

Michael A. Di Giovine

Rethinking development: Religious tourism to St. Padre Pio as material and cultural revitalization in Pietrelcina

Abstract

This article re-conceptualizes processes whereby religious tourism is adopted to generate socio-cultural "betterment" in small-scale societies by presenting an in-depth case study of the Southern Italian village of Pietrelcina, the birthplace of recently canonized St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. "Tourism development" has long been considered central for economic development, employment, and poverty alleviation; it has also been criticized as fostering neocolonialism, inauthenticity and museumification. Arguing that the pervasive "development paradigm" creates a tautology whereby outside forces create and attempt to alleviate local tensions between maintaining tradition and transformation, the paper argues that such initiatives be organic and focused on tourism's potentialities and intangible effects; an adaptation of Anthony Wallace's classic anthropological model of revitalization movements is then proposed. In contrast to the "development paradigm's" linear, top-down, and anti-organic approach, a revitalization movement posits society as a life-cycle, wherein members organically look to past practices to resolve present problems. Drawing on data collected over more than two years of fieldwork, the paper presents an ethnographic analysis of the variety of responses by Pietrelcina's locals and site managers to tourism's revitalizing potential, ultimately urging practitioners and researchers alike to consider revitalization theory as a model for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords:

tourism; development; revitalization; pilgrimage; Pietrelcin; Padre Pio; Italy

Introduction

A small village in Southern Italy is in the midst of revitalization. Despite a long period of impoverishment, a loss of its main cash crop, and a continuing trend of unemployment and emigration, Pietrelcina and its surrounding countryside nevertheless show signs of socio-economic revitalization. Books, newspaper articles, and poetry are being written on the town's history and its favorite son – the recently canonized saint and stigmatic, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. Archaeological excavations and preservation initia-

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tives have significantly altered the town's appearance. And once-dilapidated farmhouses are being restored and converted *en masse* into *agriturismi* – those rural restaurant-hotels that are ubiquitous throughout the Southern European countryside.

Excavation, restoration, preservation; the cultivation, promotion and re-presentation of tangible and intangible heritage to outsiders; the opening of country hotels and restaurants: these activities are not only strongly tied to touristic enterprises, but are also indicative of a rediscovery and revitalization of a place's unique 'cultural resources.' Traditionally, such cases of material 'betterment' are enacted and analyzed through a "development paradigm" – "a historically and culturally situated category of processes that attempts to bring about positive changes in a society through the intervention of outsiders who are considered more 'advanced' members of a common, broadly conceived, civilization" (Di Giovine, 2009c, p. 213). But Pietrelcina's changes warrant a different analytical perspective. On the one hand, although outside grants have funded many of the material improvements to the town, a purely economic perspective does not adequately interrogate the reasons why such initiatives are now, finally, successful. The South – and particularly the province of Benevento, in which Pietrelcina lies – has historically been a poor agricultural region (Davis, 1998) resistant to change, irrespective of the amount of funding provided for targeted development. In fact, the region's productivity and population has even lessened over the last few decades, and unemployment in the South remains twice that of the North (Dell'Aringa, 2010, pp. 42-43; Esposito, *Troisi e servizi*, 2009; ISTAT, 2008; Barbagli, 2000). On the other hand, while religious tourism to Padre Pio has rendered the city of San Giovanni Rotondo – where the saint spent most of his life and ministry – the second most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, Pietrelcina is largely left off of the pilgrim trail, attracting only 10% of these visitors, who spend little time or money there. Furthermore, Pietrelcina's movement has more organically harnessed the potential of tourism as a vehicle for reformulating its identity. It thus runs contrary to Britton's contention that "the establishment of an international tourist industry in a peripheral economy will not occur from evolutionary, organic processes within that economy, but from demand from overseas tourists and new foreign company investment, or from the extension of foreign interests already present in that country" (1982, pp. 336-337).

This paper argues that Pietrelcina's material changes index deeper, immaterial transformations in locals' culture that can be better apprehended through an application of Anthony Wallace's classic revitalization theory (Wallace, 1956, 2003, 2004; Harkin, 2004) – a model that examines "culture change" brought about by significant and often complex psycho-social and environmental shifts in a society, which have been caused by new or intensified contact with outsiders (1956, pp. 265, 267). As the case of Pietrelcina illustrates, a revitalization movement is a direct and organic response to conflicting ways the community views itself and its re-presentations within a larger socio-environmental milieu. While not negating the positive intervention of outside forces, the revitalization paradigm better takes into account the totalization of external and internal forces, all the while appreciating the local impetus of the movement.

Based on over two years of ethnographic research involving participatory observation with local entrepreneurs, tour guides, and religious tourists (both international and from Pietrelcina); oral history elicitation; and semi-structured interviews with tourists, sponsors, clergy, and locals, this paper will examine Pietrelcina's embrace of religious tourism (or, more precisely, its revitalizing potential) to illustrate how a revitalization paradigm can be fruitful for practitioners and analysts who are concerned with more equitable and sustainable regeneration efforts.

The "development paradigm" in the literature

One must view tourism development within the historical and cultural context of the broader development paradigm (Di Giovine, 2009c; Telfer, 2002; Burns, 1999). While it should be noted that there are many forms of development practices – as many as there are projects – this article posits that there are ideological and paradigmatic differences between "development" and "revitalization" (cf. Goulet, 1995).

The development paradigm is marked by interrelated characteristics. The first is the paradoxical role outsiders play in both creating and alleviating 'underdevelopment' in local settings. Informed by Darwinian evolutionary theories and modernization paradigms prevalent in the early 20th century (Darwin, 2005; Morgan, 1877; Weber, 1992), many early practitioners plotted the world's societies on a vast civilizational continuum. While globalization and increased contact with 'civilized' (i.e. 'developed') nation-states created greater social disparities, it was precisely this very contact that was supposed to help underdeveloped countries (Brohman, 1996; cf. Truman 1949) through economic, political and managerial programs (Rostow, 1960; Hettne, 1995, pp. 11-12). This creates conflicting impulses between maintaining tradition and seeking transformation (Di Giovine, 2009c; Brown, 2006). Development also assumes a "transitive" meaning (Rist, 1997, p. 73); it cannot occur on its own, but must be cultivated through the use of models drawn from outside the culture (Dure, 1974, p. 93). Although dependency theory of the 1970s (Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Fields, 2001; Parfitt, 2004; Mosse, 2005) and current participatory development methodologies (Chambers, 1994) focus on the "empowerment" of locals (Rist, 1997, p. 130; Kane, 1993), especially under-represented demographics (Turner, 1995; Fisher, 1997; Rankin, 2001), and on poverty alleviation at the micro-economic scale (Finnemore, 1997; Elyachar, 2002; cf. Muhanna, 2007), the means to such psycho-social efforts nevertheless rest in the hands of non-locals (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 253; Ferguson, 1994, p. 37; Gray, 1989, p. 65; Jamal & Getz, 1995, p. 194–195; Mosse, 2005, p. 4; Parfitt, 2004, p. 538; Quarles van Ufford, 1993, p. 137).

The development paradigm's second characteristic is its inorganic, top-down approach. While ethnographies have shown that development is ultimately a complex set of negotiations (Mosse, 2005; Ferguson, 1994; Quarles von Ufford, 1993, pp. 137,154) the paradigm maintains that development must be planned and implemented from above (Di Giovine, 2009c; Hawkins & Mann, 2007; Norohona, 1979, p. 1; Mings, 1978, p. 2; Ferguson, 1994, p. 37). Such an understanding is evident even in the earliest "com-

munity tourism planning" literature (Glasson, Godfrey & Goody, 1995; Burns, 1999; Hall, 1995; Paul, 1987; Gray, 1989, p. 65; Murphy, 1985; Jamal & Getz, 1995; cf. UNESCO, 1976; De Kadt, 1976a, 1976b). As a result, many of tourism's 'failures' are chalked up to incomplete planning or implementation (Stronza, 2001, p. 275), rather than on any disconnect between locals' and outsiders' needs, desires, and worldviews.

Indeed, the third characteristic of the development paradigm is the way it treats the concept of culture. Greenwood harshly points out that economists, planners, and managers frequently conceptualize culture as a "service," "come on," or "resource" to be commodified, re-presented, museumified or otherwise objectified (1977, p. 174). Many view this as compromising the perceived authenticity of the culture, or at least the tourist experience (Boorstin, 1994; MacCannell, 1976; Bruner, 2004; Pratt, 1992). This also leads to social imbalances and conflicts between so-called "hosts" and "guests" (Robinson & Boniface, 1999; Nash, 1977; cf. Smith, 1977). Development practitioners are thus becoming increasingly aware that "economic growth is necessary but not sufficient condition for development" (Telfer, 2009, p. 150); corporate social responsibility, human rights, and social welfare must play a central role in "sustainable development" (WCED, 1987; UNWTO, 2005; cf. Desai & Potter, 2002, p. 2; Benedict XVI, 2009; Del Baldo, 2010; Inskeep, 1991; Ahn, Lee & Shafer, 2002; Hunter & Green, 1995; Smith & Eadington, 1994; Lash & Urry, 1994; Poon, 1989, 1994; Brown, Turner, Hameed & Bateman, 1997). But while socially conscious tourism genres purport to be more "sustainable" than traditional holiday tourism (Mukhopadhyay, 2008, p. 240), conservation and sustainability is often secondary to profit (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2009, p. 335); even the UNWTO (2004) argues that tourism can be a "significant force...for the protection of the environment and traditional cultures, [by] attaching economic value to natural and cultural heritage, creating employment and generating foreign exchange earnings." Thus, some question how much of a positive impact "alternative tourism" really makes (Weaver, 2004; Babu, 2008, p. 192; Manning, 1999; Rao, 2008, p. 85). Such critics fall into the "post-development" movement (Rahenna & Bawtree, 1997), which recognizes the inherent ideologies in this paradigm and argue, increasingly more forcefully, for a reconceptualization of development discourse (cf. Escobar, 1996; Quarles von Ufford & Sidaway, 2002; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Nederveen, 2000; Sachs, 2006), and, it seems, of globalization in general (cf. Saul, 2005). This paper does not "reject the concept of 'development' itself" (Telfer, 2009, p. 158), but rather reveals an alternative conceptualization of how to evaluate processes of "culture change" among some indigenous movements for socio-cultural improvement.

**Revitalization:
An alternative to
the "development
paradigm"**

If the "development paradigm" is characterized as outside-in, top-down, and anti-organic, Wallace's theory of revitalization movements can be seen as an alternative. A revitalization movement is a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." It is a particular type of "culture change phenomenon" (Wallace, 1956, pp. 265, 267), brought about by cultural contact and transformation at the hands of an outside society, which is fueled by the soci-

ety's desire to restore ideal cultural values. Tourism is well-adapted to this model, for it is also essentially a "culture change" phenomenon. As a "voluntary, temporary and perspectival interaction with place" (Di Giovine, 2009a, p. 57), tourism is phenomenologically centered on fostering change – culturally, psychologically and intellectually. It is a time to refresh and recharge, to revivify and revitalize oneself during the cyclical periods of weariness or *anomie* by temporarily inserting oneself into a different environment, by adopting a different perspective on the surrounding world (Nouzeilles, 2008, p. 196; Graburn, 1977, 1985; Di Giovine, 2009a).

In a revitalization movement, individuals perceive their culture as a system that was once functional but is now operating unsatisfactorily (1956, p. 265), one that follows not a linear and evolutionary progression on the world stage, but like the earth itself, a seasonal life cycle: one's culture can be germinated, flourish, grow sick, and become re-born. Just as tourism can serve as a cyclical rite of intensification, periodically injecting new energy into a quotidian existence that may not be operating optimally, so too does a revitalization movement attempt to inject new life into a society that finds itself risking "cultural distortion" (1956, p. 268) from influences outside its social boundaries; this includes extreme pressure towards acculturation (or globalization), environmental changes, or economic distress. Early discussions of plans to alleviate these problems often increase stress because it arouses anxiety over the method's possible failure or its interference with other quotidian activities (269). As the stress progresses, individuals deal with it differently; indicative of the *anomie* that may be caused, some may be extremely apathetic while others may become so disillusioned that they leave the society.

In Wallace's model, in fact, the proposed solution usually comes to a single person, often a prophet or leader; Wallace was primarily interested in analyzing new politico-religious movements among Native American societies during Western colonialism. However, the model can be applied to secular society as well; Di Giovine has shown how "visionary local leaders" in the Vietnamese town of Hôi An began a similar form of movement to reclaim their cultural heritage for touristic purposes (2009c). What is important is that the solution makes recourse to the past when positing the way forward for the future. Based on the society's cosmology, it imagines a set of practices, traditions and values from an idealized point in its history, posits that the contemporary society had abandoned them after contact with outsiders, and proposes a way to reclaim them. If Hobsbawm and Ranger defined the "invention of tradition" as practices that "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, *which automatically implies continuity with the past*" (2003, p. 1, emphasis added), then the content of a revitalization movement can be considered a *reinvention* of tradition – a discontinuous break with the immediate past in favor of earlier values or processes that are considered more authentic, but have been deemed lost or obscured. While the society may believe it is simply returning to an unadulterated state, it really creates a radically new worldview that melds imagined past values with contemporary ones introduced by contact with outsiders.

Another foundational aspect of Wallace's model is that of a movement. Wallace's admittedly Positivistic delimitation of the movement's phases aside, general trends should be recognized: first, in reaction to an increasing feeling that present societal processes are operating inefficiently, a new solution is germinated by a visionary individual or group; second, it is communicated (or "preached") to others within society; third, it attracts followers and becomes organized. Since it often represents a radically new way forward, during the process of its adaption it may encounter some resistance (1956, p. 274), but, through these processes of contestation and negotiation, modifications may be made that will enable the movement to garner mass appeal.

A third element must be present when adapting Wallace's model to sustainable tourism: an ethos of revitalization permeates the entire touristic initiative. On the one hand, locals involved in this movement must strongly identify with the place and with the narrative with which it is imbued for touristic consumption. On the other hand, there must be strong local participation, not only in providing services to visitors, but also in consuming the place as tourists themselves: locals should be able to see the place through a tourist's eyes; they must value it and interact with it as tourists do. This results in closing the host/guest divide that leads to the frequent critiques of tourism as fostering social disparities, "staged authenticity," or commodification.

Pietrelcina and the growth of Pio's shrine in San Giovanni Rotondo

Pietrelcina is a 3000-person village lying 12 km outside of the city of Benevento, a land-locked provincial capital in the Campania region of Italy. Although archaeological remains date from the 1st century AD (Iasiello, 2004), the town is traditionally understood to have been founded in the later Lombard period (570-1077 AD). Pietrelcina is built of stones on a palisade; the town's name – *Pietrelcina*, or, in local dialect, *Preta Pucin'*, means "little rocks." While it resembles surrounding towns in its physical composition, aesthetics, and size, since at least the mid-19th century Pietrelcina was regarded in the region as an excellent producer of olives and artichokes, and for its devotion to the Virgin Mary, whom Pietrelcinesi call the Madonna della Libera because her wooden effigy is believed to have miraculously "liberated" Pietrelcina and surrounding towns from a deadly cholera outbreak in 1854. Perhaps because of its physical fortification, inhabitants of the surrounding countryside recall Pietrelcinesi as "closed" and even hostile to outsiders and non-kin neighbors.

Padre Pio was born into this highly devotional, kinship-oriented environment on 25 May 1887. After his ordination in 1910, Pio experienced a vision of Jesus and Mary at his farm in Piana Romana; he was left with the "invisible stigmata" – red marks and extreme pain in his hands, side and feet. Following a period of illness (possibly tuberculosis), he was transferred to a small Capuchin monastery in the remote town of San Giovanni Rotondo 135 kilometers away, never to return again. It was in here, in 1918, that Pio received the stigmata that catapulted him and the isolated monastic town to international popularity. While praying under a crucifix in the choir loft, he experienced a terrifying vision that left him visibly marked with the bodily wounds

of Christ's crucifixion for the rest of his life; they would eventually disappear without a trace a week before his death – reinforcing devotees' claims that these wounds were supernatural.

Word spread quickly of Pio's stigmata, aided by the distribution of *santini*, or wallet-sized prayer cards, emblazoned with an image of his bleeding hand on them. By early 1919, the unknown village attracted an average of 300 to 500 visitors a day (Luzzatto, 2007, pp. 38, 42); devotees were frenzied: "locals and outsiders reached the point of penetrating the convent armed with scissors, to furtively steal what was perceived from afar as relics: the crowd...cut pieces of his vestments, shirts, tractors, even the chairs that Padre Pio sat on" (da Casacalenda, 1978, p. 170). As word spread, some of his superiors accused him of fraudulently and egotistically attempting to gain fame and sewing "spiritual confusion" (Ruffins, 1991, p. 192). The Vatican banned Pio from publicly celebrating Mass at various times during his life, but thanks to the efforts of civic leaders in San Giovanni Rotondo, who engaged their own lawyers, doctors, psychologists and theologians to testify in favor of Pio, the injunctions would eventually be overturned. Pio also constructed the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza*, or "Home for the Relief of Suffering," with devotees' donations; intended to provide both physical and spiritual renewal, it is one of the most well-respected hospitals in Italy today. Pilgrimage only increased after Pio's death in 1968 – climaxing during the period of Pio's 1999 beatifications and 2002 canonization. By 2004, the shrine had inaugurated an immense new church designed by Renzo Piano that could hold up to 30,000 pilgrims inside and out. Piano's church does not simply reflect the shrine's wealth (it nets over EUR 120 million annually), but a practical necessity: during the controversial 17-month exhumation and exhibition of Pio's body in 2008-2009, an estimated 9 million religious tourists visited the shrine.

Pietrelcina's period of stagnation and anomie

While San Giovanni Rotondo grew exponentially, Pietrelcina was clearly left behind. Prior to 1968, pilgrims in search of healing had no reason to visit Pio's obscure birthplace when they could commune directly with him; this conceptualization continues. As with the tombs of other saints from late antiquity to today (Brown, 1981, pp. 1-22), Pio's sepulcher and the body it contains is considered the *axis mundi* of Pio's cult (cf. Eliade, 1959), a "thin place" where heaven and earth meet (Theophilos, 2010). Numerous pilgrims and tour sponsors in Ireland and Italy state that they have little desire to make the detour to Pietrelcina when the object of their devotion is Pio's tomb; of the total number of pilgrims to San Giovanni Rotondo, only 10%, or about 600,000, visit Pietrelcina annually. The Sangiovesi have been aware of this conceptualization. The Vatican's early attempts to move Pio resulted in extreme protestation and political maneuvering. One fanatic even charged up to Pio with a pistol and shouted, "Better dead among us than alive for others!" (Pio, 1998, pp. 398-399). San Giovanni Rotondo also "embargoed" Pio's relics after the monk's death; in the absence of any relics during the period of Pio's ostensione in 2008-2009, Pietrelcina made several futile requests to temporarily exhibit Pio's body in the town (cf. Di Giovine, 2009b).

When Pio was still alive, Pietrelcinesi were not only cognizant of their marginalization at the hands of San Giovanni Rotondo, but also felt entitled to the fruits of his internationally spreading cult. Da Prata and Da Ripabottoni recount several instances in which Pietrelcinesi visiting Pio asked him why he allowed San Giovanni Rotondo to reap the material benefits of pilgrimage (including wealth, infrastructural development, and "traffic") while his hometown stagnated (1994, p. 160). Pio made reference to both the past and the future in his purported two-part answer. First, he reminded them that "Jesus was in Pietrelcina, and everything happened there." Second, he promised, "I have valorized San Giovanni in life, Pietrelcina I will valorize in death" (p. 163).

This oft-recited quote is believed to be a prophecy for Pietrelcina's regeneration after Pio's death. But even after 1968, Pietrelcinesi did not immediately see Pio's promise fulfilled. There is also little indication that locals attempted a concentrated effort to develop tourism in the region; few improvements were made to the town's infrastructure, the main streets were a patchwork of asphalt and stones, and abandoned homes were left to decay. Rather, the period between 1968 and 1998 saw increased socio-cultural stress and a notable sense of stagnation. A distinctive "flight from the land" occurred (cf. UNESCO, 1976, p. 81) as Pietrelcinesi, many of them educated, left for Rome, Northern Italy, and abroad in search of work. Dropping by an average of 10% for the next two decades, Pietrelcina's population reached its lowest level since the mid 1800s, hovering around 3,000 people; by contrast, Pietrelcina's population was the highest in history during the period of Pio's childhood (ISTAT, 2008). As older Pietrelcinesi contend, this decline may be the result in a change of agrarian values: they had stopped cultivating the "traditional" artichoke in favor of the "dirty, get-rich-quick" tobacco crop (interview, 7/31/2009); but by the end of the 20th century, Benevento's large tobacco processing plant closed, its operations moved abroad. As one guidebook published by locals contends, "today, [Pietrelcina] is a town that ... is losing its original agricultural footprint, but trying to play a very important role in religious tourism" (Comitato Festa, 2010, p. 10).

Pietrelcina's revitalization

During Pietrelcina's stagnation, many individuals began to cultivate an acute sense that their society was thrown into disequilibrium because they were divested of a valuable resource, Padre Pio. Unlike worldwide devotees or those in San Giovanni Rotondo, Pietrelcinesi viewed Pio not solely as a patron saint – an "intimate invisible friend," (Brown, 1981, p. 50) – but through a kinship idiom as a family member (Di Giovine, 2009b). "Padre Pio is ours," one local recently articulated; but based on interviews and the collection of oral histories, it is clear that this notion was cultivated throughout this period of stagnation: Pietrelcinesi had already begun naming their children "Pio," praying to him, decorating their homes with his images, and circulating stories about their personal experiences with him. Several locals had also begun to self-publish books connecting Pietrelcina with the life of Padre Pio (cf. Montella, 1987; Tretola, 1988; Bonavita, 1989).

But it was only when pilgrims began to visit Pietrelcina *en masse* that the revitalization *movement* truly took form. While international visitation began in the late 1980s, mass tourism hit Pietrelcina only in the mid-1990s – when the frenzy leading up to Pio's 1999 beatification and subsequent canonization climaxed, and Italian television started airing documentaries on Pio's life. "At that time it was so packed you couldn't breathe," said one Irish guide who had been leading tours since the 1970s. Pietrelcina's "very popular mayor" at the time, Pio Iadenza, engaged a group of architects from the University of Naples to undertake a project of "urban transformation." Before re-designing the central spaces, they employed a methodology that included archival research and limited ethnography among locals. Indicative of this common tension in development practices to maintain tradition yet seek transformation, lead architect Carlo Maria De Feo writes:

Conservation and transformation are, in this effort, not antithetical in any way; rather, one guarantees the other's existence. There is no sense in conserving something if it does not restore life and utility to the artifact, if that which one conserves does not make sense to us, to the society. 'To transform' does not necessarily signify 'to alter' the structure to be conserved, but to use it in a different way, guaranteeing its vitality (1995, p. 9).

In addition to preserving some of the pre-existent structures of the town, the streets were paved with "expensive" yet non-native stones "that were put in a tumbler to appear old and weathered" (interview, 7/31/2010), and the town's central piazza was rebuilt to be a more open, accommodating, multipurpose space for public events. As Wallace points out, such radical plans could encounter resistance, particularly by those who fear its possible failure. A certain faction of Pietrelcinesi resisted the effort not because of its cost, but because it would "prive the people of their public space" while construction took place (interview 8/10/2010). The leader of the opposition was Domenico Masone, who would succeed Iadenza as mayor.

He was the head of the opposition, Masone, it was he who went knocking on doors collecting signatures against the work in the piazza. But in the end, when you assume the leadership, and you're told, 'look, this money will come to you if you do this,' you have to be courageous and utilize the funds rather than not carrying it out (interview, 8/10/2010).

The informant's words are important not only for the juicy gossip, but also for revealing the powerful potentiality of tourism to generate funding. Aided by the touristic 'discovery' of Pietrelcina, the Iadenza-Masone project began a practice of linking the economic potential of tourism to successful grant applications for infrastructural development, restoration, and the 'recovery' of traditional practices – despite the fact that tourists continue to visit for an average of 2 hours and generate little revenue. And in the process, these initiatives re-created, and revitalized, the urban space. Masone himself commented: "We don't have any ancient things, just old things... In nine years, we took an old town and made it completely new. A little with money from the European Community, a little from the Campania region, the State, etc., we've made everything new" (interview, 7/31/2010).

In a way, one can say that the movement "converted" Masone and his supporters. He speaks not simply of economic possibilities, but of a strong connection between Pietrelcinese cultural identity and the town itself, when answering why he carried out the reconstruction plan:

It's something so natural and obvious, that when you realize that your clothes are a little older, you buy new clothes to be more presentable. ... You bathe, you shave, you prepare yourself for the party. [You do this] not only for the dignity of the place's inhabitants, but also to give a more dignified welcome – to show respect – to those who visit. So that our territory can have dignity, that our hospitality can be comfortable, honest, and acceptable particularly to those who come in a spirit of prayer.

Masone's words reveal that the material changes are but a reflection of a deeper ethos, one that calls upon an imagined past to pave the way for the future, that (re)claims a resource deemed central to the society's identity, that is tied to its physical place of origin and is sensitive to outsiders' perceptions, and that is proactive.

The sentiment is also disseminated through alternative re-presentations and discourses concerning Pio and his relationship to the town. Although Pio's early life in Pietrelcina is well-documented, with few exceptions, the saint is always represented in iconography as he appeared in San Giovanni Rotondo. While there is good reason for this focus, such re-presentations seem to deny, or at least marginalize the importance of the formative period in Pio's life that he spent tangibly enmeshed in the local social networks of Pietrelcina; as Bourdieu notes, a narrative is always a selective and ideological claim about the life history of a person (1987, p. 2). In response, independent actors are publishing a host of new biographies focusing on the first thirty years of Pio's life or on his specific interactions with Pietrelcinesi during his ministry. One can find numerous images of Pio as a young child, such as the stained-glass windows in Pietrelcina's basilica; museums display objects from the period in which Pio lived in the town. The city also launched a branding campaign built around museologically inspired billboards that feature an image and relevant biographical details of a locality associated with the saint under the boldfaced heading: *Pietrelcina - Città di Padre Pio*.

Pilgrims who visit Pietrelcina are receptive to these interpretations, prompting them to recall stories of Pio and to exchange accounts of miracles and other supernatural phenomena that the saint has performed in their lives. The stones seem to act as mediators between the past inhabitant of Pietrelcina and the present pilgrim: "Just think, he sat right here outside the church waiting for it to open. My kids, I couldn't get them to go to church; I had to bribe them..." (Irish pilgrim, 8/8/2009). These elements also seem to be effective in fulfilling their expectations of a "classic Southern Italian village" that has been developed in the media. Numerous pilgrims echo the sentiments of one who said: "It was just as I imagined, only maybe a little cleaner." Other comments reveal the importance of the imagination in co-creating the touristic experience (cf. Liete, 2007): "With a little imagination, you can know how it was back then. The structures are all the same." Although the management of these sites makes no comparisons

to San Giovanni Rotondo, many tourists have been overheard favorably comparing Pietrelcina's aesthetics to that of modern San Giovanni Rotondo. "I like Pietrelcina better than San Giovanni Rotondo," one Italian declared as he rested with two women of the same age; they agreed that it was "enchanting" (7/24/2009), as opposed to San Giovanni Rotondo, which is "very, very modern with respect to who Padre Pio was" (Italian pilgrim, 6/27/2009). Indeed, even pilgrims who correctly figured that "it was more rustic back then," nevertheless positively recognized the restoration's value: Pietrelcina "needs to be cleaned and organized. To maintain it, to let the future see how it was, for the people who will come – you have to maintain it like that" (Italian pilgrim, 6/27/2009).

In addition to indexing the society's culture change, the material reconstructions of the town also create new opportunities to engage more locals and further the movement. Draped in his official sash, the mayor attends religious events. Likewise, the clergy accepts Pietrelcina's redefinition of the Madonna's story to include Padre Pio's narrative. Reacting to the impetus by the town council and the church to re-create the town in accordance with tourists' imaginaries of the Pio narrative, Pietrelcina's Archeoclub has redefined itself and its mission from being a lay archaeological organization to being a necessary watchdog for the town's "authenticity," advocating the conservation of pre-existent structures rather than their re-creation.

The restored spaces also are used for new concerts, festivals, and exhibitions, which attempt to complement or re-present the traditions that supposedly were diffuse during Padre Pio's era. The Archeoclub is planning a museum with pre-Christian *ex votos*, to complement pilgrims' modern devotion to Pio. Another festival – "*Si addà fa mattinata*", which in Pietrelcinese means "we go all night long" – is a night-long celebration of traditional food and music held in the *castello* district, the reconstructed area where Pio lived. While Pio's historic sites are closed, locals and visitors alike are coerced to walk through the mid-19th century streets, past Pio's homes, and stop at various stands to savor the food that they imagine Pio also enjoyed.

Even though many of these concerts and festivals are supported by the Pro Loco (tourism promotion board) or through grants used to encourage tourism, locals are a visible – if not a dominant – presence. Locals perceiving of, and utilizing, the site in the same way as other tourists – rather than merely giving their "external mandate" or "good will" (Jamal & Getz, 1995, p. 197) – is an extremely important aspect of the revitalization model. Not only is this occurring, but Pietrelcinesi who live abroad now return annually for the major feasts. In celebration of the hundredth anniversary Padre Pio's ordination on August 10, 1910, nearly 150 locals engaged in an early morning pilgrimage from Pietrelcina to Benevento; they celebrated when they found out that they outnumbered the roughly 50 participants from the surrounding towns who came with their own town banners in a show of devotion. Most locals also display images of the saint in their home, and conversations – inside and outside of church homilies – often focus on Pio as a familial model of moral action. Lastly, although mayor Masone

had tourists in mind when he constructed the *Via del Rosario* – a mini pilgrimage route between Pietrelcina and Piana Romana, the countryside site where Pio received his invisible stigmata – locals predominantly participate. The advertisement declares:

The Via del Rosario is a route that connects Pietrelcina with Piana Romana, which Padre Pio walked while reciting the Holy Rosary. Who knows how many graces he obtained for our souls through the many rosaries he recited along this very path. It is up to us to re-walk [this path] to obtain from our heavenly Mamma all of the graces we need for ourselves, for all those we hold dear, for our Church and for the world.

As this quote reveals, through the prospect of tourism and the encounters this global phenomenon fosters, Pietrelcina is beginning to re-construct itself and its relationship with Padre Pio – in text and image, in realms sacred and profane, in place and pilgrimage. Its distinctive placemaking strategy merges touristic endeavors with site-specific interactions and specially crafted narrative claims. It creates a particular biography of Padre Pio that is intensely local, and easily shared by those who imaginatively walk in the saint's footsteps. Lastly, it recalls the special kin-based relationship they have with Pio and the Madonna: Pilgrimage at Pietrelcina – especially by those who straddle both categories of "hosts" and "guests" – goes beyond mere *dulia*, or salvific Catholic veneration; it is an act of familial bonding. Pio now mediates between locals and the Madonna who is not simply the spiritual *Madre* (Mother), but *la mamma* – familiar, caring and nurturing; one to whom a child calls out in love, in devotion, in suffering.

Conclusion

It is easy to notice the material changes in Pietrelcina for those who have had a long connection with Pietrelcina. One 82 year-old native, who lives in Bologna but returns every summer, looked out at the town with me and repeated the sentiments of many other informants:

Everything's changed in Pietrelcina – I don't recognize it anymore. It has grown, coming down all the way past the cemetery – but back then [when I was living here], it was only the castello [historic center]. The piazza behind Town Hall used to be a plot where a few farmers grew artichokes. Before Pietrelcina was just a town, now it's become a city. (interview, 8/1/2009).

Simply conceptualizing this in economic terms is inadequate, for Pietrelcina's palpable sense of growth and improvement was generated not from funds derived from tourist expenditures, but rather the *potentiality* of the tourist experience to valorize the society and appreciate its unique place in the world. This is frequently a slow and dialectical process. On the one hand, it often germinates in a small group of individuals and gradually becomes communicated to the rest of society. On the other hand, it may be spurred on after tourists show their interest in the site; this validation might induce locals to action. Strong identity with the place is cultivated; one local architect's sentiments are extremely telling, for he equates Pietrelcinese personality with the character of both the town and their primary resource, Padre Pio:

We – as a Pietrelcinese personality – are pretty jealous even towards our townsmen. There's a strong dualism: there are two marching bands, two soccer teams, you know. But regarding outsiders we're much more open. You can read this even in the structure of the village: there are narrow alleys and closed streets, but then they open up to these expansive landscapes. Padre Pio's character was like this too: he was irritable, closed, but also with an open heart. He treated those who came to him with an immense generosity. This open-closed opposition is the key to Pietrelcinese morphology.

This identification with place is organically translated into value-laden narratives that are cultivated and re-presented in text and image, imbued in the site itself, and consumed by locals and non-locals. While locals often employ outside forces to help plan or fund these new projects, locals nevertheless drive the movement and its ideology.

Adopting a revitalization paradigm allows for greater attention to be paid to the significance of locals' discourses and practices in relationship to the panoply of other actors, and is sensitive to alternative value systems while also being responsive to the real material impacts of global forces on the local. Focusing on the transformations brought about from within a culture, in reaction to and in conjunction with outside forces, the revitalization paradigm can better capture the complex processes of negotiation that occur within the "field of touristic production" (Di Giovine, 2009a, pp. 42-48), as well as the variety of intertwining elements that inevitably factor into any "culture change" phenomenon. Most importantly, it provides a way to move beyond the tautology of development theory, opening the way for alternative views of how individuals and groups work to "improve" themselves as active agents, and how outsiders can productively contribute to the process on a more equitable basis.

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