracted to an area not because of their impact on the local economy, but because the jobs that they create can be distributed among loyal clients (1998: p.234).

She continued that these investments typically failed, and any successes would be unexpected and may threaten the dependency dynamics between clients and their patrons (Ibid). Through his research on water systems in Mumbai settlements, Nikhil Anand explains that local residents were well aware that their access to water resources reflected their relationship with state governing bodies, and in turn, the state used these same hydraulic systems to reinforce and promote their legitimacy (2017: p.10). When examining the everyday workings of government in Mumbai he states that the 'technopolitical management of public infrastructures plays a critical role in disconnecting particular residents from the benefits of urban citizenship' (Anand 2012: p.490). This was the case in the example he presents of the *dada* or local leaders who had control over the ability for city water engineers to access these water systems and serve the populations they technically were supposed to be working for, instead of being caught up in clandestine patron-client dynamics (Anand 2012: p.498, 2011).

The topic of patron-client relations links directly to Calabria's well known and over-emphasized history of corrupt mafia activity, specifically its regional mafia group called 'Ndrangheta, and this will be examined and expanded on in further detail later in chapter seven. The specificity of a place, its natural and built environments, the communities that inhabit those spaces (including their needs and desires), and the place's socio-cultural specificities (both historical and present day) determine the ways in which local and regional development manifest, succeed, and even fail (Pike *et al*. 2007). To overlook these particularities of place and space, and approach development through large-scale replication

of projects and programs which have seemingly worked for other comparatively ‘successful’ Italian regions or other countries, increases the probability of failure, disruption, and conflict for the new places in question because of inaccurate application and customization. As a result, this can lead to reaffirming the binary division of a ‘developed’ versus ‘developing’ or ‘modern’ versus ‘backward’ society. In other words, what one place and its society are, the other is not, and inherently so, which recycles southern Italian territorial stigmatization. Infrastructures are a ‘material and aspirational terrain for negotiating the promises and ethics of political authority, and the making and unmaking of political subjects’ (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018: p.20). These qualities can be starkly apparent and obvious when infrastructures such as large-scale development projects fail, breakdown, or remain unfinished.



Figure 4. Blocked areas of the viale during the spring fair (personal photo, 2019).

This could be seen in the example of the roadway project of the Parco del Benessere located on the Viale Giacomo Mancini where the traditional mostaccioli cookies were sold during the fair I went to, while it was still an unfinished construction site. The project was announced in 2017 by the then mayor and was promoted to become the largest wellness park in Italy, signed off by the regional municipality of Calabria. Stretching approximately two kilometres long, it was to be the ‘green lung’ in the centre of Cosenza with cycle paths, green

spaces and gardens, areas that would facilitate sport and leisure activities, a tramline connection to the University of Calabria, and even an underground video monitored cycling path that would connect from the historic city centre to the university.[35] This major roadway ran the length of the city from north to south, and because of this, it was a major artery for Cosenza's transit route where locals and visitors used it for commuting in and out of the city. The roadway's double lanes were separated by a raised pedestrian area with trees, pathways use for jogging and walking, as well as bus stops dotted along it.

After inaugurating the Percorso del Benessere in the spring of 2018 (a running path along the north half of the roadway), the city's then mayor announced the plans for the construction of the Parco del Benessere to begin in June of that same year.[36] This new infrastructural upgrade was to create additional green and leisure pedestrian spaces, requiring the removal of one of the double lanes in order to make space for the installation of a new tramway link and station connecting Cosenza to the University of Calabria in Rende. But the reality was that the daily traffic and congestion of commuters in and out of Cosenza significantly increased, doubling traveling times for people, and to a certain degree discouraging them from visiting the city for shopping, dining, or hanging out, which in turn negatively affected local businesses. One of those businesses was a pub owned by a good friend of my cousin, located not far from the roadway along another main pedestrian street parallel to it called Corso Mazzini, which housed retail and leisure establishments and spaces.

After being introduced to the pub owner and explaining to him why I had moved to Cosenza to live for that year, we caught up with him about his pub and how business was doing. He expressed his frustrations of the fact that businesses in the city were suffering because of how dead the city was during days and weeks which would otherwise have been peak periods for them, full of customers. He said this was partially due to the construction on the roadway and how people were less inclined to travel to Cosenza to hang out in the evening and socialize with friends, and that many more people were choosing to live and spend their social time in the neighbouring city of Rende. The University of Calabria was located there and was surrounded by a number of retail spaces, concert venues, restaurants,

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[35] https://www.comune.cosenza.it/it/novita/page/il-sindaco-occhiuto-annuncia-i-lavori-di-realizzazione-del-piu-grande-parco-del-benessere-d-italia-dai-giochi-per-l-infanzia-alla-piazza-per-gli-eventi-fino-alla-metropolitana-per-le-bici .

[36] Video report posted on the Comune di Cosenza's YouTube page: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXtjMdN7EWo .

cafes, bars, and other commercial establishments. What made Cosenza's wellness park road project unpopular with the majority of locals was that it had been initiated in 2018, construction had been drawn out, and by the time of my arrival in January 2019 for fieldwork, it had stopped completely during the winter and spring months while I was there, only to be taken up again in late summer, without any clear communication disseminated to the public as to when it would be finished.



Figure 5. Top section of the wellness park during May of fieldwork (personal photo, 2019).

People regularly reacted to my question about its construction timeline with a sentiment of unsurprised doubt and frustration. This project seemed to be another one added to the list of infrastructural projects that remained unfinished in the city, with a pending unknown deadline, all the while draining funding resources for other potentially more important things and disrupting the everyday living of locals. The wellness park remained unfinished and only partially accessible during 2020 through the Covid-19 pandemic. By August 2022, it still remained unfinished and in response to the criticism and frustration by locals regarding the previous administration, the new mayor of Cosenza hoped this road project (started in 2018) would be completed and fully opened to the public by autumn 2023,

to prevent it from becoming another 'unfinished project' for the city and region.[37] I attended a conference at the University of Calabria in the last week of June 2023 and saw first-hand that although more parts of the road were opened, there still remained some sections that were blocked off, unfinished. It was not until 2nd June 2024 when the wellness park had its official inauguration ceremony, marking the completion of the contentious project.[38]

Through his research on construction sites in Ethiopia, anthropologist Daniel Mains argues that, 'construction offers both a theory and methodology for exploring the relation between state-led development and destruction' where, 'states, citizens, materials, markets, labour, and plans for the future continually encounter each other,' and these collisions are often dangerous and unstable (Mains 2019: p.5-6). He continues that, 'construction is as much about building images and feelings as it is about building things' (Ibid: p.17). Similarly, through her ethnographic research on roads in Peru, Harvey argues that the material conditions of roads have in them the 'histories of both state presence and neglect' and that roads were not affiliated with 'moments of decisive state action' (2018: p.86). The wellness park was not the only unfinished development project of this nature in Cosenza, which seemed to be more in line with global tourism trends and approaches instead of prioritizing and improving the realities of local communities so that they could live better, have more economic stability, and in relation to tourism, have better systems and resources to support sustainable tourism activities.

Additional examples of this can be seen in two other building projects in the city of Cosenza I encountered during fieldwork: the Bridge of St. Francesco of Paola (*Ponte di San Francesco di Paola*) designed by the high-profile Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and the Giovanni Battista Amico Planetarium named after the renaissance astronomer by the same name who originated from Cosenza. Both were long construction projects which were not fully complete when their inauguration celebrations occurred. My cousin Alessio had taken me to the Calatrava bridge when I had first arrived in Calabria in January 2019 for my fieldwork and showed me that although the main structure was finished and the bridge had its official inauguration just a year prior on 27th January 2018, the areas and pathways on either

[37] https://www.quicosenza.it/news/area-urbana/468368-parco-del-benessere-il-sindaco-sul-cantiere-senza-intoppi-per-lautunno-sara-completato .
[38] https://www.quicosenza.it/news/area-urbana/inaugurato-il-parco-del-benessere-polmone-verde-in-centro-citta-caruso-e-di-tutti-rispettatelo .

side of it which connected to the banks of the river, were not complete. Although the main priorities of having the bridge constructed was part of a larger 'urban regeneration project' for Cosenza (to join two neighbourhoods separated by the Crati river and to have a key landmark for Cosenza and the region of Calabria at large[39]) the 104 meter tall harp-shaped cable bridge cost approximately €20 million from previously acquired Gescal funds meant for public housing developments.[40] Later on in my stay, another friend mentioned to me that although the Planetarium (initiated back in 2002[41]) had hosted its launch event (on 6th April 2019) with music, aerial performers, and media press, the inside was not completed, unusable still, and as a consequence was not yet fully opened to the public. According to a local news report published in May 2022, due to its miss-management and the Covid-19 pandemic, the €7.8 million planetarium remained closed, fully blocked off, rusting, with weeds growing through its pavement.[42] As of February 2025, no further changes or updates have been noted for the restoration of the planetarium and it remains closed.



Figure 6. Calatrava bridge (personal photo, 2019).

[39] https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/santiago-calatrava-completes-new-bridge-italy .
[40] https://www.corriere.it/cronache/18_gennaio_27/cosenza-ponte-calatrava-inaugurato-polemiche-costruito-soldi-le-case-popolari-eca8e02a-035e-11e8-93bb-ec4bb3ac447d.shtml .
[41] https://www.comune.cosenza.it/it/novita/page/presentato-questa-mattina-il-progetto-definitivo-del-planetario .
[42] https://www.cosenzachannel.it/2022/05/02/storia-triste-del-planetario-di-cosenza-dalle-stelle-alle-stalle/ .



Figure 7. Planetarium (personal photo, 2019).

Anthropologist Hannah Appel's ethnographic study of promise and infrastructural time in Equatorial Guinea's capital Malabo engages with the country's economic and infrastructural boom at the beginning of the 2000s, and she argues that its national economy became the 'object of development and developmental time' and in turn its boom in infrastructure was a conceptualized materialization of it (2018: p.49). Similar to the case Appel presents in her ethnography where large ambitious infrastructural developments were conceptualized for Equatorial Guinea even though they did not have consistent reliable running water or electricity, during my fieldwork I discovered that not only was Cosenza's tap water not drinkable because their water system was outdated and not separate from septic water lines, running water would shut off completely during the evenings because of a drop in water pressure disabling the circulation of water in pipes to the upper floors of older apartment buildings. This was occurring while attention, time, and resources were prioritized by the state for their multi-million-euro utopian development projects such as the roadway wellness park. On paper, these initiatives are attractive and draw attention to Cosenza, but they remain ideas or concepts of *desire* as opposed to tangible and accessible socio-economic resources for locals and visitors. Akhil Gupta states that an overlooked understanding of infrastructures is that although they embody symbolism of futurity, they begin their processes of ruination the moment their creation begins (2018). He argues that popular understandings

of infrastructures with initial planning and then concluding with the closure of inaugural celebrations expresses the disillusionment created by modernity, and ignores the temporal and dynamic components to infrastructures as being processes (Ibid: p.62). Piattoni expanded on this point by stating that infrastructures in southern Italy backed by large firm investors often serve more,

> …the selective interests of the southern contractors than the interests of the investing firm and the community at large. Also, the conflicts that inevitably surrounded the crisis-induced restructuring of many large firms in the South were sometimes effectively intermediated and other times aggravated by the local political classes (1998: p.238).

With country roads and transportation systems like the ones in Sila, failing and neglected of maintenance, set against other large-scale prioritized urban development projects that would draw attention and tourism into the city (such as the roadway wellness park, planetarium, and Calatrava bridge), the latter seem unnecessary and impractical to the lives of locals. Carse explains that competing infrastructures can create environmental conflicts, and she uses the example of the Chagres River and the tension between transportation infrastructures and rural development infrastructures to express this (2014). In similar ways, this relates to the degradation of roads and other public services neglected in rural and urban environments in Calabria, intersecting and conflicting with the development projects that detract from them, which drain resources that could be allocated towards their development, and as a result further facilitate their breakdown.

Representations of Promise

Larkin argues that infrastructures are the sites of 'political debates' because they often demonstrate the dialogues between many things (people, materials, ideologies, politics, etc.) and they become 'reflexive points where the present state and future possibilities of government and society are held up for public assessment' (2018: p.177). Dalakoglou and Harvey describe the term *non-place infrastructures* and that examples of these such as,

> …airports, shopping malls and motorway service stations might be non-places to the passing traveller – but they are replete with social relations, with material histories, with regulatory forces and when given the chance reveal complex social and cultural dynamics that bear close attention (2012: p.463).

The same applies to unfinished development projects like the roadway and broken-down infrastructures like the country roads in Sila. They become infrastructural *non-systems*, which on the surface derive from and cause disruption, but are intersectional entities which have imbedded in them social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural meaning, while hosting the relationships of all these factors. Material infrastructures like the roadway project are like what Anand, Gupta, and Appel argue as 'dense social, material, aesthetic, and political formations' consequential in separating quotidian experiences and notions of future potential (2018: p.3). They continue that,

> …the material and political lives of infrastructures frequently undermine narratives of technological progress, liberal equality, and economic growth, revealing fragile and often violent relations between people, things, and the institutions that govern or provision them (Ibid: p.3).

Gupta points out that infrastructures extend beyond the needs and desires of the present in that they are 'built in anticipation of a not-yet-achieved future' and in this way contextualize the future into the present (2018: p.63). When analysing the concept of *suspension* of infrastructures instead of *incompleteness* because they are processes and not finite projects, infrastructures take on a form of 'in-between-ness' of promise and delivery (Ibid: p.70). Larkin echoes this by arguing that technologies are equally 'metaphors' as they are 'technical objects' (2018: p.179). Similar to how the mostaccioli cookies were at one time perceived and used as representational objects for devotional and ritual purposes in controlling the uncertainty of everyday life, Cosenza's large-scale unfinished infrastructural urban projects such as the roadway-turned-wellness park exist in some way, transformed into representations of progressiveness, awe, prosperity, and forward-thinking modernity with no servable utility. These projects' failed materiality strips them of utility in the same way as the traditional mostaccioli has now become to some locals a difficult or inedible food to eat, even though its traditional form may have never acted as edible food in the first place but rather a 'blurred' entity that embodied a food item and devotional object or offering. Larkin argues that a promise is both a 'vow' or 'commitment' but also 'a future state of affairs' where people, things (both material and nonmaterial, such as ideas, etc.) embody the notion of promise (2018: p.181). Specifically in the case of the promise of infrastructure, it never refers to the temporal present but instead a 'temporal deferral' to a future time or state consisting of 'expectation and desire, frustration and absence' not often situated in rationality, and that a promise cannot be analysed outside the political systems that enabled it (Ibid: pp.181-182).

Rather, it implies that it as ‘a technological system is the aftereffect of expectation’ (Ibid: pp.181-182). In the case of road inaugurations in Peru, Harvey explains that the, ‘urge of presidents to inaugurate public works indicates the political purchase of infrastructural projects,’ and the speeches presented by state officials containing figures and metrics are ‘rehearsed as metrics of care and political investment in unspecified futures’ (2018: p.94). The reality that many of the large-scale infrastructural projects I mentioned thus far were unfinished at the time of their official inaugural ceremonies where the then major and key city council members made public appearances and statements to media outlets during their celebrations, connects to Harvey’s argument that their presence and soundbites were used to re-legitimize the projects even though the majority of the public I spoke to were not in support of these projects. Even if some were in support of them, they were unconvinced that the projects would actually be completed.

When examining the mostaccioli cookies, their traditional versions shaped as people or animals are not in fact real people or animals, but rather impressions or caricatures of them. In similar and parallel ways, unfinished urban projects become stage sets, representations of themselves which do not possess their expected utility but instead both serve the rituals of inauguration with the celebrations of their unveiling to the public as misleading evidence to the promise of progress for the city and outsiders looking in, but also as sites which excavate and accumulate the grievances and frustrations between locals and the state. Both the cookies and unfinished infrastructure projects alike are in their own ways unfulfilled promises. The traditional mostaccioli have now become remnants of their former selves, of what *used to be*, which was a materially vibrant and purposefully affective object linked to active pagan belief systems, devotion, and interpersonal relationships. Cosenza’s roadway project, Calatrava bridge, and planetarium have become remnants of what *could have* and *should have been*, infrastructural promises which have become material reminders of a wider accumulation of Calabria’s socio-cultural histories which contain stories and accounts of failure and territorial stigmatization. Temporal pasts and futures collide in their intersections, revealing that adaptation and customization to place and time are possible ways forward. This can be seen in the more contemporary iteration of the mostaccioli, which are more simplistic in form and prioritize ingredients, textures, and tastes over representation, material appearance, imitation, and traditional accuracy. Both the traditional mostaccioli and the roadway project are representational myths for the communities they are situated in. Focusing on the myth and narrative of a place as a way forward has its downfall when

fundamental structural constraints and ruptures are chronic and endemic. In a way similar to the mostaccioli's origin as a pagan offering, the roadway wellness park was an offering by the state to the city's communities which was not useful to them.

It is this in-between-ness that becomes the catalyst for aggravating already existing tensions between the Calabrian and Italian state bodies and local Calabrian communities. Simply copying and pasting approaches and trends of tourism and infrastructural development successful in other Italian regions and international countries does not guarantee success, stability, and progression for Calabria. There is already historical evidence to this argument. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, one just has to look at Italy's Unification and the consequences the South experienced by the placement of European Enlightenment values and approaches from France and England, along with sweeping national standardization and regulation by industrial capitalism from northern Italy which oppressed and stifled the South. It is in the moments when these approaches and initiatives fail or breakdown through their incorrect implementation and integration, when Calabria then becomes at risk of being relabelled as an investment liability, an inherently difficult region to develop in with difficult people, and a problematic place unable to break free from the regurgitation of anti-southernist stereotyping.

With this being said, there is a possible area of opportunity for Calabria to redefine and reacquaint itself, firstly *with itself* within a regional context, and more importantly with the rest of Italy and abroad, since it still remains a relatively unknown Italian region outside of its stereotypes. Arjun Appadurai argued approximately a decade ago that examining the relationship between the concepts of culture and future had been underexplored in anthropology and that examining them together could greatly affect understandings of development and poverty (2013: p.179). He explained that anthropology has had the habit of focusing study on the binaries of 'utopian and millennial movements' and the more contemporary focus on 'cultural trauma' without exploring the spectrum in between, which as a result has reinforced the 'sense that hope is a product of moments of exception and emergency and that the future is not a routine element of thought and practice in all societies' (Ibid: p.292). He continued that what was absent was the comprehension of the ways that 'cultural systems' constructed the 'ideal life' as 'a landscape of discernible ends and practical paths' to achieve these end goals and that anthropology must move away from focusing on cultural reproduction to a broader understanding on how cultures influence the creation of

'ideal life' imagery, 'as a map of the journey from here to there and from now to then, as part of the ethics of everyday life' (Ibid: p.292). Beyond the very real issues of chronically failing state development plans and infrastructural projects in Calabria, the mass depopulation of young educated Calabrians seeking futures (either temporarily or permanently) outside the region, and the intense conditions nature and climate change present to the region, the culture of stigma has directly affected and shaped the ways in which locals construct and express their understanding of hope and future. A cultural sentiment by some from both inside and outside the region that things in the South never change or rarely succeed, and if they do it most likely was achieved through the aid of corrupt channels of resources or cultural capital. Appadurai continues that an important aspect of 'future as a cultural fact' is that 'hope is the political counterpoint to the work of the imagination' and this is the only way in which the 'journey to desirable change can be conceptualized by a society or group of people' (2013: p.293).

Although the wider generalized cultural representation of Calabria is that of a place that is complimentary or evidential to its historical stigmas, culture itself is *malleable* and both individuals and their collective communities are *creative*, taking ownership over the social, economic, and political circumstances they exist in, and in turn have the potential to create new paths to success for themselves and their communities. Holbraad, Kapferer, and Sauma argue that, 'ruptures are moments at which value emerges through the break of something' (2019: p.1). This can be applied to the case of climate change and failed infrastructure in Calabria outlined in this section. Although these have created significant negative impacts on local communities and gastro-tourism development in the region, they also provide opportunities for adaptation, creative approaches, and revision of current systems that have not worked for the region. These changes may not be large-scale and noticeable from afar, but none-the-less they exist in the quotidian actions of the everyday lives of local communities. Vittorio and Giuseppe have found alternative ways to grow their businesses and circulate the cultural richness of their localities, the ethical standards they use in their businesses, and the regional cultural histories of their crafts to locals and visitors alike for both *re-education* and *introduction*. The ineffectiveness of the state and municipal officials as manifested through failed regional investments and incomplete unnecessary infrastructural projects like the roadway wellness park, make hope and future difficult realities for locals to perceive, but locals find other ways to enact change even when larger structural systems are under chronic failure. More examples of these alternative ways

entrepreneurs are developing to build a future separate from their regional stigma and change the narratives surrounding Calabria to be more accurate, inspirational, and constructive, will be explored in the subsequent sections of this thesis. With the next section's focus on *food*, chapters five and six will examine deeper the various markets of Italian gastro-tourism, Calabria's inclusion in and exclusion from it, the dynamics which cause these phenomena, and alternative approaches local entrepreneurs in Calabria are taking in order to strengthen the region's economy and promote its cultural richness.

Section 3: Food

Chapter 5: Heritage Pigs: Foraging Through Markets of Inclusion and Exclusion

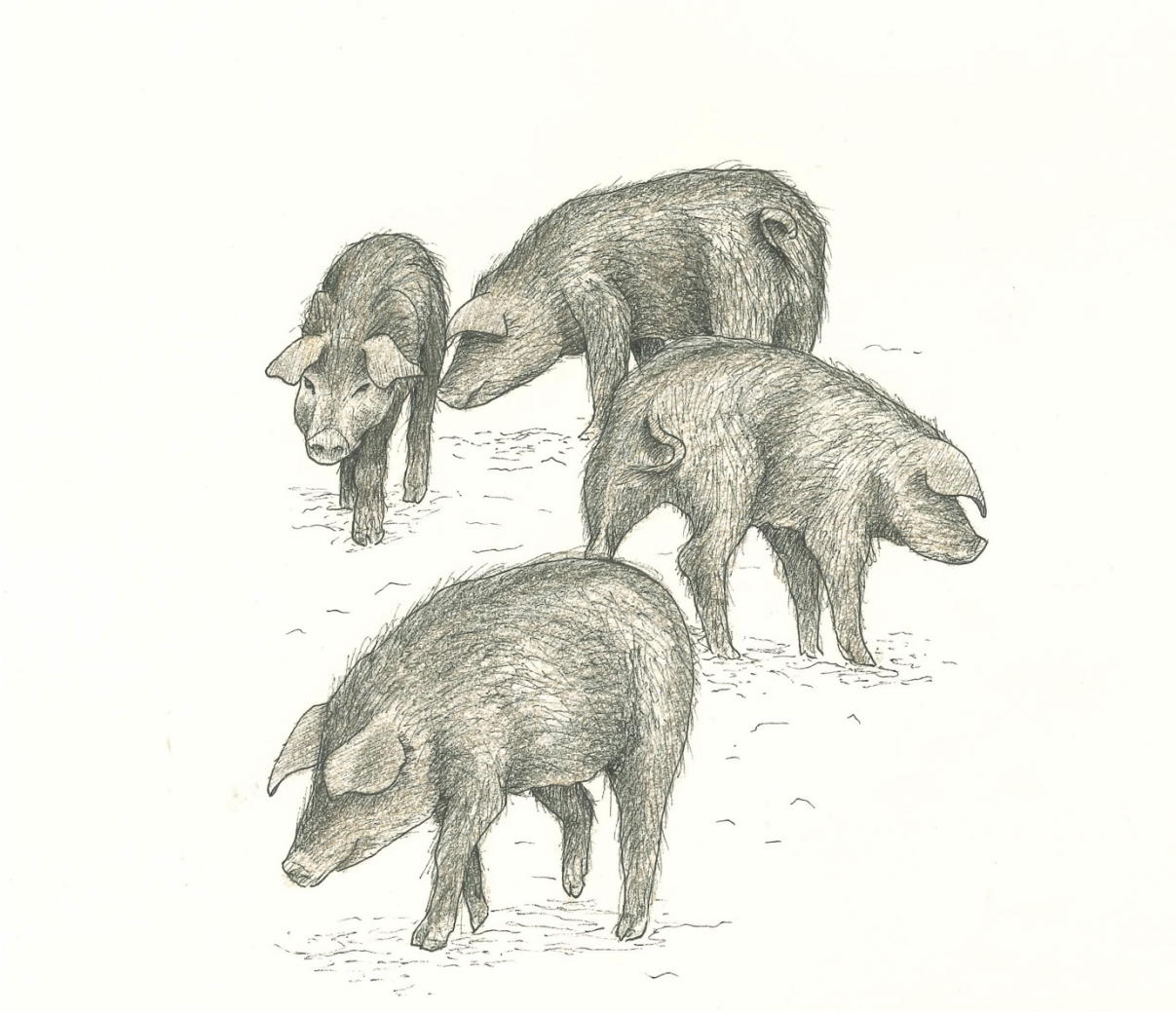


Figure 1. *Suino Nero di Calabria* (personal drawing, 2024).

My next road trip journey through the mountainside of provincial Cosenza was to a small-scale pig farmer and cured meat (*salumi*) producer named Nicola, this time in the small town of Acri. His agricultural business Azienda Agricola Romano specialized in the raising of a heritage breed of pig which originated from Calabria called *suino nero di Calabria* (black pig of Calabria). This breed has deep roots in the region, further back than larger white pig breeds (*suino bianco*) brought over from northern Europe to Calabria at the end of the 19th century (Tigiani Sava *et al.* 2014: pp.367-368). Smaller and leaner than their northern cousins, suino nero di Calabria was traditionally raised free range, grazing on pastureland, roots, nuts, and other foraged foods which made for a richer and more complex flavour profile in their meat (Ibid). My uncle Massimo sold Nicola's exclusive pork products in his

specialty grocery shop and once again, I had the opportunity to sample some of them. The flavour of the suino nero was pronounced with the combination of the savoury aged pork meat laced with ribbons of sweet fat and harmonious spices that did not overwhelm its flavour, but instead enhanced it. Nothing was 'off' in flavour, or too 'gamey' as some cured meats can carry, but it had an intensity of flavour distinctly its own which set it apart from other more popular salumi such as *prosciutto di Parma* produced in the north of Italy and others made from more common pig breeds.

My cousin Alessio had mentioned to me that Acri was a place known within the province for its very delicious foods. We were journeying the same route to Acri that Alessio regularly took because he taught drumming music lessons there, but this time on that mid-July summer day we were on our way to meet Nicola and speak with him about his work. Like many areas in Calabria, Acri also was a village with historical traditions of domestic salumi production, where households would typically make their own, sharing a pig between many families to make traditional products like *soppressata* and *capcollo* for personal consumption. The drive to Acri was about 30 minutes outside of Cosenza towards the mountain town, similar to the drive in Sila when I visited cheesemaker and agriculturalist Vittorio (mentioned in the previous section). Alessio told me the food culture in Acri was very particular to the area and unique when compared to the rest of the province.

We arrived at an address located in a residential neighbourhood and met Nicola. His factory was one of the low-rise apartment buildings along the street where we were waiting and so it was extremely small-scale and localized. It was discovered later that this seemingly nondescript residential building was where he produced all of his pork products. He greeted us, brought us inside, and stopped at a small alcove between one of his refrigeration rooms and a larger room where his team of four employees processed the meat. There were many different rooms where this small-scale production happened, which included walk-in fridges, butcher counters and other areas, all of which were extremely clean and smelt unbelievably fresh for a space that stored and processed raw meat. We began to talk, me explaining my project and what I generally wanted to discuss with him, and he explaining more about himself and his business. As the conversation continued, I assumed that at some point we would go to a quieter area (because there was the banging of cleavers through meat and bone, and the noise of machines in the background from the employees working), but this was where our extended discussion would take place. Different from previous interactions with

people in the industry up to that point in my fieldwork where we often went to a place separate from their site of production to talk, my meeting with Nicola happened in the literal 'heart' of his production site. After studying economics, completing a three-year internship, and working as an accountant, Nicola left that career trajectory and began this business in 2008. He worked under ARSAC Calabria[43] which formed a co-operative of breeders who raised suino nero di Calabria and protected their genetic heritage. ARSAC is a company which promoted and supported innovations and growth of the agricultural sector in Calabria by providing resources for businesses, companies, co-operatives, and the wider sector.[44]



Figure 2. An assortment of food from Massimo's shop during one of my first lunches with Alessio at the start of fieldwork. This was the first time eating Nicola's suino nero products (thinly sliced and pink in the centre-top of the photograph) along with other local specialties such as *giuncata* cheese pressed with fresh arugula from Giuseppe's farm in Morano (far left), and bread from a traditional bakery in the small town of Pietrafitta where my father was born (bottom-front) (personal photo, 2019).

There were many types of black pig breeds which originated in Italy and Nicola explained them to me in detail.

> We have Calabrian *suino nero*, that became Apulolucano and they included Basilicata and Puglia, but they are born Calabrian suino nero. Because the race, the type, has been found in Sila and in Aspromonte….Then there is *nero Sardo*, Sardegnio, that is a black breed that normally has long hair and looks like a mammoth. Then there is *nero dei Nebrodi* of Sicilia that is smaller and seems like a boar and is all black. Then there is the *nero di Parma*, from

[43] Azienda Regionale per lo Sviluppo Dell'Agricoltura Calabrese (Regional Company for the Development of Calabrian Agriculture).
[44] https://arsac.calabria.it/arsac-chi-siamo/ .

> Parma, that is in reality a photocopy of the Calabrian breed. We say that they stole it from us, but they say no. In the end, they stole it from us.

Nicola also mentioned another breed, the *nero di Lazio*, but he said he found it 'stupid' that it was discovered only two years ago. After all the centuries that had passed, all the technologies developed, and all the veterinarians and scientists who studied these breeds, he found it hard to believe that this one had simply gone undiscovered. He argued that it was done as propaganda: to create business and territoriality for the Lazio region by claiming a discovery of a new breed of pig.

Nicola transitioned from accountant to heritage pig breeder and his belief was to develop high quality salumi, drawing from the traditional knowledge and skills his mother used when making them for domestic consumption, and combining these traditional practices with the sanitation and hygiene regulations of local commercial food production. For the first two years of his business, he had a third-party process and produce the salumi at their own factory from the animals he raised, but he noticed there were inconsistencies in the production and issues with the quality of the products. After those two years he said, 'I knew that I had to leave, and "move with my own legs",' and in 2011 he opened the business he ran today. He explained that he felt the members who ran and controlled the co-operative failed in investing the public funds they received to run it (which he pointed out was a common issue and tendency for businesses and public governing bodies in the region). Using his economic knowledge as a former accountant, he started his business from the ground up, investing in projects, building his *agritourismo*, and buying equipment. 'Piece by piece by piece. I did this,' he said. He followed the regulations of organic and free-range production, so the animals were healthy and raised correctly, and that consumers would receive an equally healthy and premium product. Through trial and error and participating in many notable food fairs across Italy, Spain, and England, he grew his business. He also began participating in food competitions where he submitted his products to be evaluated, and in 2014, 2017, and 2018 he won best salami in Italy. Nicola explained that after all that work traveling and investing in projects, network building, and exposure, he was now at a point where the demand surpassed production and he could focus less on the former and more on the development of his small factory, his land, and his pigs. Since he first started his business eleven years ago, every year he estimated a 20-30% increase in profit, and attributed the success of the publicity of his business to his word-of-mouth approach, where he interacted

directly with consumers. The time around Christmas was what he called a 'boom' in sales because there was a strong demand from people wanting to gift their friends higher quality food products. These forms of direct communication increased in his consumer base. He told me,

> I never paid for publicity, because we are talking about a small business like this one with not that much money. It is not that you have five to six figures (euros) so you can invest in €50,000-€100,000 in advertising. I do modest numbers…and because I get good reviews from the consumer…clients have always increased.

Nicola also applied this approach to his relationships with retailers. He turned to Alessio and said that this was the case with his work relationship with Massimo's specialty food shop. He began with a small amount of Nicola's products in his shop and then the demand not only increased, but became regular. He said,

> Here there is a rapport of trust, direct. Because basically…he (Massimo) calls the producer directly when he calls me, and if he tells me 'Nicola look, I found a small defect,' this is not a large industrial production where they call a representative, or another, or the quality service department, that does the credit documents (for a refund), and then it has to recognize (the defect) and then you get tired and you do not buy it anymore. No. If there is a defect, I just say 'do not worry, it can happen. Next time if there is a defect that can happen, I will change it.' It is a case of a direct rapport of trust.

80% of the places where his products were retailed were at stores that specialized in traditional regional products or organic products, as well as higher end restaurants. Many were within Italy, but he pointed out at that time that he also had an importer from Luxembourg and one from London called *Vorrei*[45] whose founder he mentioned was also Calabrian and in fact from Cosenza. Nicola explained that his customers were conscious buyers of organic products who valued eating higher quality foods. Many of them were around 40 years of age, young families who wanted to feed their children higher quality food even if it was higher in price. Nicola established a balance between healthy organic production and high-quality taste. He argued that the former did not always ensure that the latter was there in products so making delicious products was paramount for him. '…above all my aim is that whoever eats a slice of my sausages, they have to say that they taste like the way their mother used to do it, they have to say they are always like the way *nonna* (grandmother) used to make them. This is my goal,' Nicola said.

[45] https://www.vorrei.co.uk/ .

He reiterated that attention to detail and having a hands-on approach was key to a successful business with high quality products and explained,

> I always use this example; Gianni Agnelli (owner of Fiat) took his nephew Giovannino Agnelli (before he took him to the top of the company) under a fake name, he kept him in the assembly line for two years where he assembled Piaggio mopeds (small motorcycles). In order to be a good administrator you have to know everything, from how you clean a tile, to how you pack the final product. You also have to know every client because every client has their own prerogatives, characteristics…if his father (referring to Alessio's father Massimo) knows his clients, and I know that if he says that he prefers a cut of meat, it is because he knows his clients and will sell it well. I know that he has this type of reasoning because he knows his clients, and I support him…because we are a small company with limited numbers, we can satisfy any request.

In Nicola's case, he explained that although salumi producers were common in Calabria, there were not many salumi producers like himself who were also breeders. As a result, he had direct control of all three stages of his business; breeding, salumi production, and distribution (whether through himself or the retailers he partnered with). This level of autonomy, of control, proximity, and oversight on his business is in part only possible because his business was small. He explained that over the years he had developed this level of competence in his business because of this direct ownership and he expressed pride in the fact that he saw the full cycle of his work, from raising his pigs, from life to death, and the final product. He put effort in building a relationship with his pigs. Even when it came down to their slaughter, Nicola explained that he went with them to the butcher, right up until the end of their life. He said,

> My pigs… they are happy. And when they go to the butcher, I put them on the truck. And I go Monday morning at 5am to the butcher. When I go down from the truck, no one has to touch them. Because they have dignity. And they trust me when they go down because the pig is smarter than the dog. So when they go down, they follow you, you don't need bats or other tools. They follow you and go to the place where they get stunned, in silence.

He placed focus more on respect and passion in his work, as opposed to it being a means for solely economic aspiration, and this was evident in his decision to career shift away from accounting and towards an unfamiliar profession that he connected to personally via his family traditions. 'You have to do it with the objective to grow, and for the result of the territory, maybe with the hope that someone will continue it.' He went on saying,

> If not, what can you do…then that is the end of the suino nero. Instead, the goal is to create a result that you can pass on, that remains, that grows, that someone will continue. Then you

> created the principle of the company. The company has to live in spite of everything. If the company was born with me and will die with me, then I am not a 'company' I am an independent business.

Nicola's point connects to the same sentiment of many Calabrian producers I interacted with, that wanted longevity in their businesses but also wanted the economic growth and success of the region. 'I have to create an autonomous business,' he continued. 'I want that the name created this way serves basically to create a connection to the territory.' He used the example of onions from Tropea and how the *terroir* of those onions linked them exclusively to that specific coastal place, and this generated an exclusive tourism particular to that region. The difficulty in a seasonal terroir-based tourism is that it is dependent on the time of year in which the product is available. The goal Nicola argued, was to think of ways to continue the gastro-tourism industry outside of the July-December peak period. He found that business was slowest after Easter during late spring and summer when locals would go on vacation to the ocean or the mountains. He may still have sold his products internationally during this period, but regional demand was statistically lower. Once the school year started in the fall and the holiday season approached, business and revenue increased. There was also a social component to this flux where he believed that his products sold less during the hot months because of their high fat content. Customers may be less interested in consuming fattier foods when they may be watching their diet after the holidays and during the summer.

Nicola then brought the conversation onto the topic of development. With the unlimited uncultivated land in the region, he argued that people that wanted to create their own business could not. Firstly, this was due to social class judgments on the type of work you chose to do. He said that in his case, people in his local town thought he was crazy, finishing his education and then choosing to be a heritage pig breeder for his career. '…they said son of doctors, they made him study and then he ended on manure,' Nicola said, referring to himself. He admitted that he did not begin the business out of a passion for suino nero di Calabria or salumi making though. As a trained economist, he saw an opening in the market; no one in Calabria (or even Italy for that matter) was specifically producing DOP[46] certified salumi that was also organic and made from a Calabrian heritage breed that he raised himself. These food production certifications were important for customers to remain informed on the quality and production standards of his products, and to separate them from

[46] Denominazione d'Origine Protetta (Protected Designation of Origin).

counterfeit products imitating the same standards. At the same time, there were some pitfalls with certification systems and other companies have found ways to work around these regulations to sell inferior cheaper products labelled the same with inflated pricing to accrue more financial profit. Nicola expanded on this more in our conversation and this point will be expanded on later in this chapter as well. When it came to the organic label which Nicola prioritized to obtain, for him it acted as an extension of his voice to customers when he could not explain to them directly about the quality of his products. The key to success in Nicola's eyes was hard, hands-on work, in creating something that no one else was doing, at a high level of quality. In essence, he said he created his own 'monopoly' by filling a niche market. The issue with many in Calabria he argued was, 'no one wants to roll up their sleeves to follow a principle, a passion. Everyone leaves because they only pursue a final result directly. They are born losers.' Bluntly speaking he continued that the way the system was set up in the region, 'you either have a political card and you find someone who finds you a job or you have to leave. Or you roll up your sleeves, and start to sweat, and think about something others are not doing.' It was only through his experiences, debt, successes, and failures that his work transformed into a *passion*.

When asked about the state of the current gastro-tourism industry in Calabria, Nicola brought up a well-known Italian tourism company called Valtur.[47] It was founded in Ostuni (in the region of Puglia, located at the heel of Italy) back in 1964, and then was rebranded in 2018. They organize a selection of pre-set all-inclusive tourism resorts in Italy and other countries (such as Greece), and they had two specifically located in Calabria; one near Diamante and Grisolia Lido on the eastern coastline and the other near Sibari on the ancient Greek western coastline. Referring to these resorts, he said,

> Being locked inside there and leaving occasionally to eat a pizza…It's not that you go to a store with typical products that we have in places in the mountains and along the ocean, where in reality the products (there) are made in the four to five industrial food businesses that we have. There are no Calabrian products (at the resorts), not even the primary ingredients originate from Calabria. In fact, you can't find them written on the labels.

He argued that the true gastro-tourism industry was what my thesis project was doing: searching out information on local producers and entrepreneurs, visiting them in person, and verifying the information directly from locals. It was creating an environment, with both

[47] https://www.valtur.com/chi-siamo .

public and private certified tourism agencies, where there was freedom for people like him to choose how to manage and run his business, free from lobbying bodies. I was not the first person to interview Nicola, many had come to ask him similar topical questions on his work and knowledge. The issue was that tourism companies never came to him, and he said they rarely came to Sila either, the place I met with Vittorio which was rich in natural environments and local food traditions.

On the topic of importing and exporting products like his to grow his business and the regional economy, he prioritized first retailing his products to local and international markets, and not national ones within Italy that were outside the Calabrian region. He explained,

> For me a business like mine, that is connected to the territory, strongly to the territory,… it is necessary to grow here for who goes around our locations (and) consumes our products. I should eliminate all the rest of Italy, and only do abroad. Because if I only give it to you abroad, I also make you have the need to come here.

He believed that this approach enabled him to create the value of regional exclusivity in his products, which would in turn bring visitors (Italian and international alike) to the region to taste these products directly from the region. He admitted that he did sell his products also in Puglia, Tuscany, and Lombardy but would rather not. This was because when he visited those regions, they did not prioritize selling his Calabrian products, but rather their own regional ones. I asked him, 'so for example a large store in Milan, if there are Calabrian products, is it better to sell them here (Calabria) directly to the people, also foreigners, because after maybe they will come here (Calabria)?' 'Exactly,' Nicola said, 'and they also would appreciate them more. And when a tourist comes, besides the fact that they bought products, they came, they became 'loyal' always…' He alluded to the reality that at one time, it was difficult to survive financially in Calabria and that things were gradually changing. He explained that in the past, people would go to the north to work as 'waiters, mechanics, miners,' but now the reality was that a lot of these forms of labour have been replaced by technological advancements and machinery. He concluded that there was not the same employment demands for non-specialized labour as there once was before, and that people understand that the key to economic success is to specialize in something specific.

Skilled entrepreneurship seemed to be the direction towards economic success for the region, amidst changing global markets and increasing mechanical and digital automatization

of production. Through these shifts, spaces of opportunity open up, and autonomy in one's own specialized work creates a demand market and also escapes in some ways, the political corruption, restrictions, exploitation, and standardizations that are present in larger corporate models. In choosing to specialize in regionally specific, tradition-based food production, another component to its production is certification labels which further differentiate products from other generic cheaper versions. In Nicola's case, his organic certification was important to his business (as was outlined previously) because it was a way for his customers to stay informed about the quality standards of his salumi when he could not speak to them directly. In the case of heritage livestock breeding, regulations were managed by the ministry. Nicola paid for an inspection of his pigs so they could be certified and registered as suino nero di Calabria. Regarding the ministry inspectors, he said,

> If they find a pig with a pink nose, or it was born with a white foot, they won't mark it. The others that are perfectly black, they mark them. When they send the marked ones to the slaughterhouse, they go with a code that is APC, Apulo-Calabrese.[48]

Not all certifications were beneficial, and larger established ones could have complex political influences and economic consequences which did not benefit the producer. Nicola chose to be certified *organic* over the DOP certification mentioned previously because the former was more exclusive and harder to obtain than the latter. At the time he was currently the only one producing his specific heritage breed salumi organically, whereas there were many non-organic producers under the DOP label. He explained that under the DOP certification, companies could buy pigs from other countries, have them raised in Calabria for two-three months and then they would qualify for the certification. A producer could also use 30g of preservatives, which he stressed was a lot because the place he previously worked at before he began his business used 25g, which was common in the industry. Nicola did not choose the DOP certification because his organic salumi, made with organic local ingredients, from heritage Calabrian pigs born and raised organically in Calabria, would be categorized as the same as the industry standard generic salumi. Although EU food certification systems were developed and funded on the pretence that they would protect regional, traditional products, they in fact have within them some loopholes in which products and processes can be disguised as things they are not, in order to satisfy larger cultural markets, economic systems, and private interests.

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[48] The breed code for suino nero di Calabria.

I argue that the certification process can also be an exclusionary one, both from the side of the European Commission and Italian Ministry toward small-scale artisanal producers, as well as from the producers themselves actively choosing to not acquire some of these certifications, and this will be discussed further in the analysis section of this chapter. To better understand the political and economic contexts in which producers like Nicola are navigating with their artisanal businesses of traditional high-quality food products, analysis of the wider Italian food tourism market and the larger-scale companies who dominate it is important. One company in particular which has been established for some time in Italy and is growing exponentially within international markets is the high-end Italian food grocery store Eataly and its food park FICO Eataly World (which remains the first of its kind in the world). This will also be expanded on in the next chapter.

Certifications, Terroir, and the Limitations of Authenticity



Figure 3. Two food certification labels issues by the EU (English versions from their official website).[49]

Protections against counterfeit food products and the preservation of regional culinary heritage, traditions, and knowledge have been the main goals of the European Union Commission's geographic indications and quality schemes. Established in 1992 alongside the founding of the European Union as we know it today, EU geographical indication regulations on food and wine products in European countries were established into law, as a reaction to the rapid expansion of global food markets and food trade economies, which increased the

[49] https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en#pdo .

distance and international circulation of food products (Gragnani 2012). As a result of this distance and circulation, communications of food quality, specificity, and origin increased in importance when consumer demand for quality regional products grew alongside the expansion of counterfeit food production, trade, and consumption (Ibid). The main intentions of these certifications were to protect food quality, reduce mass standardization of food products, preserve localized food traditions, promote rural economies based in food production and agriculture, educate consumers on food origins and quality, and homogenize the approach to food protection standards amongst the grouping of European countries who had independently and heterogeneously managed their own product standards up until that point (Ibid).

The EU has categorized geographic indication on food products as 'intellectual property' and value this as crucial to international trade relations amongst countries within and outside the European Union.[50] For Italian regional food and drink products, there are a number of certifications issued by the EU under this specific scheme. The most well-known and earliest derive from wine certifications which include IGT (Indicazione di Geografica Tipica) for wines specific to a geographic region, DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) for wines produced in geographic regions using traditional practices connected to their affiliated regions, and DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita) which is similar to DOC certification, but is more strict in its testing for taste and quality consistency (Di Giovine 2014). For this chapter though, I will be focusing on two specific labels which regulate both food and wine products and which were also mentioned by participants during my fieldwork. The first is IGP (Indicazione Geografica Protetta or Protected Geographical Indication) which certifies food and wine products that are directly linked to a specific geographic place or region in at least *one* of its stages of production and preparation. The second is DOP (Denominazione d'Origine Protetta or Protected Designation of Origin) which certifies food and wine products that have their entire production process in a specific geographic place or region in accordance with traditional heritage practices. The main differences between these two particular certification labels are in regard to the amount of primary ingredients which originate from that specific geographic region and how much of the production occurs in that specific place.[51] DOP is more rigorous in its standards and

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, https://www.eataly.com/us_en/magazine/culture-and-tradition/italian-certifications .

requires products to have stronger connections to their geographic area, whereas IGP is more lenient in its regulation of product categorization (Velčovská and Sadílek 2015). Southern Europe and Italy have a stronger tradition of typical regional products when compared to central and northern Europe, with Italy having 22.9% of the IGP, DOP, and TSG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed) products in the European Union in 2013 (Lazzaroni *et al*. 2013). Out of this percentage, the two highest categories are meat products at 32.7% and cheeses at 21.7% (Ibid). Within the context of Italy, southern regions in Italy like Calabria have less certifications per region than northern and central ones. When referencing the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry's DOP and IGP portal during 2023-2024, the top five Italian regions with the most food and wine certifications at that time were all within northern Italy: Veneto and Tuscany tied at 91, then Piedmont at 86, Lombardy at 80, and Emilia Romagna at 75. Regarding Italy's southern-most regions, Sicily had 67, Puglia had 63, and Calabria had 40.[52]

There are benefits to food certification labelling systems like these and to not have anything in place to regulate the protection, education, and circulation of regional products and traditional cultural practices would have more negative consequences to small-scale producers and the suppression of a counterfeit food industry. Scholar of agricultural economics and food marketing Wim Verbeke explains that labels such as these geographical indications and organic product labels 'are extrinsic information cues that can assist consumers in inferring product quality and forming quality expectations,' but they cannot achieve this outcome on their own, and in order to create commercial value, they have to be 'communicated, attended to, and understood' (2013: p.15). Labels and certifications such as these act in similar ways to what anthropologists Jillian R. Cavanaugh and Shalini Shankar term as 'linguistic materiality' in which things and words combine to express meaning and worth of those same things, in relation to cultural heritage and regional identity (2014: p.52). Additionally, Michaela Desoucey (sociologist) argues that this EU labelling program 'couples foods' market status with valorised cultural prowess tied to national identity, characterizing and revaluing national food as a central part of the national diet' (2010: p.443). On the other hand, one must understand that these labelling systems (specifically the geographic indication certifications) also contain within them issues and loopholes that need to be acknowledged and considered when examining which products and producers feature in

[52] https://www.politicheagricole.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/309 .

larger-scale Italian gastrotourism markets that rely on these labels to construct, maintain, and circulate value systems. In addition, products which are not labelled under some of these certifications do not necessarily mean that they are not always 'authentic' high quality regional products representative of their connectedness to the region they are made in and the cultural processes that form them. Cavanaugh's research on local food producers in the northern Italian town of Bergamo demonstrates how in the early 2010s, the competitiveness of global capitalism negatively hindered collaborative development in EU and government certification programs due to bureaucracy and disagreements within communities of producers, resulting in some to seek alternative approaches to marketing and labelling schemes such as international certifications or quality focused regulations (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014).

During a drive with a tourism business founder named Antonio whom I spent time with in the small village of Zagarise in the province of Catanzaro where he grew up, he explained to me that to some food producers in Calabria, EU food certifications were often perceived as more political than functional and were deterred from applying for them due in part to the financial costs required to certify their products. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Nicola explained how some producers within his industry were able to acquire the DOP label for their pig products by meeting the minimum requirements to acquire the certification, even though their pigs were not born in Italy (i.e., having imported breeds graze in Italy long enough for them to be considered 'from the geographic region') or taking shortcuts in the raising of the animals and production of the final products (i.e., adding more preservatives to extend shelf life and increase flavour where it was not naturally developed). In the past, one reason for this pitfall was that there were not enough labelling protocols which were scientifically rooted when certifying something that was DOP or IGP (Furia *et al.* 2011). An example of this is the case of Calabria's Tropea red onion (*Cipolla Rossa di Tropea*), where in 2008 it was reported that out of 100,000 tons of red onions given the IGP label, only 20,000 of them were actually Tropea red onions from Calabria and not imported from abroad (Ibid). In Nicola's case, certifying his products under DOP alone would only group them with inferior ones that met the minimum requirements in order to acquire the label. That is why for him, obtaining the organic label for his products was more important because the regulations were stricter to get certification. In 2013, organic labelling for organic farming in Italy was only 8.7% of Italy's total agricultural production (Lazzaroni *et al*. 2013), making it a more exclusive certification. This was also the case when I spoke to an

independent organic wine producer during my master's thesis fieldwork in Calabria back in 2016 (Sisca 2016) and more recently for this thesis with Vittorio the cheesemaker and agriculturalist I mentioned in the previous section. Besides his cheese production, Vittorio also specialized in organic potato farming. He explained that when I first met him back in 2016, he began to contemplate acquiring the certification of being an organic farm, and from then it took him three years to finally obtain the certification. In addition to being certified organic, he also purchased the license to sell his organic potato seeds, becoming the only organic retailer of them in Italy (at the time when I spoke to him in 2019).

These examples demonstrate the importance that some food labels have in their ability to provide the communication of quality, regionality, and cultural heritage to consumers, and this is the case in organic certifications. At the same time, it is important to understand that certifications like DOP and IGP are not foolproof and that even though they contribute to protecting and promoting regional food terroir, they are not immune to political manipulation. When it comes to organic production methods and localized traditions, standardization and the uniformity in the material qualities of food and drink products are not consistent (i.e., colour, texture, taste, smell, etc.). Natural production processes encourage diversity and heterogeneity of products based on differing annual climate conditions (soil minerality, rainfall, climate, etc.), hand-made methods, and natural bacterial fermentation processes which incorporate other autonomous organisms into artisanal processes of food and drink production. As a result, some labelling systems like the EU certifications might exclude products that are in fact closer to their affiliated territory and traditional cultural production methods than standardized equivalents which fit better into certification standards. In addition, when some regions obtain more certifications like in northern and central Italy, and others feature less (like in the case of Calabria), an inaccurate hierarchy is established where some regions are seen to have more prolific gastronomic identities consisting of authenticated high-quality products than others. A significant increase in the number of certifications a region has can then facilitate a perception that they are more reliable, more culturally rich, and more gastronomically sophisticated than others, which in turn further perpetuates stereotypes and North-South binaries of regional stigma. Thus, when observing Italian gastro-tourism markets and the array of regionally certified products sold in large-scale shops such as Eataly, the reasons as to why some regions like Calabria have less of its products featured in these systems than other regions, is not a simple case of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, Calabria has a lower number of certified products under the EU labelling system

which results in them featuring less in these nationalized state-led projects. On the other hand, artisanal and organic food entrepreneurs from Calabria actively choose whether it is beneficial for their businesses to acquire certain labels over others or retail their products to certain target markets over others, in order to protect the best interests of their small-scale businesses and prevent exploitation, weakened autonomy, and the reduced quality standards of their products.

When discussing food certification systems, one cannot avoid the heavily weighted term 'authenticity' and in the field of food anthropology, food authenticity has been well examined. Past and present approaches to popular food cultural discourses in media have often framed the authenticity of food cultures and heritage as static, specifically when examining gastronomic tourism and its economic and political engagement with food identity formation and the commodification of food and 'taste.' In contrast, the fields of sociology and anthropology have conducted extensive analysis on the notion of authenticity outside this popular 'static' understanding.

Sociologist Erik Cohen argued in the late 1980s that authenticity was a 'negotiable rather than primitive concept' (1988: p.371) and because authenticity was understood to be negotiable and not *a priori*, he explained that the concept of 'emergent authenticity' in tourism studies allowed for the potential of authenticity's 'gradual emergence in the eyes of visitors to the host culture' (Ibid: p.379). More recently in the late 2000s on the concept of constructed authenticity, Cohen argues that there is an 'intellectual hegemony' implicit in the approach of assessments or categorizations of 'objective authenticity' by professionals, experts, or intellectuals such as ethnographers or anthropologists, who seem to have the knowledge to objectively lay these kinds of definitions or judgements, but in actual fact their assessments are like 'tourists' in that they are based off of social constructs (2007: p.78). Within the context of tourism studies, he argues that this same concept is approached in a more democratic way, removing the power and authority of professionals to assess authenticity, and continues that anyone can have their own set of criteria to form their own evaluations of authenticity (Ibid). Similarly, anthropologist Dimitrios Theodossopoulos understands 'authenticity' as a 'negotiation of parallel authenticities in tension' and argues that, 'authenticity encodes the expectation of truthful representation' (2013: p.339). I would counter argue against Cohen's claim that tourism studies approach authenticity in a more objective democratic way in that it may be the case for academia, but not necessarily in the

economic commercial markets of gastronomic tourism. Exclusivity, rigid definitions of origin, specific practices of production, and consistency of taste and appearance in product quality are heavily emphasized when projecting the authenticity of food and their cultures to clients who seek out these experiences. When it comes to Italian food, tours and television programs, specialty shops such as Eataly, and cookbooks all demonstrate this point and with will be expanded on further in the next chapter. For this reason, I will not be analysing food authenticity in the ways in which it has already been explored, as it does not allow for critical originality nor nuanced analysis. Rather, in the specific case of Calabrian food producers and gastro-tourism entrepreneurs, I will try and unpack the term *terroir* more and explore how *connectedness* and *intimacy* are created in food products through the proximity they have with their regional environments and localized practices, which have developed in those same regions of origin.

The term terroir was created initially for use in the wine industry in France, but was later adopted to describe regional food products (Avieli 2016). Food historian Rachel Laudan explains that the 'French Terroir Strategy' occurred from the 1860s to 1930s, to promote the country's wine industry, and was later applied to its gastro-tourism (2004: p.138). It was a period when French grapevines were grafted to American grape rootstock in order to increase their resilience to disease, and the industry had to redefine its notion of French regionality, which was no longer embodied in the plants themselves (since they were French-American hybrids), but instead in the creation of the term *terroir*, (initially to describe the soil but later embodied the full territorial environment) (Ibid). This term maintained the grapes' identity as French (Ibid). Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig have published on the Slow Food and Slow Living movements, and explain that the term terroir expresses a region through its local cultural traditions of agriculture, its processing and consumption of food and drink products, as well as how connected food and drink products are to the environmental and landscape conditions of the place they derive from (2006). They continue that in terms of this definition of terroir, 'the identity and valuation of the place resides in its differentiation from other places and spaces and this necessarily requires communication and promotion,' not in a commercially aggressive tourism-centred expression of capitalism, but a 'reflexive' action to counter the homogeneity of global capitalism in food production and consumption (Ibid: p.77). Anthropologists Michael A. Di Giovine and Ronda L. Brulotte explain that the term terroir 'links heritage claims with a specific environment, in all of its socio-cultural and natural particularities,' and builds evaluations on a regional food's authenticity through the

ways it has been directly shaped by biological aspects of its home environment, which in turn restricts it from being made elsewhere (2014: p.6). The Slow Food movement, founded in the late 1980s in northern Italy by Carlo Petrini, uses the values of terroir as one of its core tenets in protecting and promoting local food heritage and knowledge, and combating the industrialization and homogenization of global food capitalism. On this topic of the Slow Food movement, Parkins and Craig argue that it advocates the 'relational nature and value of places' and that it celebrates the social and physical aspects of a region in a way that does not romanticize these aspects as timeless fixed qualities (2006: pp.76-77). Similarly sociologist Roberta Sassatelli argues that,

> …gastronomic identity, just like other aspects of identity, is a continuous construction that consolidates through practice across history and geography rather than an essence to be discovered in a purified moment of origin, a well-delimited site, a single product or recipe (2019: p.2).

In other words, in the case of terroir, the value of representational truth placed on local food products reflects the regions they are from and the cultural practices that are used to make them, both of which are not static, *a priori* phenomena, but instead *malleable* and *ever-changing*. Parkins and Craig continue that the notion of terroir as expressed and understood by the Slow Food movement is not a static expression of authenticity through food and drink, but rather a 'connectedness' to cultural and environmental contexts of a place through the food and drink products that are grown and made there (Ibid: p.100). It is important to note though, that this movement also is not immune to political hierarchies of food morality, taste evaluations, and expressions of socio-economic affluence, and I will expand on this in more detail in the following chapter when discussing Eataly and the dynamics of larger Italian gastro-tourism markets. Warren Belasco, a specialist in gastronomy, explains that instead of using the term terroir to reaffirm 'hierarchies of taste,' the term can be broadened and democratized to represent a '*regard* for one's native landscape, *reciprocity* between food producers and consumers, and an overall sense of *responsibility* for the consequences of one's own behaviour' (Belasco 2014: p.39, original emphasis). This last definition of terroir connects to the approaches Nicola and the other Calabrian entrepreneurs I met, have taken with the development of their products and growth of their businesses. *Connectedness* is developed from maintaining a direct contact with and understanding of the Calabrian landscape and the plant and animal species which are foundational to their food products and livelihoods. Nicola maintains a close relationship

with the pigs he raises, and Vittorio understands that a contented cow produces high quality milk, which then reflects in the quality of his cheeses. This localization and proximate knowledge of place and product is then communicated either directly through them to their customers or through the retailers and online presence of their businesses (i.e., media coverage and their online shops). The prioritization of these proximate connections combined with the high-quality tastes and textures of their products facilitate the value creation exemplified through the notion of connectedness and indirectly create relational trust between producers and consumers. This prioritization of connectedness and trust was commonly demonstrated amongst all of the Calabrian entrepreneurs I interacted with. The next section will further examine the intersections between entrepreneurship and destigmatization, and the benefits this presents in Calabria's gastro-tourism industry.

Entrepreneurship, Destigmatization, and Connectedness in Calabrian Gastro-Tourism

The study of entrepreneurship has been an important sector to understand how a region or economy grows and develops, and this is because of the ways entrepreneurs innovate, often working in restrictive industries with limited to non-ideal resources in tandem with their creativity and skills to develop new business models and products (Rui 2018). Academic in business studies Huaichuan Rui conducted research on a rural county in the Zhejiang Province of China called Yiwu and how it transformed from being one of the poorest in the 1970s, into one of the most affluent in present day (Ibid). This was due to its shift from initially being only a site of trade to one of also production, from the expansion of trader activity in the county, and through its physical instore market shifting to a digitally hybridized one of mixed online and offline commerce (Ibid). This example shows the potential effectiveness of entrepreneurship for developing a region that has experienced a history of poverty and economic precarity.

Through his research on entrepreneurship in Havana, Cuba, John Vertovec examines the reasons as to why entrepreneurship was a career path chosen by locals (2021). He concludes that it was not only due to strict government regulations, but also entrepreneurship as a creative and malleable form of employment, which had the capacity to enact state resistance (Ibid). He explains further that the state came out with a list of acceptable private-sector activities in late 2018, instead of the more common approach in entrepreneurship

sectors of listing prohibited activities which encouraged more creativity and innovation (Ibid). This system along with other restrictive aspects such as the legal rights of businesses and what types of jobs were prohibited in the state-issued regulations, in fact forced entrepreneurs to become less autonomous and more stifled under the power and control of the Cuban state (Ibid). Vertovec explains that although local Cubans who participated in his research project did not overtly express their intention to resist the state through their businesses,

> …their informal entrepreneurial activities still undermined the government's executive control over the economy, in addition to defying the state's desired revolutionary consciousness, and revealed how Cubans are adapting the ways they interact with (or resist) state policies and what the state defines as "acceptable behavior" (Ibid: p.152).

He argues that economic informality both 'diverts resources from the state and undermines the redistribution of goods,' and shows how independent networks are created outside of state control (Ibid: p.157). In its own ways, entrepreneurship is also an act of state resistance in the context of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, but based on the similar ways Calabrian entrepreneurs described the motives for their work when I spoke with them. They explained their work as a form of passion, creativity, and determination to find new pathways to sustainable development outside larger state-managed ones which were not always inclusive nor sustainable, but instead homogenizing and exploitative at times. Calabrian entrepreneurship then expresses the representation of alternative pathways of access and growth, separate but not fully removed from large-scale systems of food and drink standardization and industrialization, which often prevent small-scale businesses from thriving through strict regulation enforcement, lowering individual autonomy, and increasing consumer's alienation from food commodity chains of production and consumption. Calabrian entrepreneurs demonstrate an alternative to a state-constructed understanding of entrepreneurship (one that is connected more with neoliberal financial capitalism), in favour of a form of entrepreneurship based on passion, creativity, connectedness, relationship-building, and re-education. Their form utilizes cultural and geographical resources related to the region's gastronomy to promote new levels of connectedness and intimacy between people and places fractured by stigma. It is not separate from systems of capitalism but instead does not prioritize the main approach of capitalism which focuses on exponential growth. Instead, focus is placed on growth to a sustainable point while maintaining the

priority of connectedness to social networks, place, and localized cultural knowledge to destigmatize the region from its overwhelming stereotypes.

This point of using entrepreneurship as a creative method of destigmatization is an important one. Through the small-scale business owners I interacted with during fieldwork in Calabria and Toronto, entrepreneurship was in part used as a method (whether directly expressed by business owners or not) to destigmatize Calabria through their work. Specifically in Calabria, they showcased the region's food and drink cultural heritage and history to their customers, and promoted this knowledge specifically to local, regional, and international demographics. They often did not prioritize a national demographic at first because being included in more dominant industrial large-scale corporations could overwhelm or stifle their businesses. These corporations would also be selling their products outside their region of Calabria, reducing the need or desire for other Italians and tourists to travel there.

Many of the entrepreneurs such as Nicola, the tourism business founder Antonio, as well as Calabrian-Canadian chefs and food bloggers based in Toronto's Calabrian diaspora (which will be expanded on in chapter eight) prioritized the reconnection and re-education of Calabrian gastronomic and regional heritage to their Calabrian customers and clients as their first target demographic, with the aims of fostering economic and cultural growth within the region of Calabria first. After that came the approach to direct the promotion of their businesses internationally to countries like England in Nicola's case, or a mixture of Calabrian and non-Calabrian communities in Antonio's case, to shift the narratives about the region and showcase its cultural richness, landscape diversity, and unique gastronomy abroad. This was to create awareness of Calabria's gastronomic terroir outside of the country, to draw tourists physically into the region, as well as reigniting the desire and interest in Calabria's expansive international diaspora to reconnect with their own cultural heritage and identity. Calabrian entrepreneurs promoting their businesses within Italy was still acceptable to them, but not the first priority. In Nicola's case, this approach was to prevent customers in other Italian regions buying his Calabrian salumi from larger retail stores outside the region, which would be less beneficial for his business, would not ensure that consumers would ever travel to visit the region, and would create a distance between him and his consumers, reducing the potential of mutual connectedness and trust creation. Thus, for Calabrian entrepreneurs, they used entrepreneurship as a way to destigmatize the perception of

Calabria, both within and outside of its borders, through the promotion and communication of nuanced representations of Calabrian terroir via the material forms of food and drink.

Another notion that was expressed in my interaction with Nicola was the importance of one's own personal character, drive, will, and morality in the success of their business and the economic growth of the region. Rui explains in his research on the Chinese province of Yiwu, that locals did not use the word entrepreneurship when speaking about the topic and of the success of the county's economic development, but rather used adjectives of value that described a person's character, such as ones similar in kind to bravery, dedication, hard-working, and integrity (Rui 2018, originally cited in Chen 2011). This is similar to Nicola's descriptions of personal character when explaining what it took to create a successful business in Calabria. Via the processes of trial and error and embodying the character traits of determination and passion, he transmitted the personal knowledge of his craft and the region's socio-cultural history into the products he made. As a result, this emphasis of knowledge and quality was then exchanged to retailers like Massimo, which were then exchanged again to the customers who engaged with the products when Massimo sold Nicola's salumi from his shop in Cosenza. It was Nicola's character that enabled him to create connectedness and intimacy between his retailers, customers, his products, and the region.

Through these processes of connectedness, Nicola was able to build a dynamic network of trust between customers, retailers, and himself, which furthered the success and stability of his business. He even used the analogy of the *nonna* or grandmother figure during our discussion, when he explained that he wanted his customers to feel like his salumi were as delicious and special as ones made by their grandmothers. Fabio Parasecoli (a specialist in food studies) explains that the figure of the nonna in food culture has been transformed into a mythic representation of tradition, and for many people it embodies the past and food nostalgia (2019). He argues that images of the nonna are 'commodified as guarantors of the quality and the traditional nature of the food they cook and serve' (Ibid: p.29). In Nicola's case, one could argue that he used the notion and affiliation of the archetype of the 'Italian nonna' as a way to emphasize the trusted quality and authenticity of his products and the experience of familial closeness created when consuming them.

The increased proximity between consumers and tourists with local producers and entrepreneurs, with the regional landscapes of Calabria, and its gastronomic cultural history of production and consumption, counters the state-constructed neoliberal understanding of entrepreneurship, which is often the undercurrent of larger gastro-tourism companies and programs, even though they may present themselves as morally anti-capitalist. On the other hand, the reality is that these dominant companies and programs cannot be avoided by producers like Nicola, and understanding the complex dynamics independent Calabrian producers face when establishing their businesses within global gastro-tourism markets is key to unpacking why Calabrian regional stigma continues to persist. It also enables one to unpack why the region has not yet maintained sustainable economic growth in their gastro-tourism industry, when compared to neighbouring southern regions such as Puglia and Sicily, which have been able to achieve substantial growth. The next chapter will explore these socio-political dynamics through the examples of Eataly and the Slow Food movement.

Chapter 6: The Unification of an Italian Foodscape



Figure 1. Eataly foldable maps of Italy's salumi, bread, cheese, and olive varietals I purchased during fieldwork when visiting the store's Milan location (personal purchase and scan, 2019).

Italy's food cultures are a multi-layered patchwork of food histories and traditions which draw from all over the world through the country's historical periods of trade, settlements, colonization, and rule by foreign regimes. This means that regarding its food products and cultures, what is 'authentically' Italian is in fact not always a case of their origins being from the country, but rather that they developed over time in the peninsula from many influences and intersections. It was in the Middle Ages when Arab armies invaded and conquered Sicily, that had the greatest influence over agriculture across the peninsula from that point forward and that in the South, and while Hellenic methods of arboriculture (tree and shrub cultivation) and horticulture continued, Arab occupation introduced a wide range of new crops such as sugarcane, rice, cotton, pistachio nuts, carob, eggplants, spinach, citrus, silk, as well as other agricultural practices (Sereni 2014). During the Italian Renaissance, Christopher Columbus and other voyagers and colonizers who travelled to the 'New World' brought back with them crops unknown to Italy and Europe, some of which would fundamentally change agriculture and food traditions forever such as tomatoes, tobacco, corn, beans, and potatoes (Ibid). The 18th and 19th centuries were quite politically turbulent for what was then named the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and in the case of the South's agricultural sector, it had previously been dominant and productive, and even through the difficulties affecting the region during this period, it still produced highly valuable quality products such as citrus and almonds (to name a few) (Ibid).

The concepts of authenticity and terroir examined in the previous chapter show this tension, between Italian gastronomy which places heavy focus on how to certify and communicate authenticity through EU labelling systems, even though there may be loopholes as to how products are authenticated and categorized. These can be seen in the cases of primary ingredients such as livestock or plants grown in other countries, but then processed into products in Italy to receive certification, and the expression of terroir in Italian food products when historically some plant and animal species originated elsewhere. As argued in the previous chapter, research conducted on food through the analytical lens of authenticity has had a tendency to incorrectly frame conceptualizations of food authenticity as static. As I already argued, focus on terroir does better at prioritizing the natural flux of connectedness between a place, its food, and its community. But both of these concepts continue to become entangled into complex frameworks when examining larger Italian gastro-tourism projects which rely heavily on presenting and preserving a constructed and conceptualized Italian foodscape made up of distinct regional gastronomies. Sociologist Atsuko Ichijo and scholar

of international relations Ronald Ranta explain the term *gastrodiplomacy* as an approach used by nation-states to 'use their national cuisine as a "soft power" resource to increase the appeal and desirability of its culture, people, values and ideals' (2016: p.108). Developing a nationalized food culture through state actors also becomes a tactic to stimulate economic trade and growth through nation-marketing on a global scale, fusing tourism, international relations, the nation-state, and private sectors together (Ibid: p.109). When companies such as Eataly and other state-led media projects which focus on Italian food tourism (i.e., documentaries, TV series, cookbooks, etc.) present a national foodscape that under-features Calabria (when other southern regions such as Sicily and Puglia are beginning to be featured more), it reinforces the unfamiliar nature of the region to communities outside it and does not do much to counter the stigmas that have historically plagued it. But with this being said, is the answer to destigmatizing the region to include Calabria in these dominant nationalized state structures of capitalist-centric entrepreneurship, or in fact to prioritize an endogenic movement within Calabria's regional communities and its diaspora abroad to redefine and promote the region for itself on its own terms?

There are many agricultural products which are exclusively produced at a high quality in Calabria, but its regional products are still relatively unknown inside and outside of Italy, when compared to other regional Italian foods and how synonymous they are with the country's cultural imagery (i.e., Chianti Classico wine from Tuscany, Sicilian cannoli, or Neapolitan Margherita pizza). One example of the exclusivity of Calabrian regional products can be seen in its agriculture of olive trees and olive oil production. It is the region's most dominant tree crop and Calabria has the second largest olive oil production in Italy at 28% (only second to Puglia), producing 26.6% of Italy's total olive production (European Commission 2022). A tourism business founder named Antonio explained to me when I was spending time with him and his team in the Calabrian province of Catanzaro, that although Calabria has many distinct olive plant varietals which produce some of the highest quality olive oils, it still remains relatively unknown as an olive oil producing region in the same way that Tuscany for example is synonymously known for. This is because most of the production of high-quality Calabrian olive oil is mixed with other lower standard olive oils to increase the overall quality of the blend, and then labelled and sold outside the region with northern branding, severing its connection to Calabria. In addition, he argued that Calabrian producers have not prioritized enough on the packaging, retailing, and advertising of their own products, and have tended to only focus on the quality of the production side of their

businesses. He argued that this was wrong and that the approach should be reversed, where a strong advertising method or strategy was developed more, and then the high quality of the products would speak for themselves. As a result of this reality, Antonio later founded a second company of his own in 2020, specifically for the production and retail of his extra virgin olive oil to be accessible across Italy, not only to educate customers on the extensiveness of the counterfeit extra virgin olive oil industry in the country, but also to promote his high quality extra virgin olive oils which naturally come from a region like Presila which has the best natural conditions for olive production (i.e., altitude, soil, air, etc.).

Additionally in July of my fieldwork year, I met with Giorgio, the president of a non-profit academy of traditional Calabrian food and wine culture called Accademia Tradizioni di Calabria (which was a cultural association recognized by the region). When we met in his Cosenza office for an interview, he expanded on the many products grown and made in Calabria that were distinctly connected to the region and its gastronomic identity. He gave the example of truffle production in Calabria and how the national park of Pollino had a rich variety of truffles that naturally grew in those forests. Not many people (locals and foreigners alike) were aware of Calabria's truffle history, assuming truffles grew mainly in northern Italian regions. He continued that wholesalers often came to Calabria to buy truffles, then branded them as truffles of Alba (one of the highest quality and most expensive type of white truffle often associated with the northern region of Piemonte) and sold those 'rebranded' Calabrian truffles for €80-100 a kilogram outside the region. Similar to Antonio's argument on Calabria's olive oil production, Giorgio stated that many Calabrian producers did not focus on valorising their high-quality products with the region through promotion, packaging, branding, and business development. Instead, they focused too often on a wholesale market in which exploitation was not managed properly and companies from outside Calabria purchased its regional products at lower prices to then upsell them in their own regions or internationally.

A second set of examples of Calabrian regional products can be seen in three types of citrus fruits grown in the region: clementine PGI[53], cedro, and bergamot (European Commission 2022). In *The Land Where Lemons Grow: The Story of Italy and Its Citrus Fruit* (2015), writer Helena Attlee documents the important development of bergamot and citron

[53] Protected Geographic Indication.

production in Calabria and how they are historically and commercially exclusive to the region. She explains that the first ever specie of citrus fruit to arrive in the continent (now known as Europe), was the citron brought by Jewish refugees arriving to Calabria at around 70 AD after the fall of the second Temple of Jerusalem (2015). She points out that although citrons have the most varying types of any other citrus fruit, Calabria remains the only geographic location in the world that grows and produces the *smooth citron of Diamante*, (*Cedro liscio di Diamante*) named after the town from where it grows (Ibid). The second citrus fruit grown exclusively in Calabria is the bergamot, which has its first documented existence in the mid-17th century in Calabria after the natural cross-pollination of a lemon and sour orange (Ibid). She explains that its high value derives from its essential oil, which is used in perfumes, cosmetics, and prized for its antiseptic (as well as antibacterial) qualities (Ibid). Later, the highly acidic fruit, its peel, and oil were introduced as culinary ingredients in food production, most famously outside of Calabria as a main ingredient to English breakfast tea (Ibid). Attlee emphasizes that for this particular citrus fruit, the geography of Calabria, and more specifically its southern tip of Reggio Calabria where it predominantly grows, is vital to the plant's existence and quality of production (Ibid). She states that,

> …although its extremely high value has inspired many attempts to grow it elsewhere, bergamot is like an animal in its chosen territory: it thrives and fruits successfully only on a thin strip of coastline that runs for seventy-five kilometres from Villa San Giovanni on the Tyrrhenian coast to Brancaleone on the shores of the Ionian Sea (Ibid: p.155).

Although many other countries attempt to produce bergamot today, as well as illegal counterfeit operations which adulterate the oil for profit, it still remains that this combination of Reggio Calabria's rich soil and specificity of microclimate makes the region essential to the fruit's existence and its capacity to develop its highest quality crop (Ibid).

This type of exclusive territoriality of food products outlined in the examples above connect directly to the main market driver in Italian gastro-tourism (and arguable most food tourism projects), and gatekeeping and promoting geographically and culturally protected food and drink products in Italy has been the main ethos and business approach to the Eataly company. It operates on the premise of French terroir as outlined in the previous chapter, but for a project that proposes to house the entirety of Italy's regional gastronomies on offer to upper-middle class consumers around the world who indulge in the practices and products of this nationalized foodscape, Calabria is noticeably overshadowed and under-represented

comparatively to other regions which have now become internationally known for their gastronomy. For a region that has a myriad of unique produce and products such as Nicola's *suino nero di Calabria* from the previous chapter, to sweet red onions from Tropea, liquorice root, Cirò wine, spicy pork nduja spread from Vibo Valentia, or the bergamot of Reggio Calabria outlined above, there are cultural politics at play when it comes to Calabrian regional representation in larger gastro-tourism companies and projects such as the Eataly company.

This focus on place and territory in Italy grew from the 1990s in response to growing discourses around globalization and 'mono-cultural' development practices, and has continued to increase in priority with the dramatic shifts and negative effects on the environment and ecosystems resulting in the present realities of the climate crisis (Ferreri 2021: p.77). I would also add that other social and political debates in Italy surrounding food production, consumption, and food commodity globalization reached its height of visibility during the 1980s with the founding of the Slow Food movement, which the Eataly company draws heavily from.

My first encounter with Eataly was back in the summer of 2016 when I attended the Slow Food Youth Network Think Tank at the Terra Madre Salon del Gusto in Torino, Italy during the summer long vacation of my master's degree at Oxford. One evening during my stay, I had looked up food places as dinner options on my phone and noticed the word 'Eataly' on the map, which stood out with its 'play-on-words' name combining *eat* and *Italy*. It was not clear whether it was a grocery store, restaurant space, or both, but I decided to try it. Walking to it that evening, it seemed to have sprung out of the darkly lit area of urban Torino, with its massive sign glowing outwards towards the city. Once inside, I was bombarded by the scale of the grocery store and the different spaces housing a wide variety of products. There were sections of the store with aisles of products which looked pretty similar to any supermarket I had been to in Italy, but the products were more specific, regional, and niche. As I continued through it, other areas were marked as the bakery, fish monger, butcher, etc. The large spaces that these were located in also had seating areas for customers to eat and the way these food departments were set up was that customers had the option to either buy their fresh produce to take home, buy ready-made food and dine in at one of the seating areas (or take away), or choose raw produce and have chefs in those departments cook it for them to dine instore. In this particular Eataly location, there was also

a lower basement level which was designed to model underground cavernous cellars which housed wine and beverages, along with private dining spaces sectioned off by their own walls of glass.

Later that year, rumours were circulating of Canada's first Eataly location opening up in Toronto and a news article in *The Globe and Mail* was eventually published confirming that the store was in the works of being built in the Manulife Centre at the intersection of Bay Street and Bloor Street, which was the heart of one of Toronto's exclusively high-income corporate neighbourhoods.[54] Fast forward to 2018 and the start of my fieldwork for this thesis, I initially spent three months in Toronto before heading to Calabria, where I conducted interviews and spent time with Calabrians and other Italians working in the Italian food industry there, with the intention to understand their connections to Calabria and its gastro-tourism industry through a diasporic lens. It was during this period of fieldwork in November of that year, when I re-encountered Eataly while attending the CENTItalia exposition in Toronto hosted by the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario at Centennial College. The founder of Eataly Oscar Farinetti was presenting a lecture on the company at the exposition, and this was all timed appropriately to coincide with the construction of the new Toronto store location.

Eataly was founded in 2007 with its first location in Torino[55] and relies on the Slow Food organization regarding the products they retail and what producers to include, with the aim of ensuring they were authenticated and certified regional Italian products of high quality (Parasecoli 2019). Farinetti explained during his lecture that Eataly was based around four main premises: to create jobs, access more land, promote biodiversity to the world, and to enable more people to eat better (not reserving this pleasure only for the privileged rich). An aspect of developing Eataly that he emphasized was the importance of the 'experience' for customers, outlining six main categories: the beauty of a place, the satisfaction of desires, education, biodiversity, affordability, and that the market should not just have a commercial focus. Emphasis was also placed on featuring as much seasonal produce as possible with stores having no frozen food sections, and these products would be both imported from the regions of Italy, but also the local produce corresponding to the country where each

[54] https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/weston-family-bringing-italys-eataly-to-canada-joining-upscale-food-trend/article29690167/ .
[55] https://www.eataly.net/eu_en/about-eataly/who-we-are .

international Eataly location was situated in. Farinetti continued that the ethos behind the founding of his company was the slogan 'Eataly, eat better, live better.' The main focus he said was first on 'people' (referring to the customers of Eataly) and referred to the 42 Eataly locations across the world as 'brothers.' He also referred to himself as 'king' of this Italian food culture and the FICO Eataly World food park in Bologna as the 'temple' of this Eataly 'empire.' As of 2025 Eataly has 12 locations in Italy: 11 are in northern Italian regions and one is in the centre of Italy in Rome. During fieldwork in 2019, there was one southern location in Bari, but this later closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Internationally, Eataly has locations in Europe, the UK, North America, Asia, and South America.[56] The Eataly company goes beyond the development of their grocery stores and combines food commerce and consumption with educational spaces, classes, and multi-sensory food engagement, and this is seen in the establishment of FICO Eataly World, the company's large-scale Italian food theme-park. It amplifies Farinetti's approach to his stores on an even greater scale, and I was able to visit both FICO Eataly World, as well as three of Eataly's northern locations (in Bologna, Florence, and Milan) during my fieldwork in Calabria.



Figure 2. Entrance of FICO Eataly World in Bologna (personal photo, 2019).

[56] https://www.eataly.net/eu_en/stores .

FICO Eataly World was established in Bologna in 2017 and was created not only with the intention of being a retail and food consumption site, but also a tourist destination and a site of education on food supply chains and production systems in Italy (Parasecoli 2019). At the time of my fieldwork, it consisted of over 20 acres, four of which were actively used farmland to grow specific varietals of plants and heritage animal breeds from across the country, and another 2.5 acres hosted retail shops and restaurants. There were 30 food workshops where products are made onsite, 25 restaurants of different themes and types, and 43,500 square feet of 'culinary and agricultural education' spaces, which hosted events and activities year-round. Specifically with this last focus on food education, the site had six multimedia rides and exhibition spaces, and ten classrooms.[57] After visiting FICO Eataly World (and the other northern Eataly locations), although very impressive with the range of products and emphasis on gastronomic provenance in text-based forms and visual materials (i.e., posters, signage, pamphlets, etc.), two things stood out prominently to me at that time. Firstly, how absent Calabrian products were in comparison to other regions (specifically in the case of Eataly World Calabria only being featured mainly in two stands: one for its black pig products and the other a kiosk of preserves and non-perishable food products). Secondly, for a company which had expressed that it aimed to be accessible to all and not just the privileged few, how expensive the products were. What was even more interesting was that this was the case at Toronto's Eataly location when I visited for the first time in December 2019, and more consequentially, how it had reintroduced a nationalized Italian gastronomic foodscape under-featuring Calabria to a large Italian diaspora in Toronto, the majority of which were made up of Calabrian-Canadians.

Roberta Sassatelli explains that food is the most prominent component to the makeup of Italian identity within the country and outside of it through the promotion of 'Italianicity' or the constructed expression of Italian identity (2019: p.2), and argues that there has been relatively scarce research conducted on tourism in relation to Italians and food (Ibid). She continues that Italy's gastronomic industry has become one of the most economically and socially lucrative sectors, with exponential growth in entrepreneurship, publishing, program development, education, tourism, and local association initiatives, and what makes food such an important analytical lens is that 'cuisine and foodways' are sites where 'social identities are constructed and realized, celebrated and challenged' (Ibid: p.3). Michaela Desoucey's

[57] https://www.eataly.com/us_en/about-eataly/news/fico-eataly-world .

term *gastronationalism* represents the 'use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food' (2010: p.433). In these ways, Eataly engages in a form of 'nation branding' that is not only prioritized to increase tourism and economic development, but also influences external perceptions and depictions of a country through the ways it constructs and reflects itself as a nation-state (Bieber 2018: p.126). Annalisa Colombino (geographer) argues that Eataly simultaneously encompasses 'a company, a brand and a high-quality food mall chain that celebrates and capitalizes on a form of culinary nationalism' (2018: p.67). As a whole, the Eataly company does present a nationally unified foodscape made up of distinct regional gastronomic cultures, in how it represents the regions of Italy in one shopping experience, as a 'gatekeeper' of Italy's best and highest quality certified products and traditional food knowledge, but there are discrepancies to this as well. In terms of regional representation as was mentioned previously, Calabria is noticeably underrepresented in comparison to other regional representation, with the majority of products sold being from northern and central Italy. There are a number of reasons for this, and it becomes a more complex argument than simply assuming that it is a lack of equal prioritization of the region on the part of Eataly, that some investors or companies view Calabria as a financial liability, or that the region's infrastructural limitations prevent a wider distribution of Calabrian goods. Rather, it was in part an act of entrepreneurial autonomy in the case of participants I interacted with during my fieldwork in Calabria, which brings into the forefront larger questions regarding nation-state identity and belonging, economic autonomy, and localized entrepreneurship as a form of regional destigmatization.

Elitism, Taste, and Exclusivity

Around the time of Slow Food's founding in Italy, Pierre Bourdieu argued in the mid-1980s that in the case of food consumption, money enabled distancing from necessity, and 'taste' in food equated to the economic liberties that enabled freedom of choice (2010). As a result, people of lower socio-economic standing developed and were conditioned towards the notion of necessity (Ibid). For Bourdieu, food was one of his categorized styles of 'distinction' (along with culture and presentation) expressed by the dominant classes (Ibid). Fabio Parasecoli explains that the current international popularity of and desire for Italian

gastronomy was not always as prominent as it is today and explains that before the 1960s, Italian food was associated more with the negative stigmas placed on Italian migrant communities, their overpopularized history of mafia, and differing eating habits (2019). He continues that most Italian food traditions are expressions of working-class food habits across history and were often formed through the impression of consistent periods of food insecurity (Ibid). Over time, the transformation of these food cultures both within Italy and more influentially through the newer development of Italian diasporic food traditions, increased the popularity of 'Italian cuisine' on a global scale (Ibid). Parasecoli states that,

> Narratives and rhetoric devices in communication forms as diverse as advertising, marketing, memoirs, magazines, film, and TV shows have played a central role in constructing contemporary ideas about Italian food (Ibid: pp.19-20).

He points out that cultural values are associated with Italian food through media, some of which includes pasta brand commercials combining Italian opera music with expressions of pleasure, movies portraying Italian living as simple and pleasurable (i.e., *la dolce vita*), and cookbooks and cooking programs emphasizing Italian cuisine's innate connection to conviviality and community (Ibid). In fact, during his lecture at the CENTItalia conference in Toronto, Eataly founder Oscar Farinetti often used references to famous Italian art and culture such as its golden age of cinema and music to affiliate the company with higher cultural capital through association, but also to re-emphasize the intellectual prioritization of 'pleasure' and 'beauty' when it came to expressing Italy's gastronomic identity as an artform and cultured practice. He played Nino Rota's famous music he composed for Federico Fellini's 1973 film *Amarcord* to express 'harmony of mind and heart,' as well as Italian singer Domenico Modugno's chart-topping song *Volare* to make a point about the notion of 'future,' and music by Gioachino Rossini for other associations during his lecture.

Another noticeable example of Eataly's unresolved embodiment of elitist cultural capital and it as being the source and safeguard of authentic Italian gastronomic culture (how to shop, eat, cook, and *be* authentically Italian), is seen in its first official cookbook *Eataly: A Guide to Buying, Cooking, and Eating Italian Food* (Farinetti and Danford 2019, first published in 2014). This book which features a forward written Farinetti is formatted mainly as a cookbook and 'how-to' reference guide to Italian gastronomy, but features interesting consumption directives placed within the sections of the book that are quite strict and

uncompromising in how to execute simple tasks of eating in a way that ensures 'Italian authenticity.' One section explains how to eat pasta correctly with a fork, specifying that the fork should be held at a '45 degree angle toward the side of the bowl,' in order to successfully grab and twirl the pasta (Ibid: p.57). Another outlines how to correctly dip *cantucci* (a small Tuscan almond biscotti) in a glass of *vin santo* (a dessert wine also from Tuscany), what type of glass it should be in, how to hold the cookie, and how many seconds to soak it correctly before eating it (Ibid). The most interesting 'how-to' guide was how to eat pizza correctly and that one should use a knife and fork, cutting small triangular bite-size pieces from the centre of the slice moving towards the crust, and that one could only pick up the slice when it had cooled, with the only remaining part left of the slice being its crust (Ibid). This example stands out the most because historically, in the early development of pizza in Naples during the mid to late 19th century, it was largely an unpopular fast food made by a local *pizzaiolo* typically coated in animal lard or olive oil, raw tomatoes, oregano, pepper, and garlic, and sold by the slice on street corners (Dickie 2008). Unlike the contemporary iteration of high-brow pizza eating culture recontextualized by Eataly outlined in its cookbook above, pizza in Italy was in fact first developed around the time of the cholera outbreaks in Naples during the 19th century, and as a result was often associated with the disease and poverty ridden slums of the city at that time (Ibid). Today, many Italians typically eat the paper-thin Neapolitan style pizza, by folding it and eating it with their hands. Eataly's emphasis on a culture of regulated performance of food consumption makes readers of their cookbook feel (specifically non-Italian readers unfamiliar with Italian food culture), that there are rules to perform Italian gastronomy authentically. This also communicates to readers of the book that Eataly is the keeper of this exclusive cultural capital and knowledge of Italian gastronomy and through investing in the company, they would obtain access to this exclusive cultural knowledge.

Eataly and Slow Food's relationship with elitism and economic inaccessibility is one of their main critiques, and not only plays a role in their accessibility and relatability for customers, but also how this can re-aggravate the North-South binary of Italy with the stereotyped view of the North being elitist and the South remaining slightly more backward and less culturally refined in comparison. Simone Cinotto argues that in the case of America's first Eataly store location which opened in New York, it was created as 'an archive of the good-to-eat and good-to-think Italian food (the kind Slow Food supports, produced by small-scale independent farmers) for the convenience of upper- and middle-class consumers' (2019: p.67). As one of the most outspoken critics of the Slow Food movement, food historian

Rachel Laudan argues that in the case of Slow Food, it is more so an 'invention of culinary patrimony' than solely being about preserving and protecting culinary heritage (2004: p.140). Critiquing Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini's book *Slow Food: Le Ragioni del Gusto* (2001) she states that,

> Slow Food is founded on the purported revelation that pursuing pleasure protects the environment, creates a sustainable agriculture, preserves culinary patrimonies, increases the good, the true and the beautiful, and has the potential to save us from ourselves (2004: p.135).

Laudan argues that Slow Food advocates that the prioritization of pleasure in food consumption also has the capacity to address greater issues of climate, sustainability, food security, and protects intangible food heritage and knowledge exchange, when in fact it does not (2004). I would counter Laudan's criticism in saying that although Slow Food has imbedded within it the political and socio-economic dynamics of morality, taste, class, and social capital, it has made an impact on circulating more knowledge and awareness in consumers about traditional and sustainable food production, which in turn has supported smaller scale producers and increased more conscious food consumption globally.

Around the same period as Laudan's criticisms of the movement, anthropologist Alison Leitch argued that where Slow Food was at one point in time perceived to be an example of 'sectarian notions of bourgeois elitism, the consumption of food, and even haute cuisine,' in the 21st century it has become a left-wing political expression through gastronomy of individual, collective, and state identity based on the concept of a 'right to pleasure' (2003: p.452). She continues that the late 1990s and early 2000s in Italy, gastronomy had increasingly become political in that Slow Food culture became less about individual pleasure and more a political exercise in dealing with the fears of the genetic modification of foods, and the homogenization and standardization of traditional gastronomic cultures (Ibid). Sociologists Roberta Sassatelli and Elisa A. G. Arfini explain that food production and consumption in the current period of late modernity which consists of cheaper more industrial global standardization of food production chains, has created a counter reaction in large populations of people to seek out food production that is more localized, sustainable, and linked to traditional practices, encompassed in the notion of terroir (2017). Slow Food initiated in 1987 by Carlo Petrini along with a fellow group of left-leaning secular cooks and intelligentsia in response to the inauguration of the first McDonald's chain in Rome in Piazza di Spagna (Sassatelli and Davolio 2010). Sassatelli and sociologist Federica Davolio examine

whether Slow Food was subversive to the capitalist Americanization of global food systems as it purported or instead an elitist movement of food production and consumption (Ibid). They explain that this type of project involves resources such as money and time, and its initial focus on 'pleasure' can be understood by wider audiences as an indulgent activity for the enlightened and privileged upper-middle class (Ibid: p.222). But they also argue that what is more important is not a clear definitive judgement, but rather negotiating the tensions between food egalitarianism and elitism which the organization bring up in the contexts of contemporary global food culture (Ibid).

Similarly, food historian Jeffery M. Pilcher argues that although the core intentions of the movement are based on the betterment of individual and collective living through more informed gastronomic practices and systems, 'it will never represent a genuine revolution until it confronts the dilemmas of class that have been complicated but not obviated by increasing globalization' (2006: p.69). I would argue this for the case of Eataly as well. All though it may have good intentions in its preservation and communication of regional Italian food cultures, it would need to confront its embedded dynamics of class, privilege, nationalism, and exclusivity in order to fully express and operate under the foundational ethos it was founded on. Unpacking the notion of ethical food consumption that the company advocates for is important because it is often closely linked to authentic food tourism and other food industries which base their systems around the notion of terroir.

Regarding the distinction between the terms 'consumption' and 'consumerism,' Jo Littler (scholar of cultural studies) explains that consumption is typically the consuming of things or services regardless of ideological or economic contexts, whereas consumerism is the consumption patterns within specific political or social systems, and gives the example of 'consumer capitalism' (2011: p.28). Incorporating the added term 'ethical' also takes on different meanings for each term. She continues that 'ethical consumerism' is often seen as an oxymoron and uses the example of 'neoliberal capitalism' which relies on socio-economic disparity to function, and any ethical aspects promoted in consumerist systems run the risk of entering the categories of 'greenwashing' or other ethical 'washing' (2011: p.29). In contrast, 'ethical consumption' is broader in definition and can express ethical activities and decision-making within consumerist systems (Ibid: p.29). Although Eataly had a close relationship with the Slow Food organization during its early days, it has become progressively more distanced from it due to the company's expansion beyond the 100 kilometre radius of food

production and consumption guideline, and its collaboration and selling of products by massive Italian food brands and corporations (Colombino 2018). Another important point Littler argues is that although not definitive, ethical consumption is often argued to be undemocratic and inaccessible to all social classes, which transforms it into a socio-cultural marker of distinction (2011). Again, it is important to note that this does not guarantee that wealthy classes engage in ethical consumption, or poor classes only exercise unethical consumption (Ibid), but in the context of Eataly which emphasizes that it provides ethical food consumption accessible for all of its customers, the notions of ethics, consumerism, and socio-economic class collide. As a company founded in the north of Italy, by positioning itself as being morally higher in its ethical and culturally authentic food consumption, while exercising neoliberal capitalism development activities, and presenting a foodscape of Italian gastronomy which emphasizes northern and central regions and markets, previously existing tensions and stigmas of the North-South divide are inadvertently reignited. Stereotypes of the North being elitist with more cultural capital and the South being 'less cultured' and unable to sustain economic growth have a higher likelihood of being reinforced and recycled through these tourism markets and media discourses both locally and globally.

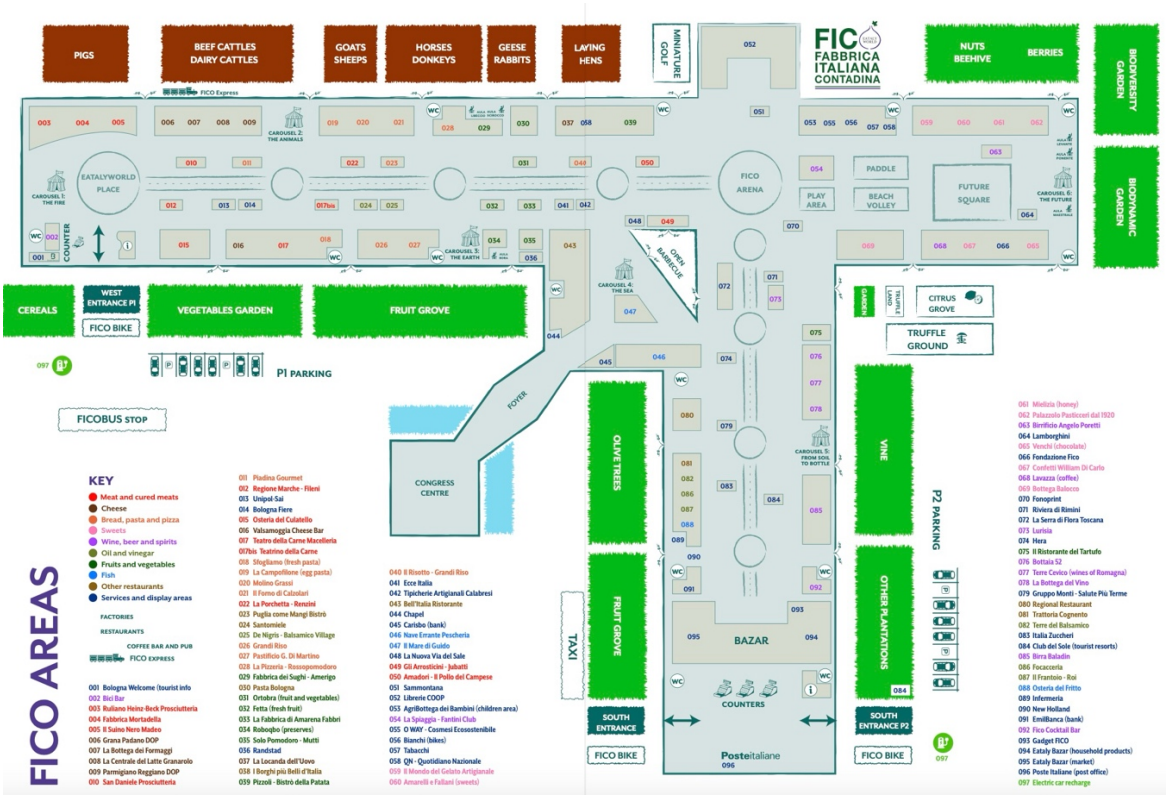


Figure 3. Park map of FICO Eataly World from an online catalogue accessible on their website in 2019.

Another point one could make regarding the Eataly company and in particular FICO Eataly world, is how it straddles the line between being a source of food education, social consciousness in food production chains, and ecological sustainability, as well as an example of Disneyization. John Urry and Jonas Larsen explain Disneyization as an economy that combines themed 'servicescapes' with entertainment and a wide range of choice-making that allow consumers to feel the excitement of freedom and authority (2011: p.54). They continue that it is a business strategy in which products and services are increased in value through their framing as special, extraordinarily distinct commodities (Ibid). I argue that although Eataly advocates for regional food knowledge protection, ethical food production and consumption, and a prioritization of pleasure in food consumption, by centralizing all of Italy's regional gastronomic identities as a 'one-stop-shop' with interactive stations, it runs the risk of transforming into a theme-park of Italian gastronomy where customers can visit Tuscany in the morning, go to Naples for a pizza in the afternoon, and end the day with a Sicilian dessert without ever having to visit those regions or traveling to Italy all together. Colombino points out that Eataly's customers are even addressed as *visitors* in the company's brand communications, which further implies their imagined journeying and experiential engagement across Italy through its food and wine while shopping in their stores (2018).

On 30th November 2023, the company even opened its first Eataly location in a train station, that being Rome's Termini station, marking this to be its 50th location in the world. According to a post on their website, they explain that this take-away and dine-in focused location offered travellers authentic Roman dishes and products along with other Italian products.[58] This would mean that visitors staying in Rome or passing through could engage with authenticated local Roman products and dishes without ever having to leave its train station. In fact, this is not the only example of Eataly opening locations in what anthropologist Marc Augé termed 'non-places'; locations such as train stations or airport terminals that were created as a direct consequence to supermodernity and which embody temporality, transitoriness, and solitary individuality (1995: p.78). Eataly collaborated with the national motorway service station chain company AutoGrill (founded in Milan in the 1940s), to open up Secchia Ovest, an Eataly café, bakery, and market on the A1 Milan-Bologna motorway near Modena (which was announced in May of 2016).[59] This

[58] https://www.eataly.net/it_it/mondo-eataly/news/italia/eataly-apre-a-roma-termini .
[59] https://www.autogrill.com/en/stories/autogrill-and-eataly-team-first-time-motorway .

collaboration continued, where Eataly opened a location in Rome's main airport Fiumicino, in Terminals 1 and 3 (announced in May of 2022).[60] This culminated in their most recent launch of Orio al Serio on 15th December 2023, which is their newest location at Milan's Bergamo airport.[61]

Through this approach of expanding its next phase of locations in *non-places* such as airport terminals and train stations, although Eataly emphasizes a prioritization on communicating and featuring *place* in the products they sell (i.e., regionally specific products made locally from producers from those regions), they in fact are creating the opposite effect. This means that by featuring Italian regional products in their shops across the globe and points of transit, customers have the added convenience of buying products without having to visit their affiliated regions of origin, thus removing place from those very products and food cultures and creating a new type of food globalization, one that combines the values of sustainability, regional identity with nationalism and capitalism in contradictory ways.

In their analysis of ethical consumption in London's Borough Market, social scientist Benjamin Coles and geographer Philip Crang explain that in double commodity fetishism, commodity origins are often hidden which transforms the commodity into 'the source rather than the outcome of the social production of value' (2011: p.89). In the case of Eataly selling regionally certified products, the enchantment of these commodities is in their expression of an authenticity of place and production because those types of provenances are featured upfront for customers, outlining and tracing the history of the product, who made them, and how and where they were produced. Ian Cook and Philip Crang explained in the late 1990s the meaning of the term double commodity fetishism as a concept that both distanced consumers awareness of a food commodity's spatial distance, while emphasizing its regional specificity (1996). I argue that in the case of Eataly, the enchantment and double commodity fetishism lies in the company's promotion and advertising of itself as the gatekeeper of truly authentic and morally ethical Italian gastronomy, in an approach that objectifies food in complex ways to express and transmit 'cultural positioning' (Ibid: p.132). Customers engage in the local cultures and terroir of different Italian regions featured in its many stores when they visit and shop, while never having to step foot in those regions, nor engage with those

[60] https://www.autogrill.it/en/news/eatalys-high-quality-reaches-fiumicino/ .
[61] https://www.eataly.net/it_it/mondo-eataly/news/italia/eataly-apre-a-orio-al-serio .

regional cultures first-hand. Where Coles and Crang explain that in the case of consumers' fetishizing a commodity, their disconnection from their origin creates 'commodity enchantment through mythical imaginations of advertising and branding operations,' and this enchantment is challenged by the commodity's actual provenance (2011: p.89). In the case of Eataly, by examining how not all regions are equally and properly represented in its project (i.e., Calabria) and its Disneyization of being a one-stop-shop of a regionally specific but seemingly equally unified Italian gastronomic foodscapes, this threatens the enchantment the company creates. More specifically with the case of Eataly World, by housing animal and growing plant species from specific regions under its one roof in Bologna for its visitors to engage with, this hides the fact that these organisms are in reality regionally contingent upon the specific environmental places they are from and grow in. Visitors may become enchanted by the idea that they are interacting with a highly unique and valued regional plant or animal, but they are in fact engaging in something akin to a prop, void of its relationship and deep connection to its place and ecosystem of origin. This demonstrates what Cook and Crang argued that food was both 'placed cultural artefacts' and 'displaced materials and practices' (1996: p.131).



Figure 4. A Calabrian grape varietal growing onsite in FICO Eataly World in Bologna. This is one of many examples of species growing onsite in the food park that are not from the region and are seemingly for display and educational purposes (personal photograph, 2019).

These examples are in part some of the reasons expressed by Nicola as to why he was not interested in retailing his products in larger retail shops outside of the region, with the fear that his customers would not have any reason nor the desire to visit Calabria. By promoting his products through his business, local food markets, and retailing abroad, he creates an initial contact with customers, with the aim of sparking their interest in his products and the region, in the hopes that this would also spark their curiosity to ultimately travel to Calabria as well. It is a balance between maintaining autonomy, product quality, and a degree of exclusivity that creates desire and connectedness to a place in an otherwise oversaturated and over-accessible Italian gastro-tourism industry. Like many other small-scale Calabrian entrepreneurs I met, their approach to gastro-tourism incorporates sustainability with financial goals, while prioritizing and fostering connections to place (i.e., Calabrian landscapes and communities) and building strong social networks between producers, retailers, and consumers.

This type of Disneyization of food nationalism presented by Eataly can also be seen in a new company called *Irasshai,* a Japanese specialty food shop and restaurant which opened its first location in Paris on 9th August 2023.[62] This shop retails regional Japanese products, some of which have not been accessible in this way outside of the country before. Similar to Eataly, its shop also features a cellar, café, bar, and restaurant within the grocery store. On their website they also provide a section on free Japanese recipes for customers to make dishes themselves using their products. What differs from the case of Eataly is that Irasshai opened its first location outside of Japan with the main targeted demographic being non-Japanese customers. Eataly on the other hand, opened its first shops in Italy and has their food theme park Eataly World in Bologna. Many of their customers are Italian and live in the Italian cities where these shops are located. On paper this would not seem to be a lucrative venture because local specialty food shops would be selling similar if not better local products in close proximity to an Eataly store location in Italy. Why would Italians want to shop at a store selling products that they could find elsewhere in their own city? I argue that it is the aspect of the business which presents a nationalized foodscape offering all regional products across Italy under one roof, that enable a new level of convenience for Italian customers, besides the predictable appeal from foreign tourists enjoying the novelty and exclusivity of the Eataly 'experience.' But what this also brings are consequences to local

[62] Opening date posted on the company's official Instagram page on 4th August 2023.

businesses. By focusing on and claiming ownership of a national food identity through its state-funded business, Eataly risks stunting the economies and socio-cultural representation of Italy's regional food identities and local communities, which inadvertently devalues the very quality it claims to protect and promote; *regionality*.

Another curious fact regarding the company is that at the moment, they do not have any locations in southern Italy. While spending time with a tourism business founder named Antonio in Catanzaro (Calabria), I brought up this topic. As we were driving through the forested mountainside of Presila, I asked Antonio how his business related to larger commercial gastro-tourism companies or ventures in Italy such as Eataly, since Eataly was a national and international 'institution' of food, but had no presence in the region of Calabria. Antonio's answer was the first I had heard of its kind so far at that point in my fieldwork. He said that the reason why Eataly and even Slow Food's 'authenticated' organic, regional food programming did not work as well in Calabria was because people here had naturally grown up with this high level of quality in foods and products. They were not seen as commodities worth spending more money for, when Calabrians often had access to products of the same or better quality here, at a lower cost or free if they were domestically made. There was not a market for the type of programming and initiatives companies like Eataly developed because the values that Eataly and Slow Food were built on and represented, were already part of the agricultural history and food culture in Calabria. These large-scale companies and organizations thrived more in northern Italian and international markets because clients from those areas were further disconnected from these products, food values, and this rich agricultural history, and so there was a strong market of desire for them. More cosmopolitan cities in the North were less connected to their land, to their local food tradition, and their traditional domestic food consumption practices (of making and eating these products and dishes at home), and so having them ready-made and rebranded as high-quality commodities was not only more convenient but also made them more desirable.

Calabrian Autonomy

Ichijo, Ranta, and anthropologist Venetia Johannes argue that, 'geographical and topographical conditions need to be factored in more rigorously in the study of nations and nationalism because they shape the ways in which symbols and culture are formed and

maintained' (2019: p.9). Italy is made of up a distinct patchwork of geographic regions, each with their own historical and cultural specificities reflected in their regional gastronomies. These contexts, along with Calabria's specific contexts of landscape and environment outlined in the previous section (i.e., its mountainous terrain which physically cuts the region off from the rest of the peninsula, earthquakes, and its location as the country's southernmost tip) along with the historical stigma southern regions like Calabria have faced in their representation and relationship with the wider 'unified Italian nation' (within and outside its borders), all of these contexts are important and cannot be overlooked. They must be factored in and interrogated when large-scale gastro-tourism companies and/or projects like Eataly claim to represent and protect a nationalized 'Italian cuisine,' in order to understand the dynamics Calabria faces with the rest of the regions, and how it can define itself for future sustainable economic development and nuanced representation.



Figure 5. Magnets featuring Tropea red onions at a gift shop while visiting the town (personal photos, 2019).

Entrepreneurs such as Nicola prioritize what Fabrizio Ferreri examines as 'place awareness' and how it is key to the 'endogenous potential of tourism development of a territory' (2021: p.75). Ferreri continues that place awareness formulates the relationship with local resources, their uses, and transformations of refinement with local communities,

combined with the prioritization of protecting and promoting local cultural heritage (Ibid). He argues that without this approach in tourism development, territorial growth is difficult and temporary (Ibid). Roberta Sonnino and Terry Marsden explain that there has been an increase in the development of 'alternative' foodways that focus on 'quality,' 'locality,' and 'transparency,' moving away from industrialization and prioritizing localization of food and farming (2006: p.181, their emphasis). In the context of ethical food consumption as a consumption of commodities, Coles and Crang also explain that they use the term 'alternative' rather than 'ethical' because of their reluctancy to fully believe that an idea of a form of consumption being purely ethical 'operates in cultures and sites of consumption,' and opted instead for an understanding of a type of consumption active in different places with different qualities that are 'better' and 'alternative' (2011: p.89). This is similar to many of the entrepreneurs I interacted with whose first priority was to promote their businesses at a regional level in order to re-familiarize Calabrians with their own cultural heritage and gastronomy, and then prioritize outreach on national and international scales.

Sociologists Raffaele Matacena and Paolo Corvo explain alternative food networks as being communities of food producers and consumers that develop and maintain 'short food supply chains,' prioritizing locality as its market scale (2020: p.414). Through their analytical lenses of de-commodification and re-socialization of food markets in Milan, Italy and the north-west of England near Manchester and Lancaster (interviewing farmers and workers in those areas), Matacena and Corvo argue that de-commodification of the markets they work in was enacted when 'the economic relations that exist between food producers, distributors and consumers are re-internalised within a net of social relations,' making them less impersonal and more connected (Ibid: p.421). When analysing the conceptualization of 'labour' in these alternative food networks, most farmers demonstrated a rupture between the binary of 'work and life,' where both blended into each other where their work was a vocation of their life and social identity (Ibid). They continue that other features to these alternative food networks were an increased autonomy and freedom for farmers and entrepreneurs regarding their business decisions (Ibid). This in turn increased their immunity to economic market volatility and uncertainty, increased a deeper connectedness to the environment through sustainable practices, and strengthened mutually beneficial support systems through the formation of social networks amongst producers and consumers (Ibid). Food as the main commercial product in these networks was then developed and understood more as the result of 'a multifaceted human activity rather than as marketable commodities,' thus enacting de-

commodification of these actual products themselves within these already de-commodified networks (Ibid: p.423). Matacena and Corvo's explanation of alternative food networks expresses what I encountered in fieldwork during my interactions with Calabrian entrepreneurs. This will be expanded on further in chapter eight, specifically with the addition of examples of Calabrian entrepreneurs in Toronto connecting to Calabria's immigration history with Canada, and demonstrating the crucial role diaspora communities also play today in the destigmatization of Calabria and the growth of its gastro-tourism industry.

It is important to note that Matacena and Corvo also argue that alternative food networks do not exist in a vacuum immune and separate from capitalism's market-societies, and that their long-term sustainability is not guaranteed, but instead these alternative food networks should be understood as flexible and creative in nature, existing within the fluctuations of capitalism and existing alongside them in complimentary forms (2020). I argue that place awareness helps situate alternative food networks in a distinct way within the noise of larger consumer markets, even though commodity chains and consumption patterns are entangled in localized sustainable economies of connectedness and social networks. Ferreri's case study on Sambuca di Sicilia in the province of Agrigento demonstrated how consequential the award it won in 2016 for 'most beautiful Italian village' was to its exponential increase in prioritization of local development, and it was this award which created 'place awareness' in the most effective way and redefined an identity for the community (2021). Similar to how cheesemaker and agriculturalist Vittorio's televised video interview increased his business sales, and Nicola's awards for his salumi positively affected his business growth, awards and publicity by legitimate organizations can act not only as a form of information dissemination for their business and of the region to wider audiences, but also legitimizes their businesses and the region by cutting through the lack of knowledge or assumptions on Calabria initially based on previous stigmas. Ferreri argues that the role of an academic, developer, or policy maker in the approach of place awareness is focusing on local system and community dynamics, and how these communities prioritize development and what form it takes for them in the best interest of their region (2021). Calabrian entrepreneurship that prioritizes connectedness, knowledge exchange, and passion over capitalism is important in the ways in which it engages in the inclusion of local actors, knowledge exchange between local communities, and its potential to create sustainable

economic systems which support regional businesses and allow for levels of individual autonomy at the same time.

In addition, this chapter and the previous one expands on the dynamics of different scaled gastrotourism markets; those being local/regional, national and global. Noel B. Salazar's case study of tour guides in Yogyakarta, Indonesia demonstrates the concept of glocalization in that the notions of global and local are enmeshed with each other (2005). After the establishment of western fast-food chain locations in Java, local entrepreneurs took direct inspiration and created localized fast-food businesses that not only served similar food but were named as slight variations of the original western names (i.e., "Kentukku Fried Chicken" from Kentucky Fried Chicken or KFC) (Ibid: p.635). This was also seen in popular neighbourhoods for international tourists which provide a mixture of local and culturally specific shops with other westernized ones such as coffeeshops and second-hand bookshops (Ibid). Salazar explains further that although global forces influence localities, he emphasizes the autonomy of locals in stating that the global 'is increasingly penetrated and reshaped by many locals' (Ibid: p.630). This is true in the case of Calabrian entrepreneurs both in Calabria and within diaspora in Toronto. Through their work in the gastro-tourism industry hosting events, tours, and creating digital content for their social media platforms, as well as other wider-reaching media outlets (i.e., television and news programming), they are actively shifting the stigma away from Calabrian culture and re-educating tourists and customers alike on regional, national, and global scales. What makes the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry different from the standard understanding of glocalization is that Calabrian entrepreneurs are not only engaging in local and global contexts to destigmatize their region and culture, but this approach of using gastronomy as a method of destigmatization is being done firstly on a local regional level within their own communities, then on a global level outside of Italy, and then on a national level within the country's other regions.

Through this cross analysis of local entrepreneurs like Nicola and large-scale national and international projects like the Eataly company, one can examine how each market level (i.e., local/regional, national and global) often use the same discourses such as *place*, *authenticity*, *quality*, *tradition*, *sustainability*, and *identity*, but in different ways, creating frictions caused by their entanglement with each other. In the example of Calabrian entrepreneurs, they connect their businesses directly to the notion of place, maintaining local production, facilitating and growing local social networks, and transmitting their knowledge

of regional locality through their products, while being based in those same localities. In the case of Eataly, their expression of place, is one of an imagined gastronomic landscape, where all the regions of Italy are neatly and conveniently situated under one roof, outside of the regions they are presenting.

Where this section of the thesis focused on *food* and the ways in which Calabria is stigmatized or destigmatized through gastro-tourism markets both small and large, the next section focusing on the conceptual notion of *people*, will examine in more detail how stereotypes of Calabrians as people historically labelled as a generalized group, make development and destigmatization difficult, even today. The next chapter will look at Calabria's notorious history of violence and relationship with its mafia called 'Ndrangheta. As stated in my introduction section, Calabrian mafia groups have been well researched in the social sciences and so I will provide a brief overview of this history. Where I will focus more on is how an overemphasis of Calabria's history of violence in academic and popular media circles does the opposite in helping destigmatize its communities, and instead often reaffirms or re-emphasizes these stereotypes, making tourism development all the more difficult.

Section 4: People

Chapter 7: I'm Gonna Bake Him a Bread He Can't Refuse



Figure 1. Some of the different types of breads Michele produces which include (from top-centre clockwise): *croste, squadatielli, crostini, frese, and tarallini* (personal drawing, 2024).

One particular meeting I had during fieldwork that shed light onto the realities small businesses faced with 'Ndrangheta control in the region was with a third-generation baker in Acri, which was a place approximately 40 minutes outside of Cosenza (the same mountainous area where Nicola produced his *suino nero di Calabria* salumi, featured in the previous section). The baker's name was Michele and he specialized in traditional twice baked dry breads typical of the region. Massimo sold his bread products in his shop and suggested I meet with Michele for my research. What I did not expect was when Alessio and I arrived at his small bakery in mid-July of 2019, Michele led the discussions to focus mainly on 'Ndrangheta and what it was like for many independent business owners like him in Calabria to run their business under their shadow.

My cousin and I arrived at the newly built extension of a low-rise white apartment building which was his small-scale factory. We saw Michele and his older parents waiting outside to greet us; his energy, socially outgoing disposition, and directness immediately evident. He mentioned how bad the roads were and that it was not the fault of nature or the mountains but 'men' (meaning the town's municipal council) not having the roads repaved. My cousin agreed and said that it also made the towns more isolated and affected people visiting them, and Michele agreed. Driving up the sharp winding turns of the single lane two-way roads, these paths were so narrow that sometimes two cars could not pass through at the same time. The roads also did not always have mirrors for traffic to see around corners, leaving them riddled with blind spots at that mountainous altitude. The fact that these roads were often unlit at night made them all the more precarious.

Michele explained that he learnt baking from his father and grandfather, and their company Burlato produced typical Calabrian twice baked crusty breads called *frese.* These were shaped in flat rectangular forms, sliced in half after their first baking, and then re-baked until fully dried out. This extended their shelf life and could be found in almost every pantry in Calabria. Typically, they would be served as the base for tomato *bruschetta* where the fresh olive oil and tomato juices would soak into the bread, softening them. I remember my nonna (maternal grandmother) dunking broken frese pieces (this time in a form similar to a bagel) in her morning filtered coffee ('Canadian coffee' as we would call it in our family home), after soaking them under tap water to soften them further before adding them to her coffee. Michele also produced smaller versions called *freselle* and *crostini*, crispy flat breads, and both *tarallini* and *squadatielli* (similar to a pretzel but crispy and shaped in a variety of forms, and flavoured with ingredients such as anise seed, white wine, fennel seeds, or dried chili flakes).[63] Michele explained that he used flours sourced from Italy, and some of his products were also organic. In addition to their baking production, he also produced large chocolate eggs for Easter, a typical gift given to children, family, or friends during that celebration. After introductions, he welcomed us into the small factory building and gave us a full tour of the premise.

[63] https://www.burlato.com/?v=cd32106bcb6d .

I was surprised (but pleased) when Michele took initiative with our meeting and the topics discussed. He was very generous with sharing information about the production processes, his factory, and the business, and for the first 40 minutes or so there was no natural opening in the conversation for me to ask a question, or to bring up my project topic in more detail. During his tour, he explained the cost of his machines, the volume he produced and sold, and the amount of work that went into the production system. Because the factory was vertical and there was a lift that enabled the flow of people and products throughout, he did not need a large square footage of space, and he added that if his production was laid out horizontally, the factory would have to be much larger. Michele then began our tour showing us each floor of his small factory. On the ground floor, he stored his baked and packaged products because it was cooler. The first floor featured a production space and had a large plaque with a quote (in Italian) from Steve Jobs, with an image of his face. Michele was very proud of this area and reminded me again at the end of our meeting when we passed one more time, that I should take a photo of the plaque, reiterating that you would not find this in any other factory here (as I understood, implying that most other Calabrians would not have this). It read,

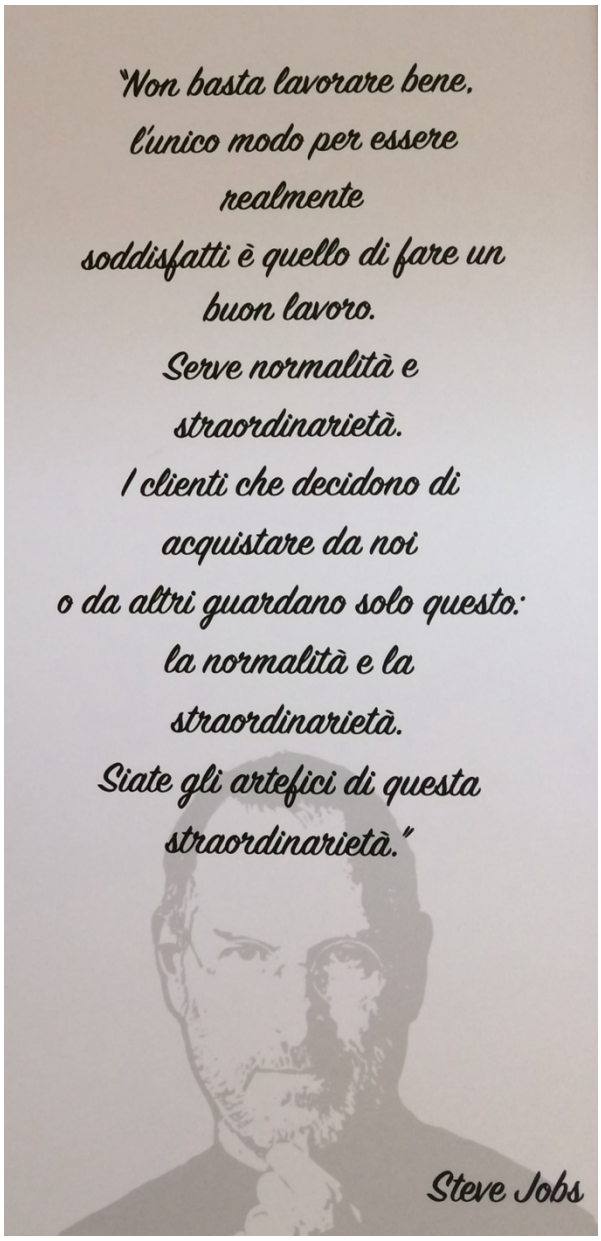


Figure 2. Steve Jobs plaque
(personal photograph, 2019).

'It is not enough to work well, the only way to be really satisfied is to do a job that is good. We need normality and extraordinariness. Customers who decide to buy from us or others look only at this: normality and extraordinariness. Be the makers of this extraordinariness.'

While he was showing me this, he also added that he was both a normal person, but also an extraordinary one, and that if one could not be normal, they also could not be extraordinary either. The impression he made was one of pride for his business success and he wanted to show me this success, as well as his sacrifices (i.e., spending a significant amount of money on expensive machinery). The second floor held the massive main oven and smaller additional ovens where the baking occurred. The third and final floor was an open space, not for the bakery production, but was transformed into a fine art gallery he opened to the public free of charge, which housed his own art and art he collected by other Italian artists. He was very proud of the gallery and reiterated the value of the pieces, some of which were works by up-and-coming artists which he believed would become very famous. At the other end of this top floor was where his chocolate production area was located. Not only was this where their seasonal chocolate easter eggs were made but this floor was also used for educational events for children, workshops, and other social events.

With all of the machinery and technology he had invested into his production system, he stressed the importance of developing a balanced harmony between modernity, technology, machinery, and humans crafting by hand. He argued that an artisanal business that did not include any technological advances in production and only made everything by hand, not only would take too long, but would result in being less productive or financially successful. It would not last and would eventually close. One example he made was the fact that his ovens baked the frese properly and accurately. Some other ovens may be too hot, over baking the outside too fast leaving the frese raw inside, and this moisture would risk them spoiling faster due to mold.

Another example he pointed out, expressing the benefits of machinery in making the production faster and yielding more without compromising on quality, was a machine that cut the mini frese in half, preparing them for their second bake. Many bakers that made these mini frese still cut each one by hand, often cutting themselves in the process because they were so thin. He continued saying that then blood could get into the bread, which could contaminate the products. The machine he bought was one that not many bakers had, and he emphasized the fact that he was one of the only bakers who owned it, and how important it was for his baking production. With this being said, he also stressed that some hand-made aspects in production were essential and gave the example of his chocolate eggs, that

although their shaping was more mechanically and technologically reliant, their intricate decorations which included chocolate piping were still done by hand.

During the tour, another point he mentioned that was important was the landscape and climate he produced his products in, not only for his breads but also for his employees. The climate acted as an additional 'ingredient' which affected the quality of the breads and how they dried out. In designing the renovated parts of the factory, he also made the point that it was important to have windows which brought light into the factory for the workers, allowing them to see the beautiful mountainous landscape they were located in while they worked. He concluded that there were three main components, important to any successful bakery: the flour, the ovens, and the bakers themselves.

While we were still on the top floor in the chocolate production area, Michele brought the conversation to the topic of 'Ndrangheta, and how they had taken over the region and the entire country, emphasizing the severity and the systemic issues and oppression surrounding their control. He said that representations of Italian mafia as most people knew through pop culture, was different from 'Ndrangheta. He explained that if one was to personify the groups as types of people, the generalized Italian mafia was a Don Corleone[64] violent type figure, whereas the 'Ndrangheta was his wife, more covert in presence and influence, but in reality more dangerous, powerful, corrupt, and influential than her husband. A figure that seemed trustworthy and charitable, but was in fact not. He claimed that most large-scale successful Italian businesses and corporations were connected to the 'Ndrangheta, and also argued that the reason why Puglia had such a successful and strong food tourism market was in part because of the control and backing of the group.

Michele stressed how pervasive and complicated this issue was and the conversation had a tone of hopelessness. I then asked him, with this deeply rooted issue, how could the region move forward and what did the future look like for it. He responded that there was not one and that the group controlled everything, multi-national corporations and controlling more and more resources and businesses. On top of this, he said many Calabrians had a temperament of laziness and not wanting to work for their money earned and that the

[64] Reference to the main mafia leader in *The Godfather* movie trilogy directed by Francis Ford Coppola based off of the original novel of the same name by Mario Puzo.

stagnant economy that Italy was facing now (including Calabria) was because of ‘Ndrangheta. The era we were currently in was not like the 1980s when things were developing and progressing more in Italy. The group controlled everything, even the government, and any progress or growth was on their terms. Regarding Calabria, their objective was to keep everyone at the same level and for the region not to progress further. He even said that any international and national import or export of food products were likely controlled by the group because of their ties to larger governmental systems.

I asked him how he managed to succeed with maintaining his business? He said that he was crazy (in a half sarcastic way) and that the importance was he did it on his own, *independently*. Similar to Nicola’s approach to his salumi business, independence and autonomy was key in thriving and functioning as a business outside the culture and systems of mafia crime groups. He said that so many small independent businesses failed because they often fell prey to accepting loans from ‘Ndrangheta, and then they eventually lost control of their business and were driven into debt. He reiterated that the only way to keep out of the grip of the group was to stay independent, self-reliant, and focus on a local market. Michele said he marketed his products mainly through direct word of mouth (but was going to set up a website for his company, which is now accessible today). His clients were all across the south of Italy and he sold his products in small shops like Massimo’s, in supermarkets, and even restaurants. But he reiterated direct face-to-face interaction was the most important and best type of publicity.

At the end of our visit, he gifted me three products; a corn frese, an organic version with different grains incorporated into it, and mini *crostini* that were high in fiber. All were made with a natural yeast starter (*levito madre* or mother dough). He then insisted we go to get a drink with him at the local bar. It was a small bar with six to eight older local men (perceivably aged 70 and older), and so Michele introduced Alessio and I as the ‘younger guys,’ and in my case the ‘American.’ We all drank cold *cedrata*, a yellow soda made from citrus fruit (similar in taste to the American soda 7up) while collectively admiring the incredible landscape of the mountainside.



Figure 3. The view of the Acri landscape (personal photograph, 2019).

The Importance of Contexts: Calabrian 'Ndrangheta and the Formation of Southern Mafia

Calabria has often been depicted and in most cases rigidly defined as solely being one large part of the popularized and generalized assumption of the 'crime ridden South' of Italy. This identity has circulated within the macro levels of popular media rooted in the historical and contemporary accounts of large-scale southern Italian mafia groups, both within Italy and internationally (i.e. Canada, United States of America, Germany, Australia, and others). Although one cannot ignore the real existence and negative consequences of Calabrian 'Ndrangheta,[65] one also must acknowledge how this reality has often been used as an anchor to which stigma and criticism towards the character or predispositions of Calabrians (as being violent, untrustworthy, difficult, or dangerous) has been legitimized and popularized, and how this in turn affects how the region can develop a tourism industry. Along with the academic texts, political discourse, and travel writing which essentialized Calabrian communities as self-serving, lazy, cheats, having low-intelligence, being manipulators, and

[65] Name of the predominant mafia group in Calabria.

corrupt in nature (as outlined and discussed in detail in the second introductory chapter of this thesis), the factual reality that Calabria has a well-documented mafia history makes it harder for Calabrian entrepreneurs in the Italian gastro-tourism industry to escape this stereotype when it still dominates popular assumptions and understandings of the region in media and news outlets.

Many of the discussions I had with friends and other locals in Calabria went to the topic of 'Ndrangheta, and even prior to the start of my fieldwork in relation to my research topic on gastro-tourism, I was aware of the involvement this mafia organization had in the import and export of Calabrian food products. Luckily, my relatives and their network of friends within the local food industries both in Calabria and Toronto were avidly against 'Ndrangheta control and openly supported anti-mafia groups and organizations. Locals were also well aware of the larger international stereotype of Calabria as being only known for its mafia corruption. As I was an 'outsider' to most locals when conducting my research on the region, they often expressed to me that they hoped that Calabria could be known for its better qualities and beauty instead of only its crime history. During one account at the end of my visit in Morano with cheesemaker Giuseppe, my cousin Alessio, his parents Massimo and Loredana, and myself all convened back inside Giuseppe's house because it had started to rain outside. At the end of our discussion when we were about to leave, Giuseppe said that he hoped that Calabria would be known for more than just the mafia. Additionally, during my time with cheesemaker and organic farmer Vittorio at his dairy farm in Sila, while we were discussing Calabria's stereotypes, my cousin Alessio who had also accompanied me on that visit said one thing that Calabria was dominantly known for and associated with was 'Ndrangheta. Vittorio then added, 'I do not know the Calabrian one, but in Italian (the) stereotype is "*mafia, pizza, e mandolino*." It always was like this.' Later on, my cousin explained this phrase more and how it meant that Italians were known for being corrupt (*mafia*), for their good food (*pizza*), for their music (*mandolino*), and throwing parties.

When examining discussions around 'Ndrangheta like the encounter I had with Michele, it is important to contextualize these experiences with a better understanding of the history of mafia in Italy and more importantly the history of 'Ndrangheta and its origins in Calabria, specifically in the province of Reggio Calabria (Sergi 2023). Within the fields of anthropology, sociology, and criminology, early research conducted on Italy predominantly focused on the formation and dynamics of mafia groups in the country. Anton Blok's early

anthropological research on Sicilian mafia during the 1970s showed how the early formations of the mafia on the island could be traced back to 1812 where baronial rule remained even with the legal abolishment of feudalism (Blok 1974). Even though this abolishment occurred during the 19th century, the residue of feudalism remained, and the new centralized government which was forming during that century, further aggravated the existing oppressive political system which saw land ownership, economic, and socio-political power concentrated into small groups in both urban and rural settings (Ibid). He explained that mafia developed at the beginning of the early 19th century under the monopolizing Bourbon State which attempted to radically shift and redistribute the traditional aristocratic power of land ownership and emancipate the peasant class (Ibid). Blok continued that the development of banditry came from the reality that peasants were moving outward into the hinterland in search for employment when population growth intensified, making the brigandage of organized groups a lifestyle and mode for survival (Ibid). He concluded that,

> The gradual emergence of what came to be known only later on as "*mafia*" can be understood in the context of this development in which the central government, the landlords, and the peasants arranged and rearranged themselves in conflict and accommodation (Ibid: pp.10-11).

Jane Schneider (along with Peter Schneider) conducted extensive research on the Sicilian mafia spanning back to the 1960s, where they identified two types of mafia groups: one being more state involved with regards to voting mobilization for the leftist Christian Democratic Party of that time, and the other being 'diffused kin-like relationships of obligation and trust, with the non-criminal general public, both of which demonstrated the term *intreccio* which exemplified the entanglements formed by the mafia and other groups (2018: p.16). Jane Schneider continues that mafia organizations operated under a culture of 'respect, discipline, loyalty, and *omertà*,' the latter term meaning 'silence before the law' (Ibid: p.17). It was in the 1980s when Sicilian mafia became involved with the international trade of heroin, contrasted by a strong countermovement of anti-mafia groups, which then culminated in the Italian Parliament establishing an anti-mafia law in 1982, identifying the mafia as a definable organization which existed separate from the rest of Sicilian society (Ibid).

Specifically on the topic of Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, 'Onorata Società' (or Honoured Society) was a term used in the 19th century to describe the cultural codes of patriarchal honour existent in peasant communities in Calabria, and that some argue it to be the precursor

to what is now known as ‘Ndrangheta today (Truzzolillo 2011: p.364). The first national introduction of the word ‘Ndrangheta to directly describe Calabrian mafia was in 1955 with a documented police raid called the ‘Marzano operation’ (Dickie 2023: p.216), and the term only transformed into one that described all Calabrian mafia groups in the region by the late 1990s (Ibid). During the 1980s onward, anthropological and sociological research on mafia began to examine it as a crime organization, moving away from how it was understood previously by academics, where the mafia was understood in the early iterations of their research as being an extension of larger southern Italian socio-cultural traditions and behavioural origins (Truzzolillo 2011). Today, the Italian Penal Code article 416-bis officially defines the group through its tactical activities which include, ‘1) the actual or threatened use of intimidation and violence; 2) the strength (and reputation) of the associative bond; and 3) behaviours of *omertà* in the community (Sergi 2018: pp.429-430). In this case, *omertà* refers to the culture of silence where communities refuse to speak on ‘Ndrangheta activity nor reveal any personal knowledge of them for the fear of consequence (Ibid).

In the contemporary contexts of 21st century Calabria and its western capitalist systems, Stavroula Pipyrou (who has studied the ‘Ndrangheta in Reggio Calabria) describes mafia presence in the region as ‘a type of matrix–invisible but omniscient and binding (2014: p.414). During my fieldwork in Calabria, I often saw many local and national news reports covering events related to or caused by ‘Ndrangheta activity in the region and other regions across Italy. At the outset of my fieldwork in January 2019, I recall watching a local news report state that ‘Ndrangheta were caught transporting drugs to the northern Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige. Another common report was of regular arson attacks in Calabria on local businesses and bars occurring outside of their operational hours. This was to publicly demonstrate what ‘Ndrangheta would do if they were not paid their *pizzo*, or money demanded from businesses, in order to ensure protection from them and other mafia groups and claim territorial financial domain over those businesses (Forno and Garibaldi 2016). If the pizzo was not paid, they would destroy the livelihood of those local business and threaten the safety of their families. It was understood that the intentions behind these attacks were not always to necessarily kill anyone, but more so to intimidate the owners and the city, and make a demonstration of mafia power through overt examples of threat and destruction.

In mid-February of my fieldwork while eating dinner with my cousin Alessio and his parents, we discussed how in Calabria there was a high concentration of 'Ndrangheta in the regions of Reggio Calabria and Vibo Valentia. They added and further clarified that there were also mafia groups in Sicily, Naples, Puglia, and even northern Italian regions. In the case of Milan, they said in a both humorous and also serious tone that Milan was a mafia city. The only difference between what has been popularly labelled as 'southern mafia' and the mafia in Milan was that the latter was more integrated and less separate from the state. Whereas in the case of Calabria, even though 'Ndrangheta was a reality and a concern, the region had been forced to wear the 'banner' stereotype of being a mafia region within and outside of Italy.

Similar to Michele's metaphor earlier in the chapter that 'Ndrangheta was the more subtle 'Godfather's wife,' Pipyrou's research demonstrates that 'Ndrangheta in Calabria in some cases were less overt and less violent in their tactics of exercising economic and political power and control (2014). Her research counters mainstream stereotypes of violence, as well as early academic work on mafia by academics, where she argues that 'Ndrangheta groups today in Reggio Calabria's contemporary system of western capitalism were not always active in violent ways, but instead acted through covert altruism and free gifting closely connected to their religiosity, which on the surface seemed to have no economic or political motivations (Ibid). She explains that although rare, these free gifts (monetary or other forms of support and favours) given by 'Ndrangheta, express a dominance of hierarchical power that they could give resources at their expense without demanding reciprocity (Ibid). What was more important to note was that although reciprocity was not the expectation, a *vincolo* or chain was instantly created once the gesture was given, for the potential of reciprocity or exchange relations to occur in the future (Ibid: p.414).

Historically speaking, economic precarity and periods of political unrest are often the ideal conditions for mafia organizations to thrive in, and one can see this through the rise of banditry and mafia activity after the Unification of Italy. More recently, this was evident during the outbreak of Covid-19 and how it affected Italy, with it being the first European country to experience the outbreak. On 20th May 2020, approximately three months after the first lockdown in the United Kingdom occurred, the BBC reported that mafia groups in Sicily were taking advantage of the economic precarity and shortages of essential resources caused by the pandemic, where they forced communities to accept the aid they were offering. Anti-

mafia investigator Nicola Gratteri argued in this report that mafia groups did this with the hopes of gaining more local support as an alternative system to the failing state, instead of being perceived as a crime organization.[66] These are examples of mafia's less violent more altruistic gestures of vincolo as outlined by Pipyrou's research above (2014). In the case of Calabria, the BBC also published an article on 30th November 2020 with the headline: 'Italy's Calabria has two pandemics: Covid and the mafia,' expressing the virus's threat on the region's already weak economy, mismanaged healthcare, political systems caused by corruption.[67] With northern Italy having been hit the hardest by the virus at the outset of the pandemic, many Italians in the southern regions economically suffered more from the national lockdown of services than the actual virus, which had a significantly lower infection rate there. I argue that consequences caused by this type of blanket approach where national policies were enforced without contextualizing the differences in regional needs, echoed in some ways how the Unification negatively affected the South, worsening the existent tensions between the North-South divide. Schneider explains that the Unification's sweeping economic policies of commoditizing religious and feudal land estates, and the national military conscription had severe negative consequences to the already weakened southern agricultural regions of the 1860s, and this in turn sparked the formal establishment of mafia groups in Italy (Schneider 2018). My argument is not to criticize the pandemic lockdowns and restrictions which were developed to flatten the infection curve of the pandemic, but more so to emphasize how through these periods of economic and political uncertainty in combination with a lack of regional nuance in state policy enforcement, organized crime groups such as the 'Ndrangheta grow and thrive in these conditions. In fact, 'Ndrangheta has less to do with being an iteration of Calabrian cultural codes as still often projected in popular media discourses, and more to do with its relationship to a failing nation-state and periods of economic and political oppression and uncertainty in Calabria and wider Italy.

Crime and the State

Often times failed development plans and projects related to infrastructure, regional programming, and others in Calabria, have been a direct result of 'Ndrangheta's involvement

[66] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52537573 .
[67] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55098415 .

with other groups of governance (i.e., the state, municipal bodies, and local councils). The BBC reported on 20th November 2023 the first round of sentencing of more than 200 members of 'Ndrangheta in one of Italy's largest mafia trials, which spanned three years of investigation. The convicted consisted of 'white collar workers, including local officials, businessmen and politicians,' demonstrating how the mafia organization was successful in 'infiltrating the legitimate economy and state institutions,' with charges including 'murder, extortion, drug-trafficking, loan sharking, abuse of office and money laundering.'[68] Blok made early arguments around the blurred relationship between mafia groups and the state. In the context of Sicilian mafia, he stated,

> The relationship between *mafiosi* and formal authorities are strongly ambivalent. On the one hand, *mafiosi* disregard formal law and are able to withstand the impact of the legal and governmental apparatus. On the other, *mafiosi* act in connivance with formal authority, and validate their control through covert and pragmatic relationships with those who hold formal office (1974: p.6, original emphasis).

During the late 1990s, Jane and Peter Schneider explained that the anti-crime and anti-corruption judiciary in Italy revealed,

> …that leaders of the national political regime that governed Italy from the end of the Second World War until the fall of the Berlin Wall not only tolerated mafia, *camorra*, and *'ndranghetta*; but, largely as a clientelistic trade-off for safe electoral majorities, these leaders were also in various ways complicitous with organized crime (1998: p.245, original emphasis).

This exemplifies the Italian term *intreccio* which expresses the clandestine and illicit relationships between mafia groups and the state and political elites, who protect them and their operations (Sobering and Auyero 2019: p.223). This can be seen historically in the dynamics and relational systems 'Ndrangheta use in Calabria. This is also demonstrated in Sobering and Auyero's study on drug trafficking in Argentina where they examined the clandestine relationships with the state, law enforcement, and traffickers, and how this created widespread cynicism in local communities towards law enforcement, seeing how 'police-criminal collusion impact the ways in which residents of a marginalized area perceive the state's actions and legitimacy' (2019: p.223). During my fieldwork, a number of Calabrian locals expressed their grievances on the failing city council, regarding unfinished infrastructure projects like the wellness park roadway, Calatrava bridge, and Planetarium

[68] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-67476125 .

examined in chapter four of this thesis. On many occasions when I asked their opinion of the projects and when they were to be completed, they expressed how the projects were an unnecessary use of funding which could have been invested in more crucially pressing issues (like city infrastructural restoration), and that the current projects would probably not be finished. Although the topic of 'Ndrangheta, state corruption, and the political and economic consequences these cause for Calabria are important in understanding the chronic developmental issues the region faces, in regards to gastro-tourism, one cannot overlook and minimize the socio-cultural impact of recycling negative stereotypes born out of early anthropology, sociology, and Italian criminology on the region of Calabria, its communities, and their affiliation with histories of mafia crime.

Character Types and the Recycling of Tropes

Criminologist Amber Phillips argues that most academic studies on Italian organized crime have focused on the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and less so on the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta (2017). I argue that although her argument points out that 'Ndrangheta has been comparatively under-researched within the field of Italian criminology, more generally speaking, academic studies and anthropological research on Calabria has done the opposite, often focusing more, if not solely on its mafia than any other aspect of its history or culture. Stereotypes of 'Ndrangheta organizations as being fundamentally part of Calabrian culture extend outside of the national borders of Italy and follow the country's diaspora abroad. Criminologist Anna Sergi argues that when examining 'Ndrangheta group activities in Canada for example, they are often understood as crime organizations based on the foundations of *tradition* and *ethnicity*, which in turn can blur the lines of how one understands Calabrian crime culture and broader assumptions of Calabrian ethnic culture, inevitably conflating the two together (2018: p.431). When discussing the *campanilismo* of regional Italian diaspora in Toronto and how they emphasize their specific regional cultures and identities from one another, she argues that, 'regional differences in displaying an Italian identity also matter in the way organized crime is perceived, fundamentally preserving the (problematic) link between mafia and southern Italian regions' (Ibid: p.433). She continues that, 'Italians and Italian descendants do not want to be associated with mafias, and rightfully so; but if it cannot be avoided, southerners seem to bear the stigma more' (Ibid: p.434).

This overemphasis on mafia groups and their activities being fundamentally part of Calabrian culture and ethnicity, continues to infiltrate tourism and popular media discourses on Calabria in the ways that the region is summarized and described to international audiences. Recently in 2022, popular media depictions of Calabria continue to draw from historical threads of generalization and tropes, framing the region as still being a host of crime activity, with its landscapes and communities embodying these same negative connotations. One popular example (although it depicts more nuance on the region), is the recent CNN television series *Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy* (2022), which follows host Italian-American actor Stanley Tucci during his travels to all of Italy's 20 regions, where he experiences and discovers their unique gastronomic cultures and traditions. In the second season of the program, Tucci visits Calabria and what makes this episode particularly interesting is that his ancestral origins are from Calabria (having all four of his grandparents being Calabrian). Familiar with the actor and his work, this was the first time I learned of his Calabria heritage, since throughout his career as a public figure he was generally only depicted as Italian-American. In a positive way, the episode does provide viewers with a more nuanced depiction of Calabria's food industry and culture, and this should be noted. The episode shows segments of him and his parents visiting traditional bakeries, the beauty of Tropea as Calabria's 'crown jewel' and the highly prized sweet onions that exclusively grow there, swordfish fishing in Scilla, a Michelin start restaurant in the forests of Aspromonte, and a feast hosted by his extended family who live in Calabria. When the topic of mafia is covered in the episode, it features locals and a local restaurant that are resisting 'Ndrangheta control in their region, emphasizing the goodness of Calabrians and the richness in the region's gastronomic culture.

With these points outlined though, the show also reiterates Calabrian stigma in some ways. Within the first minute of the episode alone, Tucci's dialogue consists of phrases describing the region as 'wild and rugged,' 'a place that's as troubled as it is beautiful,' and 'I don't remember it being this green.' Within that same introduction, a Calabrian farmer and activist is shown saying that Calabrians are stubborn. Other emphasis was placed on the region not having infrastructure, having abandoned buildings, poverty, and corruption. This is in contrast to another episode on the same season of the program featuring the southern region of Puglia (which neighbours Calabria), where Tucci introduced the region with phrases such as 'rags to riches' and 'reclaiming the past,' which have more hopeful and positive connotations than the negatively focused dialogue used to describe Calabria in its

episode introduction. Although these are hyper-specific examples, this type of discourse analysis is important because through the use of phrasing and words, stereotypes are either challenged or reaffirmed through popular television programming like this one, which are broadcast across the globe to an expanse of international audiences. It matters how Calabria is defined and portrayed in contemporary contexts and how its challenging histories of violence and oppression are articulated, in order for any destigmatization to occur.

Noel B. Salazar's research on tourism in Indonesia demonstrates the ways in which stereotypes are recirculated not only from outside the country but also often recycled by local tour guides themselves (2013). He explains that in the case of cultural and heritage tours in Indonesia, some local tour guides studied anthropology, but with a curriculum often lacking in contemporary anthropological research on the country, and instead a curriculum that focused on early (and essentialized) works on Java (Ibid). This early research was then uncritically integrated in tourism programming, legitimizing stereotypes and tropes by local Java people themselves, instead of properly contextualizing and criticizing these discourses (Ibid). Salazar found that for some local areas studied, often new contemporary research was very limited and what existed was outdated (Ibid). This I would argue in some ways, parallels the circumstances present in Calabria, not only in terms of the occasional times Calabrians recirculate their own stigma, but more so the types of academic and media discourses on Calabria that are produced and circulated which often do not provide critical nuance or contextualization on the roots of the issues the region faces in its tourism development. Not enough critical contemporary research has been done on the region and sometimes, well known but problematic texts are often the only ones referenced uncritically and out of contemporary context (i.e., the case of tourism programs referencing Edward Lear and Norman Douglas' travel writing of Calabria and other parts of the South, which I expanded on in chapter two).

Another important point is the effect 'Ndrangheta and its affiliation with Calabria has had in maintaining the historical stigma surround Calabrians as being a specific character 'type' and having a 'natural' predisposition to violence, low intelligence, and distrust (amongst other pejorative traits). As mentioned in chapter two where I outline the stereotypes of southern Italian and Calabrian 'character' created from early accounts of Italian criminology, anthropology, and travel writing, one discussion during fieldwork expanded these stereotypes and their relationship with mafia activities more. In July of that year, I met

with Giorgio in Cosenza, who was the president of a non-profit academy of Calabrian traditional food and wine culture and gastronomy, which was a cultural association recognized by the region of Calabria. He originally studied economics in Naples but then moved back to Calabria and began his work there. On the topic of Calabrian character traits and the dynamics of 'Ndrangheta, Giorgio stated, '…here there is an anthropological matter, in the sense that Calabrians don't live in a pack. Also, the success of 'Ndrangheta is due to this, because 'Ndrangheta has an organization that is familial,' dissimilar to the organization of mafia groups in other territories. He used the example of the existence of the Corleone mafia named after the Sicilian city where they originated from, whereas in Calabria there existed the Mancuso mafia, which was the family surname of one of the most prominent and powerful 'Ndrangheta clans. Expanding his argument that Calabrians did not collaborate well, he continued that, 'the problem with Calabrians, which is the worst problem…that is in my opinion unfixable, is…if me and you are talking and I am in front of you, I believe immediately that I am more intelligent that you are.' Giorgio argued that this was not necessarily because Calabrians felt themselves superior to each other or that there was a strong sense of distrust amongst community members, but more so that, when consortiums or groups were formed in the region to promote a food product for example, often times the leaders of these groups manipulated the resources and earnings from the group for personal benefit and gain, which directly affected the trust and sentiments amongst group members that may have worked hard and honestly, but were taken advantage of.

In the context of local tour guides in Java, Indonesia, Salazar explains that, comedy with humorous self-deprecation, 'is probably the most common device that guides draw on, among others to reinforce common stereotypes about their own culture' (2013: p.681). In the context of Calabrian communities, similar discourses of cynicism, teasing, and criticism towards their own communities are very common. Within Italian diaspora communities in Toronto, I recall growing up even today hearing Calabrians and Italians from other regions describe Calabrians as being 'pig-headed' or 'hard-headed.' These phrases express 'stubbornness,' and also associate Calabrians with pigs, not only because the region has a deep history of pig farming and pork traditions, but also it is commonly perceived culturally as a lesser quality dirtier animal. During a discussion I had with Calabrian-Canadian chef Luciano in Toronto at the beginning of my fieldwork in November of 2018, he explained that growing up in Calabria, most households raised their own pig because it was a lower valued meat, easy to raise where they could be fed the vegetable scraps from the household, and was

an affordable animal to raise. Other times during fieldwork, entrepreneurs would express their frustrations regarding collaborations with other Calabrians, saying that they were lazy and did not want to work hard to get results, or that they were consistently unreliable. In the Calabrian episode of Stanley Tucci's television show mentioned earlier, it was during a scene where he was in Tropea visiting an onion producer, where Tucci brought up the Calabrian stereotype of them being innately hard-headed and asked the producer why that was. The producer answered that historically Calabrians had always been dominated by some form of foreign rule, and this was a survival quality in response to this historical oppression. Instead of having popular discourses continue to generalize Calabrians as being innately uncollaborative, distrustful, or stubborn, when contextualizing the region's historical periods of oppressive rule and poverty, an opportunity of analysis would be to further explore the potential correlation of these behavioural qualities to being possible protective or defensive mechanisms of survival. Though I was not able to research further into this correlation and do not make it a definitive claim in this thesis, I would argue that it should be one that is examined in future research on Calabria, and also when looking at other stigmatized communities which have experienced long-term historical periods of uncertainty and oppression.

The ways in which media such as food documentaries and news outlets emphasize Calabria's mafia history and its current activity, affects the ways in which tourism can develop for the region. Jensen and Christensen conducted research on the territorial stigmatization of the Danish city of Aalborg East, and one mode of analysis was how the media covered the area (2012). They concluded two types of approaches; one being 'paradoxical stories' which covered positive occurrences in the city as a rare exception, and the second being 'unambiguously negative' coverage which was the majority of the cases (Ibid: pp.80-81). Regarding paradoxical stories they argue that, 'to produce a story about problem solving, it is also necessary to focus on problems, thereby reproducing the negative image' (Ibid: p.80). In other words, it is not that positive coverage reinforces the stigma that Aalborg East is a fundamentally problematic city, but it is the ways these stories are covered set against the backdrop of overwhelmingly negative coverage that dominates the realm of media and maintains regional stigma (Ibid: p.81). In the contexts of Calabria and its relationship with 'Ndrangheta, the overwhelming dominance of its news coverage in regional, national, and international news outlets inadvertently creates an imagining of the region as one fully crime-ridden and dangerous to visit, overwhelming all other positive

aspects of the region. This form of territorial stigmatization then bleeds into public understandings and assumptions of Calabrian communities, and the historical negative stereotypes that have existed for centuries resurface and become radicalized again. Herzfeld explains that, 'state mechanisms of control always inflict marginalizing labels on people (for example, refugees, migrants, "dangerous populations," and "criminal classes"), and the demand for definitional clarity reinforces that exclusion' (2015: p.19). This relates to how Calabria and its communities have often been blanket-labelled as a region of dangerous crime-ridden communities. Although 'Ndrangheta groups are a significant problem to the region and the wider peninsula, other regions in the north have their own mafia corruption, and to stereotype the South in this way as one homogenous corrupt entity, or at least not to denounce this misrepresentation, is another example of a mechanism of state-exercised oppression. Another aspect to the stigmatization of Calabrian communities, involves a history of racial prejudice as outlined in detail in the introductory chapters of this thesis. This was exercised by northern regions and other white European elites, intellectuals, and politicians, where they emphasized Calabria's most southern geographic location as being closest to the continent of Africa, and in turn, it being closer in culture and ethnicity to that continent than of Europe. This racial prejudice has remanifested today through the migrant crisis of the last couple of decades which caused an influx of refugees and displaced asylum seekers to seek refuge in the South. Right-wing political parties such as Lega have used the presence of refugees seeking safety in southern Italy and those regions trying to assist in this humanitarian crisis, as negative points to further disparage the South.

With the recent developments on the arrest of the head boss of the 'Ndrangheta's Bonavota clan reported in the Guardian on 23rd April 2023,[69] the mass conviction of 200 'Ndrangheta members and affiliates, and the numerous accounts reported on state corruption in Calabria during my fieldwork, how are local Calabrian communities, particularly the entrepreneurs I engaged with during fieldwork, moving forward, either solving the issues surrounding these deep levels of corruption or avoiding them, in order to positively develop the region? Economists Kaushik Basu and Tito Cordella argue that when it comes to overturning corruption, there is not one blanket method of doing so, that foreign intervention is often unsuccessful, and countries have to do it for themselves (2018). Nayanika Mathur

[69] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/27/italian-police-arrest-ndrangheta-mafia-boss-pasquale-bonavota .

argues that when examining corruption in India, one needs to stop using it as an 'explanatory trope' for developmental failure, and instead, one needs to investigate and analyse what the Indian state is, how it functions, and how it presents itself (2017: p.1796). In the context of the corruption of Calabrian 'Ndrangheta and the difficulties Calabria continues to face in terms of its regional economy and development, I also argue in line with Mathur's approach that one has to move away from over emphasizing mafia presence when discussing Calabria and its cultural identity. Instead of focusing on the generalized affiliation of this southern region as a 'mafia region' with a 'mafia culture,' if one intends to investigate 'Ndrangheta, more critical examination of the Calabrian regional state (as well as the larger Italian state) needs to coincide with this analysis. What historical contexts allowed for the formation of one of the world's most dominant and powerful crime organizations, and what contemporary contexts enable it to exist and function at such a dominant level today? These are the questions that require prioritization instead of framing Calabria as an endless question mark of precarity and oppression, with communities that embody negative character traits that prevent their own economic growth and development.

Through separating Calabrian 'Ndrangheta from wider discourses on Calabria and its culture, a transformation can begin to occur where the region is defined by other more positive aspects of its culture that have existing across its history and continue to evolve today. This transformation of destigmatization through more nuanced discourses is imperative in the sector of tourism. As mentioned previously in the first introductory chapter, Mathur argues that a dominant focus on corruption itself displaces the more critical interrogations of how a state governing body functions in relation to it (2017). In the context of tourism discourses, an excessive focus on Calabria's mafia and its dominance on parts of the region does nothing to solve the issue of corruption inside and outside of the Italian state, and instead plays on pre-existing cultural tropes of Calabria and its people being dangerous, which then makes tourism development more difficult. Mathur concludes that, 'a shift in the way we understand corruption can only begin when we change or reimagine the pejorative vocabulary through which it is discussed and which has a long stigmatized history' (Ibid: pp.1801-1802). Through my fieldwork, I witnessed this shift of discourses, from a stigmatized Calabria to a Calabria of inherent beauty, diversity, creativity and promise. I also witnessed first-hand entrepreneurs that were utilizing creative methods in their business structure in order to protect themselves from 'Ndrangheta intimidation and control. To counter the oppressive control of mafia groups, anti-mafia organizations in Italy developed

the policy of *spaccatura* meaning *to split*, in which people cut ties with anyone related or connected to *mafiosi* networks (Schneider and Schneider 1998). Sociologist Francesca Forno and scholar of tourism studies Roberta Garibaldi's research on *Addiopizzo Travel* tourism (founded in 2004 in Palermo by postgraduate students) combats mafia in Sicily by supporting and promoting local entrepreneurs and businesses that are not controlled or supported by mafia groups (2016). This demonstrates the ways in which 'host-guest relations' can create new alliance-based markets which counter the 'oppressive system of power and privileges' (Ibid: p.50). All of the entrepreneurs I spoke to emphasized autonomy as a key priority to the success of their businesses and prioritized forming the right kind of social networks with customers and other producers. Another important tool utilized by both the Addiopizzo organization and many of the entrepreneurs I spoke to was the internet and facilitating sales through their online shops. For Addiopizzo, it countered the pizzo blackmail culture of the mafia and encourage businesses to go 'pizzo free,' and promote their business and other resources to customers (both local and visiting) who bought their products and services (Pickering-Iazzi 2017: p.7). Robin Pickering-Iazzi (a specialist in Italian and comparative studies) argues that,

> …human geographies are undergoing transformations driven by the growing use of mobile technologies and Internet-based activities such as YouTube and Facebook, which are reconfiguring the relations between biological, biographic, and virtual dimensions of habitats and the manners whereby they are built and lived (Ibid: p.10).

Although the opportunity for partial anonymity of a person's identity or location in digital spaces on the internet (such as social media groups, websites, and email services) can in fact be used to benefit mafia groups and their supporters, it can equally be affective and useful for anti-mafia organizations, their supporters, and morally ethical businesses (Bagnoli 2017). They can use these digital resources to avoid retaliation from the mafia, while storing and disseminating anti-mafia resources, spreading the culture of anti-mafia legality to wider communities (Ibid). This was the case with tourism business founder Antonio from Catanzaro (Calabria) who I have already mentioned in this thesis. During a car ride with him in late April of 2019 through the forests of Sila, on a day him and his team were filming content for their social media and meeting with other collaborators on current projects they were working on, he explained that the mafia still had a presence and control on how business prospered and grew in Calabria, and that this system of patrimony still existed. As local businesses grew for example, the mafia would demand more from those businesses with which they had

control over. He explained that the business model he had developed for his business, actually protected their project from mafia control because their business was all online-based (with their online shop) and not a physical property or place which could be targeted in the common methods mafia used to intimidate or control (i.e., physical damage or threats to a property or business, arson attacks, etc.). Antonio's company was in a way *non-material*, more abstract with no in-person location where it could be physically controlled, threatened, or disrupted. Their project was an 'approach': a business model that used the internet to sell their products and tour services. It was a 'collective community' of contributors and collaborators, and most of their tourism services were provided through excursions, events, and social media. It was the immaterial network of the business, that made it more difficult for mafia groups to take control of, physically target, or intimidate them.

This example, along with Michele the baker from Acri, demonstrate how Calabrian entrepreneurs are creative and practical in their business development approaches. In addition, through showcasing different entrepreneurs in each chapter thus far, each of their cases demonstrate how Calabrians themselves are multi-dimensional individuals, fusing their personal passions and creativity with business models they developed, through trial and error and years of experience. It demonstrates the shift away from the over-emphasized mafia's economic control on Calabria and the regional stigma that has been created by it. Michele is not only a baker but a fine artist who is passionate about Calabria's regional bread traditions and proud of the success of his own business. Nicola is both an economist by formal education, but also a knowledgeable heritage pig breeder who prides himself on his organic production. Vittorio studied science but returned back to Calabria, to continue and grow his father's dairy farm and agricultural business. Antonio's example, as well as a Calabrian chef I met in Toronto named Luciano (who will both feature in the next chapter) follow these similar themes of creativity and progress. The next chapter will thus expand on the ways in which their work in the gastro-tourism industry destigmatizes Calabria, and specifically how they are using their businesses to facilitate a transnational connect between Calabrian communities in Calabria and abroad, to facilitate this process of re-education and destigmatization.

Chapter 8: The Land of Olives and Honey



Figure 1. Olive branch (personal drawing, 2024).

During the first few weeks of arriving in Cosenza in January of 2019, my cousin Alessio and I went to meet up with some of his friends at a popular bar and live music venue in the city, opened just a couple of years prior. As I answered questions about my research topic to our group over a round of *amaro,*[70] another close friend mentioned that the bar owner

[70] A popular category of bitter liquors made from herbs and other ingredients. *Amaro* being the Italian word for bitter.

knew people who worked in the gastro-tourism industry in Calabria. Generous and eager to help, he introduced me, and the bar owner explained that one of his friends Antonio founded a gastro-tourism business called Discovering PreSila[71] in the neighbouring province of Catanzaro. If I was interested, he could get me in contact with him.

Antonio and I began our dialogue over Facebook messenger and then connected me with one of his other team members Francesca to organized three days in April where I could meet the team and spend time with them while they worked and toured me around the small village of Zagarise, Presila, and wider Catanzaro. Zagarise had approximately 1600 inhabitants (in 2019) and was considered part of Sila Piccola[72] and the Parco Nazionale della Sila. This was also the village Antonio and the other business members grew up in.[73]

Antonio's business had a website, online shop, and active social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram). These were to promote its nature walking tour services and packages, sell their local hand-made regional products, and communicate information on the cultural, ecological, and gastronomic history of the region. I examined these resources prior to our meet-up to gain further contextual background on their business. Antonio was in his early 30s and explained on the business's website that the initial motivation to form it was to return back to 'his homeland,' combining 'technology, creativity, traditions, skills and heart,' with the hopes that it became a socio-cultural movement centred on five values: resilience, altruism, optimism, team spirit, and honesty. There was also a quote by him attached to his profile on the website which said,

> *To belong to a place, to spread its roots and to welcome the world.*

As recounted by his best friend and team member Carmine (also around the same age), Antonio phoned him on a March evening in 2018 to ask him to join the project he had a desire to create. Antonio stated in his profile,

> *A country that you feel is yours and needed. Being part of a country means not being alone, knowing that in people, in plants, in the earth, there is something of yours. That even when you're not there, it stays there waiting for you.*

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[71] https://www.discoveringpresila.com/ .
[72] The smaller part of the national park of Sila in Calabria.
[73] https://www.discoveringpresila.com/chi-siamo/ .

Antonio and his team used their business's public social media platforms for promotion and to widely circulate information relating to their project. This consisted of videos, photographs, and written posts. In many of their earliest videos, Antonio explained that his idea to start this project was born out of his desire to 'return home' and to become closer to his place of birth (Zagarise) after 11 years of being away from it living in other parts of Italy. He wanted to discover the undiscovered beauty of the region and place, and to develop an impact on a territorial level. During a 'selfie' video which he filmed while driving his car, he explained that he left his secure job in Veneto to come back to start this project and that many of his friends had also left their region to either study or find work. At one point in the video, he addressed the viewers who were Calabrian diaspora in other parts of the world, and encouraged them to contact him about the project because his dreams of returning to his homeland were also their dreams of returning too (implying a shared desire amongst Calabrian diaspora to *return home*, whether physically or emotionally). In another video, he expanded on how the group wanted to achieve an impact on the territory. He said that, simply speaking, it was formed from a business model that connected players interested in the region's culture and products into a network, with an end goal to promote the project outside the region to other parts in Italy, but also internationally to other countries, through a single brand or vision to achieve their goals. This also meant that the structure of the project was formed in a way to create a good and productive economic system.

The business's website not only provided information on their company (its core values, members, additional information on the area of Presila, and services they provided such as guided and packaged tours), it also retailed their own olive oil from it (which Antonio later founded a separate business exclusively for it in 2020, as mentioned in chapter six), along with other artisanal products. These additional products included hand-made pasta, cured pork salumi, goat and cow's milk cheeses, organic honey produced by a local beekeeper named Pasquale (whom I met during my visit), *sottoli,*[74] wine, herbs (fresh and dried), dried porcini mushrooms, crisp *taralli*, and others. These products were either made by them and their families, or by local producers that they collaborated with.

They also developed an email subscription to circulate additional information and updates regarding Calabrian gastronomy and their business to members. Just after the first

[74] Cured vegetables preserved under olive oil.

two days of signing up, I received a link to a pasta recipe of *casarecce all 'nduja* created by a chef friend of theirs, featuring their hand-made *casarecce* pasta and *'nduja* spicy pork spread. Later, another email provided additional information specifically on the Calabrian pork product *'nduja*. The emails were written in a very personable manner, with language and phrasing that made the reader feel like Antonio was speaking directly to his subscribers. The business also circulated a free comprehensive guidebook for subscribers, and the following will summarize some of its key information.

The guidebook explained that the business's main aim was to take advantage of the beauty, health benefits, and cultural richness of the area, which was at that moment still unknown and undervalued in the tourism sector. They used the positive qualities of the area to create a sustainable eco-food tourism company, which combined tradition and innovation in a harmonious way. The guidebook outlined that the three main levels of action for their project were food and wine, agriculture, and tourism, with the aim of creating sustainable tourism, as well as preserving and protecting local businesses and historical traditions. This would combine a sense of global outreach, while maintaining its regionalism and localism. In essence, preserving the past while using it as a basis for creating contemporary healthy living. They also described that their initiative would promote Calabria to a wider Italian context, as well as supporting and promoting the south of Italy. They recognized the importance of Italian regionalism, but also expressed that a union of Italian culture also made everyone stronger. Even though small rural villages were being depopulated more than ever before over the last 20 years, they believed that these villages provided the opportunity to develop a successful career in cultural history. Historically speaking, the main source of livelihood for these Calabrian villages was agriculture, and the guidebook went on to explain the different regional products found in Calabria. At the end of the comprehensive guidebook, they described the geography of the region and how beautiful it was.

By the end of April of 2019, it was time to finally journey to Zagarise and meet Antonio and the rest of the group. I purchased my ticket for the bus at the Cosenza main central *autostazione,*[75] on the morning of my departure. As the bus entered Catanzaro, the city seemed smaller to Cosenza, but its topography was noticeably hillier with tight steep inclining streets at every turn. The coach bus driver skilfully squeezed through the narrow

[75] Bus station.

streets, even though they were lined with parked cars. There were a few ‘close calls’ when the driver had to do some reversing, tight steering, and incremental manoeuvring, but city cars, buildings, and bus alike, came out unscathed.



Figure 2. Catanzaro’s bus terminal (personal photograph, 2019).

Antonio and Carmine drove up in their car to pick me up, wearing their business’s logo t-shirts and welcoming dispositions. On the road, I further introduced myself, my background, project, and intentions with this trip visiting them. Antonio explained more about their project, the things we would be doing, and what they had planned for me. Along our way we stopped by one of the nearby beaches and Antonio wanted to show me it because he explained it was one of the longest coastlines in the region. As the three of us walked on the beach, we spoke about tourism in Calabria, and Antonio said that there was not a strong industry or presence in the region because Calabria did not have an infrastructure in place to support it. These were things such as roads and accommodation. The coastline seemed beautiful, despite Antonio telling me to excuse the fact that it was not clean at the moment, and was nicer in the summertime. This went unnoticed to me as it was my first visit to a beach since arriving in Calabria, but I later saw how widespread of a regional issue illegal

littering of garbage on coastlines, in cities, and country roads was. In the months to follow, I visited many beaches and beach towns with friends and family, which including Fuscaldo and Lido Malena near Rossano, and noticed the presence of this issue, along with seeing regular television news reports on how it affected local communities and international visitors. On the other hand, there were other beaches I visited such as the ones in Diamante, Amantea, and Tropea (the latter being a more internationally known tourist spot), which were relatively very clean. Tropea already had established a lucrative tourism economy, where money was more successfully invested in city development and the tourism sector, and its success was more noticeable there.



Figure 3. Top left clockwise: Coastline with Antonio in Catanzaro, coastline in Lido Malena near Rossano, coastline in Amantea, and coastline in Tropea (personal photographs, 2019).

After our conversation on the beach, we went back to the car, quickly met up with Francesca to say hi, and then headed to the *agriturismo* (restored farmhouse estate) where I would be staying. The landscape along the country roads transformed into a series of lushly green enclosed valleys covered in olive and citrus groves, and the agriturismo was high up top one of the hillsides. The owner, who Antonio and Carmine formally and affectionately

called Signora Maria, was an expat from Ireland who had married an Italian and lived there with her late husband for around 50 or 60 years, but was now widowed and ran the estate on her own.



Figure 4. View from the agriturismo in Zagarise (personal photograph, 2019).

Since Signora Maria was busy at that moment when we arrived, Antonio and Carmine gave me a quick tour of the estate. I later found out from her that the expansive amount of land within the surrounding landscape of olive and citrus groves, was part of her estate as well. Antonio was eager to show me the best spots to look out at the panoramic landscape that circled us. It was a complete change from the noise, busyness, and activity of urban Cosenza where my apartment was. As we were walking around the property, I noticed there were no other guests currently there. It being April, it was most likely that it was off-season for the agriturismo. We went back to the front area of the property where Signora Maria re-joined us, speaking perfect Italian to the guys and then English to me in a clear Irish accent, very warm and sweet. She gave me the key to my room and proceeded to show me where it was. My room was part of a long stone structure consisting of several separated accommodations attached to one another. They each had their own front entrance terraces

with sitting areas sheltered under a metal structure with grape vines and plants growing along it.

After settling in, Antonio and Carmine picked me up, and we headed to Catanzaro's historic city centre (*centro storico*) to eat at on their friend's restaurants. It featured food and a majority of the drinks (especially their beer selection), either made in-house or locally sourced from Catanzaro or wider Calabria, and specialized in a 'build your own' style burger with options of meat, bun type, and toppings. I had ordered the *Podolico* beef (a Calabrian heritage breed), with a white sesame bun, *caciocavallo Silano* cheese, and slaw salad. To drink, I ordered an IPA beer called Rock IPA made in Catanzaro. Over dinner, Antonio explained that I was going to accompany them during the day while they filmed content in a small village called Taverna and the local Mattia Preti Museum located there. The rest of the day would be planned as we went.

When we finished, Antonio paid for dinner at the bar and we capped the night off with an amaro shared with the owner. I explained my research and a bit about myself to him and he, like many Calabrians, was shocked that I was in Calabria researching gastro-tourism for a degree at a university like Oxford. The owner explained that he had studied and worked in other parts of Italy and all over the world in London and Australia, but he eventually decided to settle down in Catanzaro to open up his restaurant. He told me that he had another panini restaurant in Milan where he focused only on featuring Calabrian products and ingredients, with the intention to promote Calabrian gastronomy there. Later in July, I made a visit to his panini restaurant in Milan, which featured a small food counter and walls lined with shelves of products from Catanzaro, promoting southern food in the North.

The next morning, we headed to Taverna, and picked up their videographer who owned a drone they used for filming aerial and panoramic shots of land and cityscapes for their video content. This method of filming was effective, not only because of its current stylistic popularity in tourism and documentary filmmaking (presenting sweeping, impressive, cinematic shots), but also because the mountainous topography of Calabria made these locations near to impossible to video document in that same way using other methods. We drove through the rural countryside dotted with small pockets of suburban neighbourhoods, construction sites of half-built buildings, apartment complexes, and retail stores. The partial completion and vacancy of some of these buildings added to an

atmosphere of remoteness and desolation in some areas which then contrasted the lushness and scale of the mountain-scape. As we entered Taverna, we parked, headed towards the museum to meet with an archaeologist who had done previous research on Italian dialects and who researched the history of the area. The plans were to film a tour of the museum with him and take drone footage of Taverna for one of their upcoming YouTube videos.



Figure 5. View of central Taverna (personal photograph, 2019).

After the interior filming was finished, Antonio said he had to go to Sila to visit another person regarding a collaboration they were doing, and gave me the choice of either staying with Carmine for the rest of filming or to join him in Sila. I chose the latter, figuring it would be a good opportunity to ask Antonio more questions about tourism in Calabria. During our car ride while discussing what tourism markets he wanted to target, Antonio said he wanted to first prioritize getting Italy to understand and become more familiar with the beauty and quality of the landscapes, culture, and food of Calabria, and then to open up their project to the rest of the world once that was established. This was because Italians from other regions still did not know Calabria outside of its public perception and what it could offer in terms of gastronomy and nature tourism. Our conversation paused as Antonio pulled up to a large hotel and spa in the middle of the Sila forests, to meet with the owner who was collaborating with him on accommodating a visit of German tourists who were arriving soon.

Antonio brought some of his products (a bottle of their olive oil, *salsicia*, and a bag of hand-made pasta) to his friend, as they were planning to make gift bags of their products with the business's brochure for each of the tourists.

Later in the day, we reunite with Carmine and the three of us went to visit one of their friends Pasquale, a beekeeper in Zagarise who produced the honey they sold. Pasquale ran his small-scale artisan honey business where he produced five types of honey: wildflower, eucalyptus, sulla, chestnut, and citrus. His apartment was located near a central square in the village and we saw him atop one of his balconies greeting us from above. Pasquale and his wife welcomed us up into their beautiful apartment and offered espresso and some espresso liquor to drink (by a Catanzaro company called *Guglielmo*). After introductions and catching up over our refreshments, Pasquale led us upstairs to his small honey processing room above their apartment and explained the extraction process and the other products he made from the honey processing (which included pollen, wax for his hives and to make candles, and an extract that was a useful cold remedy). Pasquale asked if we were interested in visiting the beehives in the field near his house and we all eagerly said yes. Descending the long exterior staircase of the apartment, interlocked neatly like puzzle pieces into the landscape as all the village buildings were, we headed down to street level and returned to our car to head to Pasquale's field. Once at the agreed meeting point near Pasquale's hives, we got onto his two-seater pickup truck to finish the rest of the journey there (Antonio and I outside on the back and Carmine in the front passenger seat). The vivid expansive valley streaked past while we sat clinging to the truck.

We arrived at the hives, got off the truck, and put our bee suits on. Pasquale giving me a new white one never worn. We all dressed and walked onto an open inclining field surrounded by olive trees and filled with a rich diverse carpet of wildflowers. He had two long rows of bee houses and began harvesting pollen from each as we stood and watched. He explained that he did this on a daily basis. Antonio filmed a video of our experience for their Facebook page and introduced me as their Oxford academic guest (twice). Pasquale showed us the queen bees in some of the hives, the larvae, and the different types of honey being made which took on different colours. He also had plastic bottles with a substance inside them, hanging from the olive trees closest to the hives, and explained that it was a natural repellent to kill predator insects that could harm the bees.

Once Pasquale collected all of the pollen, we headed back to the road where we de-suited and were given fresh handfuls to taste. It was incredible and unlike anything I had tasted before. The range of colours (orange, yellow, cream, dark brown, deep purple) were pollens collected from different flowers. It had the texture similar to cooked chestnut paste, was mildly sweet, and had the pungent flavours from the aromas of the different wildflowers. Pasquale said that it was a high source of protein and good for people who did not eat meat in their diets.



Figure 6. Pasquale's harvested pollen (personal photograph, 2019).

The next afternoon Antonio picked me up and explained I would be having lunch at Carmine's family's house and then Carmine would show me around Zagarise's centro storico. Later in the evening, I would then join all of them for a town event where the candidates for mayor would be delivering their speeches for the vote that would happen next month on the same day as Europe's national elections (27th May 2019). At the end of the day in the town square after the speeches had finished, tables were brought out to form a long row and filled with a succession of food provided by a local restaurant, and everyone helped themselves to food and some prosecco (and other drinks). At one point, Antonio came to check up on me and see if I had enjoyed the event. I said yes and took that opportunity to asked him a question I had been meaning to ask that related to my research. I asked him why he returned back to his 'roots,' to Zagarise, and create a future livelihood after having lived and worked in other parts of Italy. He answered that he had a deep connection to Zagarise, recalled that the piazza we were just in was the same one he used to play football with his

friends when he was little, and he saw his future there settling down and having a family. He made the comparison of when you fall in love, you cannot explain it in words, it just was.

Then a few days later back in Cosenza, I received their weekly newsletter email and Antonio featured me in it. He described my visit, that I was a Canadian guy whose parents were from Cosenza (but not close to Presila though), and that I was a PhD student studying social anthropology at the University of Oxford to understand Calabria and why tourism and food and wine gastronomy was not growing here. He then described how I got in contact with his business; that I met someone where I lived in Cosenza that told me about the project, I then wrote to Antonio, they then welcomed me with open arms and hospitality at the agriturismo in Zagarise, and took me along to follow them for a few days. Antonio explained that the reason why he was explaining all of this to his subscribers in this newsletter was because his encounter with me made him realize that making the world know about Presila was fundamental. He went on to reiterate how the region's nature had been untouched and remained pure. He then recounted our encounter with Pasquale the beekeeper, and quoted something I said to him when he asked me about how I was liking the bee visit while we were there. '*Antonio sono senza parole* (I am without words). *...It's wonderful.*' He finished by thanking me and welcoming his readers to Presila the same way he welcomed me.

A Tale of Two Countries

A couple of key themes that surfaced during my interaction with Antonio and his business were the importance of establishing a localized sustainable tourism model and reconnecting Calabrian diaspora to their own culture. Monica Gilli and Sonia Ferrari's research on the concept of the 'diffuse hotel' demonstrate in similar ways Antonio's approach with his business: a tourism model that prioritized local communities and long-term sustainability, while promoting desirably unique experiences for tourists (2016). Diffusion hotels first originated in the 1980s after a devastating earthquake in northern Italy occurred, to restore the villages and communities that were affected by it, and it gained more widespread popularity across the country in the 1990s (Ibid). Gilli and Ferrari explain that the concept of the 'diffuse hotel' or '*albergo diffuso*' decentralizes the notion of a unified singular hotel in the countryside, transforming it into an approach of hospitality as a series of small homes within villages (Ibid: p.65). They argue that not only does this provide more

intimate unique experiences for tourists with local communities, but it also enables the restoration of abandoned ghost towns prevalent in remote areas across Italy, while decreasing land degradation caused by building new structures on untouched land (Ibid). Although Antonio's business is slightly different, his approach is similar in that by utilizing his local knowledge, collaborating with other locals (i.e., Signora Maria and developing an agriturismo with her, collaborating with other independent businesses and producers, etc.) he was able to provide high-quality unique experiences to tourists, while ensuring that local communities directly benefited from this type of tourism without being exploited. Gilli and Ferrari continue that this type of sustainable tourism model places focus on 'soft infrastructures' as priority to develop and invest in (i.e., resources for quality of life, city restoration, transport, water and electricity, etc.), as opposed to draining funds on large-scale common tourism attractions (i.e., museums, landmarks, art galleries, etc.) (Ibid: p.70). This approach would support local communities and ecosystems, promote local knowledge and site-specific cultures, and fulfil the desires of a growing demographic of tourism who want unique, *authentic*, and *off the beaten path* experiences (Ibid).

The second theme Antonio's business expressed was the desire for Calabrians like him and Calabrian diaspora like myself, to reconnect with their own cultural heritage. Before continuing the analysis of this second theme, I will explain my use of the term *diaspora* in further detail. Robin Cohen (social scientist) explained in the late 1990s that the term diaspora originated as one which labelled Jews, Africans, Armenians, Greeks, and Irish, but this changed in the 20th century when minority communities were able to maintain dual citizenship, and both maintain and reinvent their cultural heritage within the increasing shifts of globalization (1996). He argued that although the narrative of the 'victim tradition' had always been interconnected in early academic diaspora studies (in that minority communities had formed diaspora out of forced occupation, famine, war, slavery, forced migration, violence, and prejudice), it was important to transcend this analytical tradition because diaspora experiences were much more nuanced and complicated (Ibid). To categorize them solely within a victim tradition would be to disregard the achievements, positive developments, and creativity that have come from diaspora communities beyond their historical trauma (Ibid). Also, the term diaspora has become more widely used in a generic sense, to describe immigrant and ethnic minority communities that does not relate to the victim tradition narrative in the same ways (Ibid). To these points, this expresses my use of the term Calabrian diaspora in this thesis. Although Calabria has historically experienced its

own version of historical traumas (as I have outlined throughout my thesis), my examination of its diaspora in this chapter focuses less on the region's history of trauma and more on their growth today, and how these communities are redefining their own culture, acknowledging their history, but not remaining overburdened by it. The majority of entrepreneurs I met during my fieldwork in Calabria had left Calabria either for work or study, only to return back to the region and combine their acquired skills with the vocational collective desire to develop the gastro-tourism industry there. This was with the aims of improving and strengthening local communities, the region's economy, and other socio-political systems, while also dispelling the stereotypes Calabria has still yet to be rid of. In the case of the Calabrian entrepreneurs I met in Toronto, they came from generations who immigrated from Calabria to Canada for economic and political security with the hopes of returning back, even though the majority of that migrant population eventually settled in Toronto. Both groups of Calabrian entrepreneurs expressed a deep interest in reconnecting to their cultural origins. In the particular case of Calabrian diaspora in Toronto, this relates to a larger phenomenon in tourism called *roots tourism*, an umbrella term used to describe tourism travel by diaspora communities 'one or more generations further removed from their ancestral "home",' that do not necessarily have first-hand experiences or memories of their ancestral homeland, but have a deep desire to travel there 'in search of origins and identity' (Marschall 2015: pp.878-879).

The phenomena of return migration and a region like Calabria have always been deeply connected, and in the case of research conducted on return migration, southern Europe was a key region of interest from the mid 1970s to 1980s (King, Mortimer, and Strachan 1984). Early research on roots tourism focused on quantitative data within a larger macro context scale, but more recently, the genre of roots tourism research has increasingly expanded (Pelliccia 2018). Sabine Marschall (a specialist in culture and heritage tourism) adds that within the context of popular media discourses, roots tourism became well known partially due to the publication of *Roots* in 1976 by Alex Haley (and later became a popular TV series) which sparked an interest in African Americans to visit West Africa (2015: p.879). She explains that roots tourists are generations of people separated from their ancestral homeland whom, through this process of severing, hold a powerful connection to cultural identity and familial heritage, as well as a 'real or symbolic connection to the place of origin,' even though their recollections of the homeland are not first-hand experiences (2015: p.879). She continues that,

> Roots tourists are driven by a desire for rootedness and identity; their search for information and remnants of forebears is an attempt at consolidating a specific (sometimes chosen) cultural identity and a sense of belonging (Ibid: p.880).

Within the Italian cultural context, anthropologist Nicholas Harney explains that the notion of transnationalism has been at the core of Italian communities for over the last century, and specifically in the early 2000s, the majority of Italians who first immigrated to Toronto during the 1950s and 1960s had now reached retirement, resulting in them having more leisure time and expendable income (2002). With these newly acquired resources, they acted on their homeland nostalgia and would make trips back to their home regions (Ibid: p.45). In my case, I argue that the second-generation Calabrian-Canadians in Toronto I incorporate in this thesis, have reconnected to their cultural roots more so because of the passing away of first-generation Calabrian-Canadians (i.e., their parents and grandparents), as well as a desire to anchor their identity withing the high-paced cosmopolitanism of global capitalism. This is also seen in the case of Scottish diaspora, where Duncan Sim and Murry Leith state that this nostalgia for home or even a notion of one's rooted past (that may have never even existed the way it has been constructed to be), 'becomes more and more important in an age of diaspora, general globalisation and population displacement' (2013: p.260).

Pelliccia's research on roots tourism within second generation Greek diaspora living in Italy who travel back to explore their roots in Greece, found that for the second generation Greek diaspora he interacted with, roots tourism meant 'living the experience of an emotional landscape both symbolic and material,' which included attending festivals, meeting distant relatives (and going through materials like photo albums), eating typical dishes, and visiting unique local landscapes (2018: p.2113). He continues that these activities were a,

> …re-affirmation of their identity and allow to live the past constantly, through the materiality of being in places, not only of their ancestors, but also in places that marked their childhood and initiation of Greekness (Ibid: p.2113).

In my project's case of Calabrians both returning back to the region from other parts of Italy or Calabrian diaspora in Canada, experiencing the physical landscapes and material culture of local food traditions enables the re-affirmation and maintenance of their cultural identity. This re-experiencing of Calabria first-hand, with less framing from second-hand depictions or popular misrepresentations, enables the facilitation of more intimate, nuanced,

and connected socio-cultural network-building, both amongst communities and gastro-tourism industries.

Academics in tourism Sonia Ferrari, Gilda Hernández-Maskivker, and Tiziana Nicotera also explain that roots tourism is when diaspora communities visit their homeland or the places of cultural origin of their ancestors, with the intention to reconnect with their ethnic and cultural roots (2022). Their recent research project examined roots tourism in Calabria and the impact of this relatively recent (but fast-growing) tourism market on local communities, their quality of living, and 'socio-cultural sustainability' (Ibid: p.118). They argue that tourism studies have often focused on the negative effects of tourism on host local communities and environments, and not on the potential benefits of alternative tourism systems which may be beneficial for them, nor on the perspective of the tourists visiting (Ibid). Their project aimed to fill those gaps and the glaring absence of any academic research conducted on Calabria on this subject matter (Ibid). In a similar way, I also noticed the scarcity, if not absence, of research on Calabria and its gastro-tourism industry, and this is the very reason why one main aim of my thesis is to contribute to filling this gap and expanding its discourse. Most tourism in Italy is designed for foreign tourists and not roots tourism (Ibid) and so in contrast to this, Antonio is an example of a local Calabrian who is approaching his tourism programming to appeal to Calabrian diaspora, Calabrian locals, and Italians from other regions. His priority was to familiarize Italians with Calabria and Calabrians with their own region, before prioritizing an international tourism market. Ferrari, Hernández-Maskivker, and Nicotera argue that roots tourism is not focused on largescale attractions but rather local cultures and traditions, and they explain that tourists with Calabrian backgrounds 'are passionate about their family's place of origin, and the idea of contacting people who are directly or indirectly connected to them leads to responsive travel' (Ibid: p.126).

Another important point to mention is that there is a collaborative aspect to root tourists wanting to engage with locals and locations in more meaningful ways, creating mutual benefits by reconnecting people to their cultural roots, host communities, and local entrepreneurs managing their tourism programs separate from state-led projects which can often be exploitative in nature (Ibid). This relates to Pelliccia's framing of roots tourism as a 'hybrid tourism' that it goes beyond ordinary leisure travel, one that is closer in affiliation to a 'transnational practice that goes beyond the concept of conventional mass tourism and which

can be considered as a personal transition oriented to weave important relationships' (2018: p.2114).

Nicotera also argues that the extensive history of emigration from southern Italy has the potential to become important to facilitating a flow of tourism (specifically in the market of roots tourism), but Italy is still in its early stages of developing this specific tourism industry (2021). With Calabria's deep relationship with migration and the movement of its populations to the north of Italy (and more prominently to other countries around the world), roots tourism accesses an already existing market of diaspora tourists, one that would engage in this current period of Calabrian cultural renaissance in more generative and sustainable ways. It was after 1951 during the second wave of Italian migration that Canada had the largest percentage of Italian migrants in the world (most of which were from southern regions), and by 1961 Toronto became the largest receiver of Italian migrants in Canada, which became their largest non-British diaspora in the city (Iacovetta 1992). One of the largest Calabrian diasporas outside of Italy is the very one I am part of in Toronto where I originated from, and as mentioned in chapter one, Calabrian diaspora make up one of the largest demographics of all Italian regional diaspora in Canada.

Simone Cinotto explains that the global popularity of Italian gastronomy was in fact initiated and expanded by its diaspora communities, and the cuisine invented in these communities 'was borne out of a combination of "high" and "low," national and local, references to Italian classical culture, art, and landscape and the everyday experience of migrant workers' (2019: p.43). This reiterates the important influence migration has had on the development and popularisation of Italian food tourism across the globe. Nicotera explains that local Calabrians see their diaspora as a way to generate tourism flows through 'place promotion' and tourist image enhancement, as well as an increase export of products from their ancestral region (2021: p.203), similar to Antonio promoting his business abroad and calling out Calabrian diaspora though his YouTube channel and other social media content.

On the topic of Calabrian diaspora, Nicotera and Ferrari conducted research in Calabria on the phenomena of roots tourism, and carried out 45 detailed semi-structured interviews with tourists of Calabrian ancestry between 2017 and 2018 (Ibid). The majority of the participants had a desire to visit Calabria to reconnect to their family history and meet

existing family living there, learn their cultural heritage and the Italian language, and to experience a place they grew up hearing about in person in a way that gave those 'intimate stories some concreteness' (Ibid: p.206). The last point connects directly to my own positionality which I outlined in chapter one in the introductory section. It has been through conducting my thesis project where I have been able to connect and form a dialogue with my own cultural heritage in direct and concrete ways. Nicotera and Ferrari concluded that the overarching motivation behind these roots tourists' interest in reconnecting to Calabria was to 'look for their own identity through the belonging to a place other than the place of their residence and re-establishing contact with the family country/region/town of origin' (Ibid: p.207). The next part of this chapter will now document the interactions I had with Calabrian entrepreneurs in Toronto, and how they are contributing to this growing industry of Calabrian roots tourism.

At the outset of my fieldwork, I spent the first three months interviewing Calabrian-Canadians who worked in the Italian food industry there, and many of them represented a growing number of second-generation Calabrian-Canadians building their own careers on the promotion and education of Calabrian food heritage. During my Toronto fieldwork, I met with a local food writer, blogger, and podcaster I knew previously named Jenny in November of 2018 at an Italian café in one of the well-established Italian suburbs called Woodbridge (in the city of Vaughan, Ontario). Born in Canada by Calabrian parents who immigrated to Canada, Jenny initially started her blog Fables & Focaccia[76] out of a desire to tell stories through food. It not only acted in part as an archive cataloguing traditional Calabrian recipes to prevent their disappearance by neglect and time, but also educated readers on these recipes and the life stories behind them. Jenny wrote on a wide range of food topics (not necessarily exclusively on Calabrian food culture) but said,

> I find that when I post something super traditional is when I get the most comments…For example in the summertime… I'll post about the zucchini flower…we call them *piteyi*…they're fritters, right? And without fail every summer I'll get someone messaging me saying, 'oh, I remember my nonna making these' or 'I remember my aunt making these' and 'would you mind sharing your recipe because I never was able to learn how to make them.'

Jenny explained that engaging in Calabrian food storytelling was, 'going back to my roots, my parents' roots. Learning, obtaining that knowledge, and trying to be able to pass it

[76] https://fablesandfocaccia.com/ .

on.' Using a digital platform like a blog was a way to expand her outreach and readership, the same way Antonio used his social media platforms and email subscription in his business. Jenny added that some of her readers were from England and even from Italian diaspora in Australia.

Another Calabrian food blogger, content creator, and entrepreneur I met during my Toronto fieldwork was Frank, who I first connected with while attending a couple of Calabrian food events hosted that year through mutual friends who were organizing them. We met up also in November 2018 in the same Italian suburb where I met with Jenny, only this time it was in one of the oldest Italian grocery stores in city, founded by Calabrian migrants. Frank was very close with the owners, and we sat down for a discussion in the store's casual dining area near the hot table of prepared foods they made, over an espresso and some hand-made pastries.

Frank explained that the idea to start creating content on his YouTube channel Family Style[77] and his businesses around Calabrian food culture, came shortly after his father passed away in 2008. It was that period of time when he began reminiscing on all the Calabrian food practices his father and mother engaged in. I explained to him that this was the same in my case as well. I was never actively interested in Calabrian gastronomy and cultural traditions growing up, even though I was surrounded by family members who practices them. It was not until all four of my grandparents passed away that I began reflecting on the notion of mortality and my place in my Calabrian culture, which ultimately shifted me away from a fine art career towards the beginning of my anthropological research on Calabria at the University of Oxford in 2015. Both Frank's and my own experiences regarding our relationship with our Calabrian backgrounds, connect to Gregory Higginbotham research on the topic of diaspora identify formation. Higginbotham states that,

> As modernity renders the self and identity indefinite, ephemeral and susceptible to change, it is the pervasive sense of uncertainty as an outcome that predisposes a fervid search for stability, coherence, continuity and meaningful belongingness (2012: p.192).

He explains that postmodernity exponentially increased possibilities on how one defined their sense of self, and as a result leaving it 'lacking, or possessing little sense of, a

[77] https://www.youtube.com/@YouMazzTube1207 .

real, authentic or true identity' (Ibid: p.194). In the case of migration and diaspora communities, he argues that identity construction integrates the history of new places while maintaining the historical stories and myths of places of origin across time and space, and even though places of origin may change or disappear, memories and narratives around them may become 'meaningful for generations of family members who after some time become preoccupied with questions of their identity, home and belongingness' (Ibid: p.196).

During our conversation, Frank continued that using food as a method of communicating Calabrian culture and lived experience was important, often more effective than knowing history alone. He stated, 'when we eat dishes, it doesn't just have a taste, it has a language.' Ferrari, Hernández-Maskivker, and Nicotera's study on Calabrian roots tourism connect to his argument and also demonstrated that food was one of the strongest components to this type of tourism, and that the consensus amongst tourists was that the food and regional culinary traditions of Calabria were excellent, and the region had a strong, unique terroir (2022). Social anthropologist Emma-Jayne Abbot also explains that for diaspora communities, food traditions are important in maintaining a perceived 'belonging' to their culture and home of origin, and is an exercise in reaffirming inclusion within the diaspora community members and exclusion of the differences in taste by non-members (2016: pp.115). She continues that,

> Migration places an individual's sense of being and belonging into a state of flux; as they become pulled in multiple directions and subjected to a range of influences and changes in their everyday lives, they have to (re)construct their identities and relations (Ibid: pp.116-117).

As a result, food then acts as one of the ways migrants anchor their identities (Ibid). This can be either to reaffirm their cultural identity of origin, or to disassociate with it and connect with the cultural identities present in their new home. For example, Calabrian diaspora in Toronto can use their cultural food traditions to reaffirm their *Calabrian-ness* or they can actively disregard them and identify more with cosmopolitan North American identities. In the cases of Frank and Jenny, food practices and knowledge exchange maintained their connection to their familial and cultural roots, and facilitated their reconnection to their Calabrian heritage outside of its cultural stigma or stereotypes.

Another method of communication which Frank believed was very important, were the social media platforms he used in creating his content, which enabled him to reach viewership outside of Canada. This was also the case for Jenny and her food blog. Digital methods allowed Frank to reconnect and form a dialogue specifically between Calabria and Calabrian diaspora in Canada. In similar ways, scholars Burcu Yaşlak, Aliye Ahu Akgün, and Tüzin Baycan argue that online entrepreneurs exist as local and global actors at one time, and found through their research on entrepreneurs in Turkey, urban residences that moved from the city to rural areas in order to escape the homogeneity of urban life, collaborated with rural locals, creating economic potential in those rural areas through their integration into global markets, via in-person and digital resources (2023). In the case of Calabrian entrepreneurs like Antonio, Frank, and Jenny, digital resources have enabled them to reconnect Calabrian communities with each other across space, as well as introduced Calabria to those unfamiliar with the region and its culture, outside of its stigma-centric discourses. With this being said, digital experiences and knowledge exchange do have their limitations, and can only go so far in their effectiveness. Sim and Leith argue that although the internet has expanded resources in one's ability to connect to their own history via communication technologies, knowledge exchange, and archival resources, it has not replaced the physical journeying back to one's place of origin and in-person discovery (2013). This is why in the case of Antonio's business, digital methods are used to initiate reconnections which are then followed by in person tourism programming.

Destigmatization Through Gastro-Tourism

The intersection of 'mutual benefit' between diaspora reconnecting to their cultural roots, and this in turn, developing a more localized, nuanced, community focused, sustainable tourism model (that is both economically viable and culturally sensitive), has been reiterated by all of the entrepreneurs I interacted with as a potential way to develop the region moving forward. King explained two general effects of return migration and economic development in the mid 1980s; one being that migrants returned with new skills, innovative thinking, and 'entrepreneurial attitudes,' and the other being that they returned with financial capital through savings and remittances (1986: p.18). Statistical and survey-based research conducted during that same time on the impact returnee migrants had on southern Italy (specifically the regions of Puglia, Basilicata, and Calabria) found that although returnee

migrants acquired skills and socio-economic capital during their time studying and working abroad, they had a lower impact on regional development and its economic growth due to weak institutional frameworks in southern Italy, as well as them focusing on personal growth and security over the improvement of their region (King, Strachan, and Mortimer 1986). I would argue that today, through research such as my thesis on Calabria which prioritizes qualitative methods of ethnographic research instead of solely quantitative ones (like research conducted in the past on southern Italy), this creates a shift, not only to more comprehensive understanding on the dynamics of development and economic growth in Calabria, but also it demonstrates a change in the approach of returnee entrepreneurial migrants from the region and their desire for regional long-standing growth over solely personal ambitions and economic security.

Salazar explains that voluntary mobility is often perceived by many people to increase socio-cultural status, transforming one's identity to become more cosmopolitan, which expands their economic resources (2018). Anthropologist William Benton's research on diaspora returnee entrepreneurs in Lebanon demonstrates this because through diaspora leaving their country to study and work abroad for a period of time, they returned to Lebanon with 'experience and comparative analysis,' which had a positive impact on their development projects (2023: p.70). Lebanon as a comparative example shares many contexts to Calabria in that both have notable histories of emigration, as well as turbulent periods of state failure in infrastructural and service sector development, and economic precarity. Another ethnographic example of this can be seen in Alin Croitoru's work (sociologist) on Romanian migrant entrepreneurs in Austria, which examines the interrelationship of entrepreneurship and migration, specifically how migration influences the development of personal entrepreneurial tendencies (2013). He argues that migrant entrepreneurs were more adaptable to changing markets because of their exposure to different market types, and there was often more focus on 'human and social capital' rather than capital that was strictly economically centred (Ibid: p.120).

During my discussion with Calabrian food academy president Giorgio in Cosenza in July 2019, he argued that Calabrian diaspora were an advantage to the region and had the potential to act as the 'fulcrum of communication activities' about Calabrian culture internationally in their own countries, which then had the potential to help reframe the region's negative reputation and facilitate the process of destigmatization. Giorgio stressed

the use of the word *ambassador* when explaining his argument about the potential of Calabrian diaspora in this method of territorial and cultural destigmatization. He said, 'why do we name ambassadors? Because the ambassador is the one who goes to communicate the positive aspects of this land.'

On this notion of Calabrian diaspora acting as ambassadors of their culture, Paul Basu explains that there is a difference between 'return migration' and 'return movement' in that the latter is more than just a migration phenomenon, but the word *movement* implies 'a collective project, a cause or campaign' (2005: p.131). In the case of Calabrian diaspora in Toronto or the Calabrian entrepreneurs that worked or studied outside the region, their movement back to their cultural identities and region of origin symbolizes a larger phenomenon of inward reflection and curiosity, of people wanting to discover or reconnect to their cultural origins. Basu continues that this movement to rediscover one's cultural roots is a response to increasing multicultural societies, and the feeling of a person's ethnic and cultural identities 'gradually and inevitably being absorbed into the melting-pot' (Ibid: p.134). This can be seen in the case for Calabrian diaspora in the highly cosmopolitan and multicultural city of Toronto, though I would argue that the mortality of older migrant generations and the aging of their communities and spaces, contributes to this increased desire to re-engage and in a way 'salvage' their perceivably fading distinct cultural identity.

There are a couple of points to be made with the roots tourism study by Ferrari, Hernández-Maskivker, and Nicotera, which although presented an important contribution to tourism studies, also presented potential risks when it came to reinforcing stigma and stereotypes in diaspora communities regarding their own cultural origins. In their study, they explain that tourists' interest in local cultural heritage increased the value of heritage and investment potential for restoration and preservation projects (2022). Because of personal ties between tourists and Calabria, there was more of an emotional and affective relationship between the former with the latter, which increased a desire and willingness to help preserve and promote local heritage (Ibid). They explain that in their study, some tourists aired their grievances during interviews on how some locations were unkept, some places were closed and not operational, and they perceived some locals to have a sense of apathy towards the value of their own culture and history (Ibid). This last point is an interesting one because there becomes a risk of falling back into the stereotypes of how local Calabrians are 'perceived' to be, and implies that there is some sort of blame on them for not having

initiative or a desire to promote and protect their own heritage. This approach of analysis becomes a slippery slope because it ignores the complex contextual relationships between Calabrian communities and their own histories, and the socio-political systemic and hegemonic structures they live in, while reigniting cultural stereotypes about the region and its communities.

Ferrari, Hernández-Maskivker, and Nicotera argue quite strongly in favour of roots tourism and the benefits it provides to the Calabrian region and their host communities, and I agree with many points they present. The arguments in which we differ are in their analysis of the negative impacts of roots tourism to local communities. Firstly, they argue that overtime, roots tourism would influence the lifestyles and ways of thinking of local communities (Ibid). While this is true in some ways, it implies that local communities in Calabria are timeless and immune to the influences of global capitalism and media, harkening back to the essentialist stereotypes perpetuated by early anthropology and the study of southern Italy as being a static time capsule. Local Calabrian communities are constantly evolving and changing (individually and collectively), and cultural traditions are not fixed.

This brings me to the second negative effect they claim roots tourism might have on local communities, and one I disagree strongly with: the notion of *authenticity*. They argue that with roots tourism, there is a risk of local traditions and cultures changing due to commercialization and commodification (Ibid). As interrogated in the third section of this thesis, the notion of authenticity is constructed, subjective, and highly contingent to those who have the power to place morality and value on culture. Cultural traditions cannot escape commodification, especially when set in a tourism context or where monetary value is placed on them (i.e., tours, tickets to events, purchasable material culture, food and drink, etc.). What is more important is that roots tourism has the potential to connect Calabrian and non-Calabrian communities to the region and its culture through what Giorgio termed *ambassadors*, who would have the ability to approach tourism development with a stronger prioritization on connectedness, cultural awareness, sustainability, and nuanced knowledge exchange.

During fieldwork, an ‘ambassador’ of Calabrian gastronomy and heritage whose work in both sites focused on showcasing Calabrian gastronomy and culture in ways that destigmatized the region, was professional chef and food educator Luciano. I first met

Luciano after I completed my MSc in social anthropology at Oxford at the end of 2016 when I returned back home to Canada. We kept in contact ever since, and I met up with him during fieldwork at his Toronto home in November 2018 while he was preparing food for an upcoming culinary festival in collaboration with the Association of Italian Canadian Chefs of Canada. He was featuring a traditional Calabrian dish of beef tripe stewed in tomato sauce. As it bubbled away in the background, we caught up.

Originally born in Canada by Calabrian parents, he moved back to Calabria and grew up there, where he studied a bachelor's degree in tourism science at the University of Calabria. Although not having formally studied food anthropology, he explained how he identified his curiosities and interests in Calabrian food gastronomy, anthropology, folklore, and history. After noticing the potential Calabria had in its regional tourism development, he went on to study a master's degree in tourism system and development planning, completing it in 2011. During our discussion, Luciano explained to me that he found it difficult to collaborate on projects with other Calabrians before he moved to Toronto. Back in 2011 when he was still in Calabria, he founded a cultural association in his home village of Olivadi in the province of Catanzaro, and took on a number of formal roles in the community. He explained that the hesitation to the idea of change, demonstrated by community members in Olivadi, motivated him to work elsewhere.

During the Calabrian portion of my fieldwork, Luciano informed me that he was organizing a culinary tour in Calabria from the 17th to the 27th of July for a group of eight of his clients and friends interested in visiting the region. This was a pilot test to establish an annual Calabrian tour he wanted to organize. The group ranged in ages, careers, and was a combination of Calabrians and non-Calabrians. I was able to spend a couple of days during that tour with them, the first of which consisted of visiting Cosenza's national gallery (Galleria Nazionale di Cosenza), its centro storico, and an impromptu visit to my uncle Massimo's specialty food shop. On the second day I spent with them, we went to a small mountain village called Longobucco where we visited a local bakery making traditional regional breads, a heritage craft museum featuring domestic and agricultural objects, another heritage museum of traditional Calabrian textiles (made from wool, silk, and broom or *ginestra*), and took part in their final dinner celebration (where myself, Luciano, and another chef led a collaborative cooking demonstration to the group) at the agriturismo in Sila that they were staying at. Luciano's main intention for the 'cooking class dinner' (which was one

of three he did during the trip) was so that guests could learn and bring back knowledge of Calabrian recipes, to cook at home and integrate it into their everyday lives in Toronto. Luciano also explained to me at the end of the meal when we caught up, that many of the guests had a natural interest in learning more about Calabria through the work he had already been doing in Toronto for almost a decade, promoting the region's culture and gastronomy. This was a full circle moment in our interactions because this connected back to our first discussion in his Toronto home eight months prior. It was then where Luciano re-emphasized why he was so interested in and adamant on connecting to his Calabrian roots through his work and promoting Calabrian gastronomy in Canada, while maintaining a direct connection to Calabria. He explained,

> I'm proud to be Calabrese and I'm proud of eating my *'nudja* or making my *'nduja*. Eating *trippa*, making *cervelati*, my *sanguinaccio*.[78] So I actually make all these forgotten foods because I'm proud of this and I miss it and nobody does this here…if I don't have them…what I miss is a symptom of…my identity because I'm not Calabrese anymore…I wanna leave a legacy for the next generation.

Stigma and food also have a complex relationship and is seen in the case of Calabrian culinary traditions originating from periods of austerity brought over by Calabrian migrants to North America, which for non-Calabrians enabled them to perpetuate cultural stigma of alterity and inferiority on Calabrian migrant communities. Cinotto explains that at the turn of the 20th century, southern Italian stigma was experienced outside of Italy's boarders, where migrant communities in America had their food habits (i.e., cooking, eating, commensality practices) linked to a 'social inferiority' by professionals in social work, medicine, and education (2019: pp.51-52). This shaming also continued within the domestic context of households where generational conflicts arose regarding socio-cultural assimilation and mobility (Ibid: p.52). Similar to the case of Calabrians migrating to Canada during the mid-20th century, this was one of the ways in which the stigmas and stereotypes of Calabrian communities were reinforced and reflected back on the region and its communities outside of their borders within more contemporary global contexts. Though this is changing now with the renaissance of Calabrian diaspora such as Luciano, reconnecting with their culinary and cultural roots, this history contributed in part, to Calabrian culture remaining relatively unknown internationally outside of pre-existing stereotypes of backwardness, crime, and sociocultural inferiority.

[78] Traditional Calabrian products and dishes.

On the political movements of nationalism, James Clifford argued in the late 1990s that,

> …diasporic and hybrid identities produced by these movements can be both restrictive and liberating. They stitch together languages, traditions, and places in coercive and creative ways, articulating embattled homelands, powers of memory, styles of transgression, in ambiguous relation to national and transnational structures (1997: p.10).

I argue that the same points can be applied to Italian gastro-tourism today because of how closely linked and politicized food identity is to Italian national identity. Calabrian gastro-tourism interacts with this hegemonic Italian food nationalism in ways that Calabrian entrepreneurs are redefining their regional identity and prioritizing a differentiation between Calabrian regional food and Italian nationalism (as promoted at state-level programming). Clifford continued that, 'what matters politically is who deploys nationality or transnationality, authenticity or hybridity, against whom, with what relative power and ability to sustain a hegemony' (Ibid: p.10). As outlined in chapter one of this thesis, both the Canadian and Italian governments at the start of my project in 2017 noticeably prioritized the development and investment in their trade relationship, with a key component of that relationship leveraging Italian diaspora in Canada. This is the case of what is happening today between Calabria and its diaspora, but historically speaking, this is not a new development nor approach by Italy in terms of facilitating state-led economic growth.

Cinotto explains that in the case of Italy's relationship to America, there is a deep history of the Italian state supporting, fostering, and relying on its diaspora communities outside of the country, for economic development in food trade and growing a market for Italian gastronomy, even before a domestic market developed within America by Italian-Americans after the First World War (2018). This same phenomenon was also demonstrated in the contemporary example of Scottish diaspora where Sim and Leith explain that the Scottish government had noticed the value of their global diaspora and had creative incentives to welcome them back (2013). One specific example they used was the 'Year of Homecoming' in 2009 by the Scottish government to draw their diaspora back home (Ibid: p.259). In the case of Calabrian gastro-tourism, what is important is that entrepreneurs both in Calabria and Canada are independently creating initiatives and alternative markets of reconnection and knowledge exchange between diaspora and their communities of origin. Just before I finished my fieldwork and returned to Oxford at the end of September 2019,

Luciano launched Heritage Calabria[79] in that same month, a cultural organization that celebrates, promotes, and preserves Calabrian cultural heritage in Toronto. As the president of the organization (combined with his other work as professional chef and food educator), Luciano is recovering the gastronomic culture he came from and sharing it with other Calabrians and their diaspora, maintaining this intergenerational and transnational knowledge exchange within the community, and reforming the migrant bonds between them and their cultural roots. By then sharing this knowledge with non-Calabrian communities, he expands the potential ways in which Calabria as a region can be destigmatized and understood with nuance in a contemporary light, in its own right, separate from the shadow of Italian food nationalism and the popular discourses that continue to circulate Calabrian stigma today.

Cultural anthropologist Nir Avieli argues that local food specialties are 'paradoxical artefacts' rooted in 'local ecologies, histories and sociologies,' and are created and sustained within the 'dynamic contexts of tourism and migration, in relation to flows of people and goods' (2016: p.146). This is one aspect of the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry that both Toronto diaspora and local communities in Calabria are developing and promoting their food terroir, in ways that combine the connectedness of Calabrian products to their localities of place and people, with that of the region's migration history. On this similar topic of analysing second-generation diaspora which I have examined in this chapter, Russell King and sociologist Anastasia Christou examine the return migration of Greek-American and Greek-German diaspora, specifically 'the migration of host-country-born second-generation persons to the birth-country of their parents' (2010: p.103). This is not only the community I am part of within the equivalent context of Calabrian-Canadian diaspora and my positionality in this thesis project, but also many of the Calabrian entrepreneurs and locals I spoke to in Toronto. King and Christou explain that by choosing to analyse second-generation diaspora, it better accesses the 'complex intersection between diasporic identities, geographic positionality, class, gender, age and generations' (Ibid: p.105). This is in line with my intention to incorporate a diasporic analytical angle in my thesis as well, because not only does this access these same intersections, but it also allows for new, original, and more nuanced analysis on Calabrian stigma, its relationships to notions of place and identity, and the creative processes of destigmatization that can be achieved through the dynamic nature of cultural food practices in gastro-tourism.

[79] https://www.heritagecalabria.com/ .

Conclusion

Chapter 9: New Calabria

Referencing Norman Douglas' travel writing book *Old Calabria* (1915) which I examined in chapter two, *New Calabria* is an intentional play on words referencing a book that during the beginning of the 20th century, reaffirmed a representation of Calabria that was of the past: as region that was frozen in time, and as relic of western antiquity and barbaric socio-cultural primitivism. *New Calabria* does not signify that my thesis has documented and examined a fixed 'new' form of the region from an equally fixed old form, but rather it is an expression of reclamation to represent new approaches to understanding and co-representing places and people with the involvement of those communities.

My thesis project experiments in developing a new approach in anthropological research to studying stigmatized communities and regions often left behind, misunderstood, or misrepresented. It does this by taking an interdisciplinary approach incorporating historical contexts often overlooked (i.e., political, economic, and others), environmental factors specific to places and communities (such as climate, topography, and natural disasters), travel writing literature which plays a significant role in stereotyping identities (specifically within tourism), and the role food plays in narratives about stigma (in particular notions of terroir, taste, and markets of gastro-tourism). This approach offers new ways of engaging with and communicating information about regions like Calabria which have been territorially and culturally stigmatized by systems of political and economic hegemony throughout their histories and in turn, offers a model for examining stigma in anthropology in other communities, regions and cultures. The interdisciplinary aspect of this approach in combining segregated fields of research and genres of writing expands the potential of incorporating and understanding 'contexts' and 'realities' in nuanced and comprehensive ways, while identifying the construction of inaccurate assumptions and narratives. This approach would be useful for anthropologists and other social scientists examining the dynamics of stigma construction and maintenance, both in a broader theoretical sense but also within the ethnographic specificity of the respective communities they research. My hope is that my approach also extends beyond academia and is applied in tourism program development, popular media, and literary genres which are responsible for how communities, places, and cultures are depicted and understood by people outside of academic discourses. From cookbooks to conferences, travel shows to monographs, tourism programs and research

studies, my hope is that this approach better interrogates stigma instead of risking its reaffirmation.

New Calabria focuses on dialogues and discourses around stigma, why they are so often difficult to dispel or even to counteract, why they are created in the first place, and what are their complex structural systems of maintenance. Stigmas and stereotypes do not emerge from thin air, nor are they culturally or biologically rooted innate facts. They are deeply political, created and maintained by outsiders and members of those communities affected by them (and those in-between), and used in ways to simplify categorical understandings while perpetuating misunderstandings of those same phenomena. More importantly, stigmas and stereotypes are not limited to textual or verbal discourses. They are environmental, spatial, sensorial, and performed dialogues of experience and categorization. By using gastro-tourism development as the lens through which I examined Calabrian stigma, I was able to access the non-textual non-verbal aspects that have contributed to the maintenance of the systems of stigma, which include natural environments, infrastructural breakdown, spatial location, food markets, and the absence of representation in those markets. Analysing southern Italian stigma exposes the tensions between identification and liminality (Moe 2002) because of how the South has been othered from fully belonging to the Italian nation-state and wider European Union. How 'Italian' and 'European' southern Italian regions are, has always been in debate by larger political bodies when addressing representations of belonging and identity, and more importantly these regions have acted as the problematized sites onto which the fears, insecurities and failings of nation-state and European Union building have been projected onto. Calabria is an important region to prioritize this examination because its stigmatization has endured throughout its history, both through the recycling of historical tropes but also through the ever adapting political and cultural discourses of belonging and identity, in relation to the Italian nation-state and European Union (i.e., what constitutes a region or culture being modern, developed, Italian, and European).

This thesis has thus far demonstrated the ways in which Calabrian entrepreneurs are developing, sustaining, and growing their businesses in the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry, within the contextual dynamics of regional and cultural stigma, often overlooked by academics and popular discourses (such as media and literature) which have studied and represented the region. In turn, these stigmas have been imbedded in various aspects of everyday life in Calabria and engage with the region's developing gastro-tourism industry.

The global capitalism of the late 1990s and 2000s demonstrated an urgency to examine how southern Italian stigma was constructed and then simplified into widely circulated negative tropes of representation (Schneider 1998b). I argue that due to the exponential popularization of Italian gastro-tourism worldwide today, although southern regions like Puglia, Sicily, and Sardinia have been able to feature their food cultures while dispelling some of their cultural stigma, Calabrian stigma remains comparatively more persistent. Interrogating this is important to understanding how stigmas gain this level of continuity and resilience. With this being said, instead of solely focusing on the examination of negative representations of Calabria like its mafia or state corruption, my thesis has demonstrated how there is a transnationally connected countermovement of Calabrian entrepreneurs who choose to focus less on negative stigma and instead prioritize the vibrancy, uniqueness, and positive aspects of Calabrian food cultures and landscapes through their work, which as a positive consequence counteract these stigmas.

At the outset of this thesis, I prioritized an in-depth examination into the historical background of Calabria, how I connected to the region as a hybrid member being a Canadian-born Calabrian, how the region and its communities have been researched about in various fields of study and literature (such as anthropology and travel writing), and how these discourses have greatly impacted the ways in which Calabria's stigma has been maintained. These historical contexts are crucial and have often been under-prioritized when examining the region, and this is particularly true in the case of travel writing by non-Calabrians which has played a significant role in shaping the perception of the region both inside and outside its borders. Not only have these histories been overlooked and under-engaged with, but by acknowledging and understanding these contexts one can begin to unpack the nature of Calabrian stigma in more nuances and long-standing ways.

As stated earlier, stigma and stereotypes are not only textually or verbally reliant phenomena. What has been less examined in the context of southern Italian stigma are the ways in which it is also facilitated in spatial and sensorial forms of experience. To this, I explored the importance of nature and infrastructure in the development of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry. Nature is specifically important because its significance in the region has often been under-prioritized in development projects. Calabria's topography is a diversly rich but challenging one and its intense conditions (exacerbated with the increasing consequences of climate change) have too often been used to create false equivalences of Calabrian culture

and its communities as being equally as intense, dangerous, and difficult as the landscape they are situated in. Calabria's three mountain ranges (one of which demarcates the region from the rest of Italy) have made some places remote and isolated, the historical periods of malaria and seismic earthquakes have negatively affected its landscapes and communities, and contemporary realities of heavy snowfall and mass-wildfires from drought have all collectively presented real challenges to the region. In turn, roads, transportation systems, and other infrastructure vital for the operation of the tourism sector are directly affected by these conditions, evident in their chronic failings in tandem with their mismanagement from state and development actors. The chronic failure of infrastructure and misuse of funding for cosmetic 'tourism-boosting' projects instead of practical ones, further aggravates the already tense relationship between local communities and the state (on local, regional, and national levels), creating a sense of cynicism amongst some community members that long-standing improvement and change are not possible. This further highlights the corruptness and ineffectiveness of state-governing bodies and the reality that any development projects were often false promises of misused funding for the benefit of a small few instead of the region and its communities at large. Within the context of everyday life and the gastro-tourism industry, failing infrastructure like roads disrupt and rupture the movement of people and products throughout the region. All of these environmental, spatial, and material phenomena collide in ways that often are used to reframe and justify the region as being one 'difficult to develop in' with a community culture that is not inclined to collaboration, co-operation, or change.

Food is an important material and cultural practice to use for examining the various scales of markets Calabrian entrepreneurs engage with when it comes to Italian gastro-tourism and the political, cultural, and economic dynamics which affect how Calabrian entrepreneurs are able to develop and grow their businesses. Within the systems of EU product authentication, protection, and regulation, deciding which certification systems would benefit one's business is crucial in communicating the correct information to consumers. It is also important in avoiding exploitation by largescale companies and counterfeit food production which operate within and outside these government-supported regulatory systems. When examining large-scale Italian companies that have political and economic state-led support which capitalize on the country's distinct culture of regional terroir, its culture of authenticity, and the representation of Italian gastronomy as a performed cultural practice and lifestyle, the under-representation of Calabria is in some ways a

consequence of exclusion by those large companies but also an autonomous decision on the part of Calabrian entrepreneurs to forge their own alternative markets. Thus, when one examines the overall underrepresentation or absence of Calabria in national gastro-tourism programs or companies which promote and retail a unified foodscape of Italy consisting of regional diversity in a way akin to *Disneyization*, it is not only a passive consequence of exclusion by these large actors. Instead, it is also an active decision by Calabrians to prioritize the protection of their autonomy over their businesses, the prioritization of quality and ethics in their production and consumption, and the maintenance of a connectedness and proximity with their landscapes and consumers. None-the-less, the comparatively under-representation of Calabria by consequence, enables the continuation of its stigmatized narrative that it is an unknown region too far south and uncertain to venture to or explore.

When examining stigma and Calabria, one cannot ignore the dominant discourses of mafia and corruption when discussing or engaging with the region. Instead of simply restating what has already been discussed and examined on ‘Ndrangheta by anthropologists, sociologists, and criminologists, I examined the relationship of mafia groups to the region but more so on the overemphasis of its presence, and its inaccurately claimed innate cultural origins in Calabria represented in academic, popular, and political discourses. These discourses often rely and play on the tropes of the region and its communities as being ones of violence, oppression, and danger. In addition, a hyper-fixation on corruption when discussing or examining Calabria limits one’s ability to be able to understand or interrogate these systems in order to establish long-standing ways to dismantle and counter them. The lines between state governing bodies and ‘Ndrangheta are blurred, and there is much more nuance, complexity, autonomy, and creativity occurring within Calabrian communities than simply stereotyping them as corrupt and distrustful. What I discovered during fieldwork is that Calabrian entrepreneurs are using their careers in gastro-tourism to destigmatize the region through processes of re-education and reconnection, not only with other Calabrians and non-Calabrians outside the region, but also more crucially with Calabrian diaspora abroad. There is a growing industry of roots tourism which is bringing Calabrian communities inside and outside the region closer together in meaningful ways. Similar to how Italian diaspora communities use their migrant food culture to create places of *Italian-ness* outside of their homeland (Cinotto 2019), Calabrian food entrepreneurs both in Toronto and Calabria are using food and drink in similar ways, to create *Calabrian places, identities, and dialogues* within markets, households, shops, and tour programs, reclaiming and

redefining the region for themselves and circulating this beyond its regional boarders. My intention to have a transnational component in the analysis of Calabrian stigma, not only through my positionality but also incorporating Calabrian diaspora in Toronto in my thesis, was to break the tradition of Calabria being analysed as a static region with a static culture, which has only perpetuated southern Italian stigma rather than understand and interrogate it.

What all of the Calabrian entrepreneurs and other participants I met and spoke to during my fieldwork had in common, was that they were aware of the various forms of essentialization and stigmatization Calabria has inherited throughout its history, from outsiders looking in, as well as from their own community members. Even within these webs of misrepresentation which have hindered the region's development of a sustainable, mutually beneficial tourism industry, the people I interacted with were always hopeful, determined, creative in their approaches, entrepreneurial in their mindset, and forward thinking to the possibilities and potentiality for the region. There was a common thread of prioritizing *connectedness* in their work on various levels. In the second section in this thesis, cheese producers Vittorio and Giuseppe prioritized a maintained connectedness to the natural landscapes where they lived and worked. In this case, not only are nature and environments the foundation of any gastro-tourism industry but they are also the source from which food and drink product are made, produced, and retailed. Prioritizing a connection to Calabria's natural landscapes helps one better understand the region historically, its value in unique terroir, and biodiversity. This is critical in adapting to the ever-changing effects of climate change the world is facing today and these factors are crucial to the success of any sustainable gastro-tourism industry.

Connectedness to local markets, customers, and communities was also a prioritization for heritage pig breeder Nicola and was fundamental to the success of his business. This proximate space of connection between producers like him and his consumers, enabled the development of a culture of trust, a richer understanding of the ethics of food systems, and the opportunity for knowledge exchange on Calabria and its food cultures beyond its essentialized stereotypes. Connection and trust between independent businesses and consumers was also evidently crucial in the case of baker Michele in how it enabled him to navigate around the continued reality of 'Ndrangheta activity in the region. Being autonomous in his business model and focusing on quality and tradition in his products helped in the development of his business outside of the webs of regional mafia corruption.

In the cases of Antonio and his tourism business, as well as the Toronto-based food bloggers Jenny and Frank, and professional chef Luciano, they all demonstrated a focused approach in connecting directly to their customers via digital resources and social media content which helped facilitate community as well as information on Calabrian culture. They also used their work to reform the stretched and often severed transnational bonds between Calabrian diaspora and their communities of origin, in ways that both reconnected them with their own cultural heritage and helped destigmatize Calabria within and outside the region.

When interrogating the abstractness of 'Italian identity,' Italian communities have often identified more with the *campanilismo* of their region, which is more evidently present in Italian diaspora communities abroad who identify closer to their *region* or *town* than to the *nation*. Regarding gastro-tourism, by having Italy consist of a series of regional gastronomic identities, this creates a stronger proximity and intimacy between those food traditions and the people who grew up with them. Since Calabria has historically been described and understood through the lenses of territorial and cultural stigma, intimacy and connection between Calabrians and their region has been fractured and maintained in these complex webs of representation. This is why the Calabrian entrepreneurs who I interacted with all shared the common priority of a focus on connection, proximity, and nuanced knowledge exchange through their work, in order to grow their businesses and the Calabrian gastro-tourism industry at large in sustainable and lasting ways.

When reflecting on my role as a liminal insider-outsider to Calabria and as an academic conducting research on the region and its communities, ethnography as a methodology has enabled me to form my own levels of connectedness to the places, people, and experiences I have engaged with, which have only allowed for a more nuanced interrogation on the dynamics of Calabrian stigma. This demonstrates the importance of ethnographic based research in examining stigma because it goes beyond the verbal and textual representations of stigma and allows anthropologists like me to access its material, spatial, experiential, and sensorial qualities which I argue are more consequential to how stigma is able to endure and be reinvented overtime, more than texts or conversations could ever do. They are often the phenomena overlooked when trying to understand the nature of stigma even though they can be some of its greatest contributors and circulators.

Upon reflecting on the findings of my thesis, I myself have also been forming my own connections and reconnections to Calabria, its culture and what it means to me through the writing of this research project. Its aim was not to develop a prescriptive document outlining the solutions to Calabria's chronic development issues. The contribution of my thesis is to expand the discourses surrounding the region and its culture and to reflexively interrogate the ways in which stigmatized regions like Calabria have been understood and portrayed, and how this continues today. Ethnography has been an essential methodology in this approach to understanding, not only to provide more nuanced accounts of everyday life and experiences directly from local Calabrians, but it also enabled me to interrogate the ways in which forms of travel writing (intrinsic to the field of anthropology and tourism) greatly influence how places and identities are constructed, understood, and represented by academics and their readership. In addition to the integral role ethnographic fieldwork plays in achieving this, interdisciplinary research is fundamental to this understanding, and I have attempted to incorporate research from outside anthropology including geography, food and tourism studies, history, literature, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology in this approach to unpacking the dynamics of stigma formation and maintenance. It has demonstrated an original angle of analysis in incorporating and recontextualized Southern Question discourses, travel writing on southern Italy, and anti-southernism through the lens of Calabria's gastro-tourism industry. In a broader context, my thesis also fills the gaps of anthropological and ethnographic research on Calabria which remains under-researched outside of the most commonly chosen topic of mafia formation and corruption, and instead provides both a contemporary ethnography on its gastro-tourism industry and a more comprehensive analysis on the realities the region faces regarding its economic development and stigmatization. My hope is that this contemporary ethnography on Calabrian gastro-tourism contributes to a greater understanding of the region and expands research on Calabria and its culture, how territorial and cultural stigmas manifest and recirculate, and why for some regions this still persists today.

One area of opportunity for future expansion of this research is to examine marginalized groups within Calabria's gastro-tourism industry, specifically migrant communities, and their role within these systems of labour, production, and consumption. The topic of mobility in tourism research has in the past often focused on the movement of tourists rather than the mobility of tourism labourers even though spaces of tourism are connected to ones of forced migration (Salazar 2022). My thesis has focused more on the

migration of Calabrians and their diaspora instead of the migrant crisis in the southern regions of Italy and the migrant labourers who work in the gastro-tourism industry, for the sake of keeping the topical focus of my thesis concise and not have it examine too many themes. An area of great opportunity for future research on Calabria and stigma would be this examination of marginalized communities such as migrant workers in Calabria's gastro-tourism industry and how they relate to stigma as well as contribute to the industry. It would be important to examine who is being employed in these food and tourism businesses and where they originated from. The migrant crisis in southern Italy is an ever-evolving reality and so it would be important to further explore this topic in relation to gastro-tourism when looking at the sectors of agricultural labour, hospitality, and transportation services.

At the outset of this research project, I embarked on a return journey back to Calabria to deepen my connection to the region and culture of my parents and to gain greater insight and nuance into its relationship to stigma (within its communities, to wider Italy, and Europe). Successful ethnographic fieldwork is one that allows for the experiences of participants and environments to surface and to then facilitate the communication of these journeys. The ways in which travel writers and academics have written about Calabria and its communities across its history have predominantly focused on its failures and dangers which have only re-emphasized and legitimized its stigma and stereotypes, instead of expanding awareness and knowledge of the places and the people which inhabit them. This thesis engaged with the concept of the *journey*; to tap into the tradition of travel writing on southern Italy and critique it through writing my own travel writing ethnography through my point of liminality; as both an insider and outsider of the community, and as an anthropologist and creative artist. This approach to writing ethnography and conducting anthropological research expands the possibilities of achieving nuance in how it communicates places, cultures, and people, but also expands the potential readership well outside of academic circles alone. How would a trained anthropologist write a travel writing book and why would it be important? My thesis has begun the process of engaging with the answers to these questions. As an anthropologist, I have begun to interrogate the cultural and territorial stigma imbedded in Calabria; where it comes from, why it endures, and how it affects the region's gastro-tourism industry. By hybridizing the categorization of my thesis as both academically rigorous while incorporating ethnographic travel vignettes, it offers different levels of connection and engagement with the reader. With the current reality of an increasing number of anthropologists publishing their research outside of academia, towards more general

audiences, this positive shift breaks through the rigid silos of academic knowledge and allows for a richer and more expansive potential of knowledge exchange with a wider readership that is also more diverse. In order to know a place, and experience a community or culture, one has to *journey* there and form dialogues, connections, and knowledge exchanges, instead of simply relying on generalized tourist directives and second-hand descriptors. In parallel ways to the entrepreneurs I interacted with, I myself as a Calabrian-Canadian am addressing my own relationship with my ancestral region and culture, unpacking and interrogating the stigma I grew up with, where this came from, and why it still remains. Looking towards the future, my hope is that my research project continues a dialogue and develops further into redefining travel writing and academic research on Calabria. I am encouraged just as the Calabrian entrepreneurs I interacted with are, that this is the beginning of expanding these discussions and shifting cultural understandings in nuanced and engaging ways.

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