Monographic Section

Collaboration in anthropology: the (field)work of grounded practice

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Abstract. This essay uses ongoing ethnographic research with olive and olive oil producers in Sicily, Italy, as a springboard to reflect on collaboration in anthropology. I provide a brief review of various approaches to collaboration in anthropology and discuss the potential of practice theory and correspondence (Gatt and Ingold 2013, Ingold 2017b) to collaborative anthropology. I offer this reflection through the lens of my ongoing fieldwork as one example of how power dynamics and positionality in and out of the field shape what types of collaborations are possible and may be potentially fruitful.

Keywords. Collaborative anthropology; Practice theory; Sicily; Olive oil.

INTRODUCTION

What is collaboration? What do we mean by collaborative work in anthropology? The call asks us to consider «how collaborative work, between researchers and local actors, can produce mutual learning and transformation, in terms of social knowledge, relationships and forms of action (Rappaport 2008)». Considering «collaboration» leads to questions about power and meaning. That is, who controls the production of anthropological knowledge, and for whom is it produced? Given this, what is the value of that knowledge, and of anthropology? And, especially relevant to fieldwork itself – why should anyone want to work with anthropologists? While these perennial questions have inspired vast literatures, I take up Lutri and Bianchi's call to explore the "possible futures" with which anthropologists engage as I undertake my own fieldwork.

COLLABORATION: SOME BACKGROUND

What does it mean to claim that anthropology is collaborative, or that an anthropologist is using a collaborative approach? Asking these questions

of collaborative anthropology may generate more questions than answers (Cook 2009:109). It comes as no surprise that anthropologists mean a variety of things by «collaboration» or «collaborative anthropology». When we speak of collaborating with people who are not trained as anthropologists, do we mean the act of fieldwork itself, or are we talking about the production of anthropological and ethnographic texts? When, with whom, where, and to what ends do anthropologists collaborate?

Here I collapse collaborative anthropology into a broader consideration of strands of anthropology that have been termed applied, practical, public, engaged, and so on. Practitioners of these various types of anthropology may vigorously take issue with lumping them together, but for my purposes here, these approaches to anthropology have in common an explicit interest in questions of power and representation – and collaboration. In general, these anthropological approaches work to address social issues and inequities and may even provide policy suggestions. These approaches have been contrasted with "pure" or "theoretical" anthropology, and questions about the value of "practical" or "applied" anthropology have inhered in the discipline since its inception[1]. This divide between applied and pure, however, is more salient in colonizer nations; in these contexts, anthropology could be "applied" to colonial administration, for example, or perhaps used as a tool in opposition to colonial projects, or it could remain aloof from such practical concerns (Baba 2000, Sillitoe 2007). Baba and Hill (2006:10) note that in many nations that were colonized rather than colonizing, anthropologists practice an overtly political anthropology, which is not considered lesser-than or somehow impure (see also Rappaport 2008). Italy, too, has a practical/applied tradition (Colajanni 2014, Scheper-Hughes 1995:415-416, Severi and Landi 2016).

For proponents of "pure" anthropology, the discipline needed to concern itself with social scientific claims about the universality of objective knowledge, and less with solving practical problems. At the very least, applied anthropology needed to «be based on pure anthropology» (Radcliffe-Brown 1931: 276). These "purists" came out of an Enlightenment tradition which subscribed to the idea that producing such objective knowledge, or theoria[2] (Baba 2000), would help to cement anthropology's place in universities in which it was a small discipline. Anthropology had to prove itself worthy of public funding, a situation in which it finds itself again, or maybe from which it has never left (Sillitoe 2006).

Recent recognition of anthropology's (perhaps largely unfulfilled) promise for public policy and critical dialogue has produced interest in applied/public/engaged/collaborative anthropology (e.g., Checker 2009, Rylko-Bauer et alii 2006). These collaborative anthropologies include *activist anthropology*, which advocates for overtly political engagement (see Scheper-Hughes 1995, Speed 2006), and *engaged anthropology*, a term preferred by some to denote an ethical and collaborative approach that may be (but is not necessarily) politicized (Beck and Maida 2013, Low 2011", Checker 2009). *Public anthropology* tends to refer to anthropological work that is either undertaken with the goal of addressing public concerns, is shared with a broad public, or both (Beck 2009; Borofsky 2000, 2010; Scheper-Hughes 2009; Severi and Landi 2016). *Applied anthropology* describes work in which anthropologists, frequently outside of a university setting, work with NGOs, government agencies, or communities, and seek to address their concerns (e.g., Austin and Quinn 2007, Baba and Hill 2006, Colajanni 2014, Sillitoe 2006).

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[1] See, for example, Sillitoe's 2006 discussion of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard, in particular. Sillitoe argues against any hard-and-fast distinction between applied and pure anthropology and cites Malinowski (1939: 38): «only 'one who imagines that academic pursuits begin where reality ends' will argue that an issue becomes 'less scientific because it is vital and relevant'» (Sillitoe 2006: 12). Drawing on Goody (Goody 1995), Sillitoe (pp. 7–11) presents Evans-Pritchard's stance as ambivalent or hostile to applied anthropology.

[2] On THEORIA: «this is a set of ideas that explains how we get the knowledge base that is the core of a discipline (see for discussion Partridge 1986). In the Aristotelian sense, theory is knowledge of the objective universe; for example, in anthropology it includes knowledge pertaining to the unity and diversity of humanity. The philosophy underlying theory holds that knowledge should be sought for its own sake; it is good in and of itself (Cohen 1954). Any utility beyond fulfillment of the human thirst for truth and understanding, or curiosity, is not required as a justification. In theoria, the universe is viewed as an object that may be manipulated intellectually. The best way to know this world, according to Aristotle, is contemplation through rigorous intellectual discipline: empirical observation and inquiry, quiet reflection, and hard thinking and writing. The necessary action of application and intervention distracts from and crowds out the intellectual discipline needed for theoria» (Baba 2000: 22).

For some anthropologists, all anthropology is collaborative regardless of whether it is explicitly considered as such. After all, it is not far-off to claim that anthropology, as a discipline inherently interested in the human condition and human experience, is de facto collaborative (e.g., Field and Fox 2007). One cannot do anthropology without interacting with people. Just because anthropologists interact with people, however, does not mean we necessarily maintain a critical eye towards issues of interpretation, representation, and power (Johnston 2010). An explicit focus on collaboration hopefully provides this critical perspective and strengthens anthropology's contribution.

What collaboration looks like depends on the specific study under discussion, and methodological considerations of collaboration are not new (e.g., Stull and Schensul 1987). Some anthropologists collaborate during fieldwork – with other trained ethnographers (e.g., May and Pattillo-McCoy 2000), with community co-intellectuals, or with ethnographers-in-training, be they university (undergraduate or graduate) students or community members (Sheehan, Burke, and Slack 2007). Focusing on involving undergraduates in collaborative research, Stein et alii assert that «Anthropology can be done by anyone, anywhere, and as a collaborative endeavor» (2016: 164). In collaborative fieldwork, the collaboration may begin before the fieldwork does, with framing the research question, determining the scope or goals of the research, reaching decisions about research design, timeline, and methods to be used, and the general impetus for doing the research in the first place (see Austin 2003, 2004, 2010; Austin and Quinn 2007). This process can vary depending on the interests and needs of a particular community or organization, as well as the skills the researcher has to offer (Pulido 2008: 355).

Lassiter, writing about ethnography, argues that since ethnography is drawn from the direct voices and experiences of people who willingly participate in ethnographic studies, it is in some way collaborative, but could be more intentionally so (L. E. Lassiter 2005, Lassiter et al. 2005; for more critical reflection on ethnography see Abu-Lughod 2008a, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus 2007). Others strive to collaborate with co-intellectuals during both fieldwork and writing, or other means of dissemination (e.g., Breunlin and Regis 2009). Many collaborative approaches draw on the radical pedagogy of Paolo Freire (1993) to attempt to disrupt the typical power dynamics of top-down research that is dominated by researchers who design research with little or no input from the people *on* which they do research. Freire instead inspires researchers to work *with* people. The interest in collaborative anthropology may point out a distrust of researchers' objectivity in a "pure research" approach, or the idea that researchers seek to maintain objectivity while carrying out the research, and avoid political or other active engagement in the communities they study. These debates are not new – they have been going on for decades, and feminist, postmodern, and postcolonial critiques of scientist commitments to objectivity in the reflexive turn had, and continue to have, a resounding impact on the type of research anthropologists carry out. An attachment to objectivity and to cultural relativism, to the point that the anthropologist must always maintain a neutral position even in situations in which she feels a strong moral imperative to act, has been critiqued by practitioners not only of an actively engaged anthropology (e.g., Scheper-Hughes 1995, 2000), but also by those who remain committed in some capacity to the concept of cultural relativism (Carrithers et alii 2005).

In these collaborative efforts, reciprocity and accountability are fundamental: «...activists and community residents resent academics who are not accountable, so too do they resent those who swoop in, collect what they need from a community, and then move on, having enriched themselves but not necessarily provided anything of substance to the community in question» (Pulido 2008: 351). The parameters of reciprocity and accountability are by no means always clear-cut—communication is a constant stumbling block to ensuring that all parties are on the same page as regards expectations and setbacks. Collaborative approaches to research and the time, dedication, and oftentimes personal turmoil they entail should not be oversimplified; in fact, this is emphasized both those who endorse collaborative research and those who do not (i.e., Gross and Plattner 2002). Even those who are in favor remind us that these approaches are not for everyone and to be circumspect in what we claim to be able to offer communities with whom we work (Checker, Davis, and Schuller 2014). In Sillitoe's words, "we must beware of selling what we cannot deliver" (Sillitoe 2006: 16). Practice theory offers one approach to collaborating meaningfully with research participants without, hopefully, selling what we cannot deliver.

Collaboration, in my case, is informed by practice theory and praxis. Practice theorists are not always the identified sources of inspiration for applied/public/engaged/collaborative anthropologists, and yet practice theory

(Bourdieu 1977, Giddens 1979, Ortner 1984) allows social scientists to pay attention to both hegemonic structural systems and creative individual or group responses to them. Collaborative anthropology, with its attention to power dynamics and in many cases social justice, therefore utilizes practice theory's attention to both local detail and larger power structures, and the dialectical relationships between the two. Practice theory allows for close attention to quotidian practices and the beliefs that surround them, and seeks to connect the dots between those practices and beliefs and structure – political economy, including class dynamics, history, and the state. In an ethnographic study of Sicilian oliviculture, my approach to collaboration is inspired by practice theory, and explicitly involves work. Although participant observation requires all different kinds of work, something I address in more detail below, by laboring alongside my participants, I participate in the quotidian practices that I want to understand, and which I want to connect to broader, global processes. Therefore, working *with* rather than *on* people is a critical aspect of my approach to collaboration.

COLLABORATING IN SITU: SICILY

I now turn to what forms collaboration has taken during my ongoing fieldwork in Sicily, Italy (May-June 2016, September 2017-November 2018). As discussed above, collaboration in anthropology means different things in different situations to different people. Collaboration during fieldwork may take a different form than collaboration while not in the field (if the field is spatially distant from the anthropologist's home, which is not always the case). Dei emphasizes the differences in what kinds of results come from anthropology "da lontano," from afar, versus "da vicino," from nearby, both of which offer benefits and drawbacks, but the first of which is more closely linked to the colonialist legacy of the discipline, in which the anthropologist arrives from afar to study exotic people. Abu-Lughod's discussions of the struggles of feminist and "halfie" anthropologists work to unsettle simple but value- and power-laden categorizations of anthropologist versus native, research subject versus objective researcher, self versus Other (Abu-Lughod 2008b). When considering my ethnographic fieldwork, my own positionality, is, of course, central to the ways that I am able and allowed to collaborate in the field. This is certainly true when considering the legitimate critiques of anthropology coming from postcolonial (e.g., Asad 1979, J. Comaroff and Comaroff 2003), feminist (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1990, Ortner 1972, Rosaldo, Lamphere, and Bamberger 1974) and indigenous scholarship (e.g. Smith 1999). As one would expect, if I were any combination of characteristics other than what I am (female, white, able-bodied, a U.S. citizen, Italian-speaking, married, heterosexual, educated), my collaborative possibilities would change. The way participants interact with me would change. The types of collaboration anthropologists undertake take on different hues depending on our own positionality and the already-existing social relations where we seek to work.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The significance of the olive tree is truly epic,[3] an intricate layering of meaning that is both sacred and profane, tied to particular places and times and yet extending well beyond them. Used as a cleanser, a perfume base, for ritual and mortuary practices of anointment, as food, lamp oil, and later as the best lubricant for the wheels of English industrialization (Meneley 2007: 681), olive oil has been important to human beings for at least 6.000 years (Vossen 2007). To explore the diverse meanings that are attached to some olive oils such that they can embody the hopes of farmers, the history of a landscape, and the identity of regions, I investigate how a Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) for Sicilian extra-virgin olive oil affects Sicilian olive producers. In the European Union, PGIs

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[3] Some oft-cited mythological and religious examples of this epic significance include the people of Athens choosing Athena's gift of an olive tree over Poseidon's of a salt-water fountain, lending the city its name; the dove bringing Noah a branch of olive to signal the end of the biblical flood; Odysseus anointing himself with olive oil after finally washing the salt of sea water off of his shoulders; and Mary Magdalene anointing Christ's feet with it before drying them with her hair (Mueller 2011).

are enacted to create market value for specific food products as a way to protect the cultural and environmental knowledge necessary to produce that food, staking the legal claim that only certain people in particular places can create the certified food (see Besky 2013, Coombe, Ives and Huizenga 2014, Papa 2000). A famous example is champagne, which can only be sold as «champagne» if it comes from a specific territorial area in France, and is produced in a certain way.[4] These certified foods are then linked to the cultural heritage of the country requesting the designation, contributing to the construction of nationalist identities, what DeSoucey terms «gastronationalism» (2010).

The process of identifying and legally codifying which aspects of cultural heritage, be they tangible (e.g., architecture, archaeological sites) or intangible (e.g., oral traditions, festive rituals), should be protected and promoted can be termed heritagization, a somewhat bulky translation of «patrimonializzazione», or patrimonialization (Grasseni 2013, Palumbo 2006, Heatherington 2010). Food, because of its boundary-pushing nature – both material and symbolic, tangible and intangible – presents a rich case for considering heritagization and its conflicting effort at fixing dynamic meanings and processes (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014, Meneley 2008, Papa 2000, Siniscalchi 2010). A tension lies in the fact that these efforts promote "authentic" cultural, and in the case of food products, culinary heritage by commodifying and selling it globally (Besky 2013, J. L. Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, Coombe et alii 2014, Leitch 2003, Moro 2013, Papa 1998, Siniscalchi 2010). My research focuses on what cultural and environmental knowledge is necessary to produce Sicilian olive oil, and what the effects of the process of legally defining and then selling cultural heritage, as embodied by PGI olive oil "Sicilia," are on the people and places it is meant to protect or preserve.

(FIELD)WORK: PRACTICE THEORY IN OLIVICULTURE

The collaboration in my research and fieldwork is informed by practice theory and by a Gramscian commitment to praxis. As noted above, practice theory allows attention to both the daily lives of ordinary people and the wider webs of power in which we live. Practice theory takes the basic premise that involvement in everyday action has the capacity to inform theory – that the paths between theory and practice are multiple and co-constitutive, rather than a linear view that only privileges theory directly informing practice (Baba 2000, Ortner 1984). Praxis should not be used interchangeably with practice (Warry 1992), as praxis calls up a Marxian tradition and an explicit concern with justice. In a Freirean reading, praxis refers to reflection in action (Austin 2004: 421). «Praxis», writes Baba, «is a way of knowing that relies on engagement in social reality, on being embedded in the processes of social life. Praxis is, in part, subjective since the practitioner is not a spectator but an actor. The practitioner of praxis is engaged in complex interactions with social reality, as it is lived "on the ground"» (Baba 2000: 26). A praxis approach therefore offers one way to engage in collaborative anthropology.

Labor has been a primary way I have engaged in complex interactions with social reality as it is lived on the ground during my fieldwork. Work has been a primary way of giving something of value, one attempt to answer the question, «why should anyone want to work with anthropologists?». I work with participants, and in many cases their employees, in olive oil production. My presence is tolerated, or maybe even welcomed, and in return one of the things that I do is work. This approach to collaboration, doing agricultural labor, is shared by other scholars of food systems in Sicily (e.g., Sanò 2015), and part of a longer tradition of Sicilian and international scholars of Sicily who have had strong commitments to imagining possible futures and contributing to opening up space for them (Dolci 1964, 1972; Schneider and Schneider 2006). During the olive harvest from September through December, my work was primarily harvesting olives, although I also participated in transporting olives and spending time at olive mills, where olives are pressed into oil. This entailed working with the rest of the harvest crew

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[4] Geographic indications, or appellations, for wine have a slightly different history and administrative structure than those for other food products but legally perform the same task of defining and delineating the territories from which certain wines may come and how they may be produced (Gade 2004, Moran 1993, Overton and Heitger 2008)

– carrying, positioning, and climbing ladders, picking olives with my hands or with rakes, placing nets on the ground underneath olive trees, occasionally driving tractors and four wheelers, and picking through harvested olives to clean out leaves, branches, and other debris. In the fall of 2017, I worked with multiple different olive producers in different parts of Sicily, and my schedule varied, but in some cases I worked from 7:00 am to 12:00 or 1:00 pm, which differentiated me from the rest of the workers, who were there all day. In others I too worked until 4:00 or 5:00 pm and in still other cases I started later in the day or left earlier. One participant remarked to me after I had been working daily with his crew for about two weeks, «Ma tu non fai una ricerca. Tu fai un lavoro» or, «You aren't doing research, you're doing a job».

Once the harvest season ended, the work I could do changed. Rather than harvesting olives, I do things like help prune olive trees, stick labels on bottles of olive oil, pack bottles into cardboard boxes, put together the cardboard boxes, and translate documents. In all cases, working alongside participants is foundational to my interpretation of everyday collaboration, to practice theory, to grounded theory, and to praxis. In working, I am taking part in what Carrithers describes as «engaged learning» (Carrithers et al. 2005: 437) and what Ingold writes about in terms of ethnographic research being about education, about learning *with* people (Ingold 2017: 23). In working, I am both participating and observing, the classic anthropological method of participant observation. I am moving through space and time together with participants, something Ingold terms «correspondence»: «Launched in the current of real time, participant observation couples the forward movement of one's own perception and action with the movements of others, much as melodic lines are coupled in musical counterpoint» (Ingold 2014: 389). My ethnographic work is not necessarily melodious, as learning how to do these various tasks is at times awkward and at other times boring – but it is, at all times, social, because I am doing it with other people. My work, my labor, is performed in the hopes of, and oftentimes in the process of, building rapport and trust with people who did not previously know me and may have reasons either to object to my presence (this may be along gender lines, that I am performing "men's" labor) or to welcome my presence (this, too, can be along gender lines). In fact, Ingold's broader emphasis on process is important – the way we move through the world, affecting and being affected by other beings – and this constitutes a knot, or rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) of relations that unfolds through both time and space. If on a fundamental level «all creatures create the conditions for each other's existence» (Ingold 2005: 503), then by participating in daily life and work with participants, I am engaged in a relational process of correspondence.

My manual labor is not always and only a form of giving back – after all, it requires that someone else take the time to teach me how to do something, and how to do it correctly. While my research is not particularly dangerous, if I fall out of an olive tree or burn the clutch out of a tractor, no one is happy. My being able to work requires that research participants are willing to take the time and energy, therefore, to teach me, and in order to teach me, to trust that it is worth teaching me. This is a leap of faith taken in the social context of a relationship between an anthropologist and a participant, but also between a student (me) and a teacher, and between two people who otherwise may or may not have many things in common. This is a basic educational collaboration, but it is also basic human interaction.

There is of course other labor, other work, involved in the awkward process of trying to weave ourselves as anthropologists into other people's everyday lives – the labor of caring, of being out of place, of speaking another language, of listening, of conviviality. This work, too, makes up anthropological collaboration and is undertaken not only by the anthropologist but equally by the people with whom she is working. At times the moments of correspondence, when things feel melodious, are far outweighed by the moments of feeling very out of place, in terms of my gender, language, and skillset. Much of the work I perform is with Sicilian, Romanian, or Albanian men and is gendered as men's work (like olive picking, although I also worked with Romanian women who picked olives, but did not climb ladders, which was considered too dangerous for women).

My specific positionality (able-bodied, white, married, American, cisgendered, educated, etc.) colors the way we work through this gender conundrum together, and I am often characterized either using linguistic diminutives, *Amanduccia* (Little Amanda in Sicilian), or through shows of linguistic respect or joking, *La Dottoressa* (The [female] Doctor). At times the linguistic work participants attempt to do to contextualize me, or put me in place, for others and for themselves is successful, and at other times less so. When accompanying a truck driver on his

route to pick up olives to bring back to the mill from producers who lacked the necessary heavy transportation equipment, I was mostly politely ignored after being formally greeted by laborers from whom we got the olives, with the exception of one man who was insistent that I could hardly be a doctor since we were far from the hospital. This play on words served to heighten the out-of-placeness of my presence, and to mock my host, the truck driver's, attempt to explain and normalize that presence. Language itself can be work, especially if the language spoken by the men with whom I am working is not Italian but various dialects of Sicilian, which I can sometimes follow but certainly cannot speak. In these cases, someone must do the work to translate for me, or I must do the work of trying my best to follow and asking a sympathetic listener to clear things up occasionally. Or we simply move along, doing the same work but not participating in the same conversation or thought process. The labor of caring, or of making friends, is also work that must be navigated according to ideas about what constitutes an appropriate relationship one can have with me, since I represent a strange social entity that in many cases could be interpreted primarily as a disruption to the social fabric into which I am hoping to blend. The rough figuring of how much my presence is a burden and how much my presence is a boon – of how much work, manual, mental, and emotional, I am doing and how much work my participants are doing – is a calculation I run frequently, but one to which I will never have a mathematical answer, because the parts of my equation are human relationships rather than numbers.

Another aspect of my positionality that influences why people might be willing to work with me, like the imagined futures cited by Lutri and Bianchi, comes from how my Americanness is interpreted. For participants, there may be, whether actual, imagined, or dreamed, the potential of some sort of future benefit stemming from a relationship with me, with my particular bundle of characteristics. This is especially the case since I am American and many olive oil producers already have consumers in the United States or would like to expand into the U.S. market. These potential future benefits for participants could be in the form of publicity for them in my publications, or from their desire to contribute to a positive representation of their home, Sicily, in the context of plenty of popular negative connotations about mafia, corruption, and general backwardness. Some participants have tried to directly involve me in their business affairs, especially in contexts like food and beverage trade shows, by encouraging me to import their oil into the United States to have an informal business, selling to friends and family. Others have involved me in their business affairs simply by asking me to check the translations on their labels, or emails in English to English-speaking clients. In any case, my acquaintance opens some doors, even if they are only doors to learning more about the United States, a place about which most of my participants have consumed plenty of cultural media, but not been able to visit. This is to say nothing of the continued U.S. military presence in Sicily (see Lutri 2018) and the strong and problematic ties between American and Sicilian politics and violence (Schneider and Schneider 2006). In all cases, my positionality – the ways in which I am privileged (white, American, cisgendered) and the ways in which I am not (a woman, a foreigner) – is central to the types of collaboration that are available to me as an anthropologist in Sicily.

COLLABORATION IN LIMINAL SICILY

Collaborative approaches to anthropology partly respond to critiques of the colonial origins of the discipline. Postcolonial and feminist scholars rightly question the privileging of Western centrality in anthropology and the extractive nature of much, especially early, ethnographic work (see for example Abu-Lughod 2008, Said 1993). Sicily is positioned uniquely in terms of postcolonial concerns with positionality because of its liminality. In this context, collaborating through working has allowed me to better witness the competing voices and narratives that vie for inclusion in the creation and maintenance of Sicilian identity, as refracted through one Sicilian food product.

Sicily is liminal in that it is both North, as part of the Italian state and Europe, and South, as the southernmost region in Italy and certainly South in terms of the Southern Question. It is part of the West (Western Europe) as well as an otherized East (the Byzantine, Arab, and Arab-Norman era); it is colonizer (Mussolini's campaigns in Africa) and colonized (having been conquered by nearly every Mediterranean power for the last 5,000

years), historically emigrant-sending and currently immigrant-receiving. The chosen axis of liminality could be north-south (Moe 2002: 5), or, following Said, east-west (Said 1993, Schneider 1998). Michael Herzfeld, playing on Orientalism to coin the term «Mediterraneanism», describes the types of othering that occur in Mediterranean contexts, like Sicily (Horden 2005: 26). Whether one prefers a north-south or an east-west comparative axis, Sicily remains securely "Other", Southern and Eastern, backwards and exotic, and at the same time it is uneasily claimed as "us" – Italian, Mediterranean, or European; rational, modern, and civilized; as the case may be. In short, in Sicily's geopolitical and historical positioning one can find «...the classic symptoms of liminality – confusion of categories, expressions of chaos and antistructure» (Ortner 1984: 127).

Sicily's liminal position, narratively and geographically, makes it distinctive; furthermore, the way scholars in the Marxian tradition like Antonio Gramsci have formulated and interpreted the Southern Question, focusing on power relations within social relations of re/production, is of primary importance to collaborative anthropology (e.g., Gramsci 1992, 2005). At its core the Southern Question allows us to ask questions about people and power, or «the fields of force to which they became [and become] subject» (Wolf 2010, xxii). The fields of force to which olive and olive oil producers in Sicily were and are subject has shaped their everyday lives and their social, political, economic, and environmental realities. Power deserves attention, and so does practice. Collaborative research in this setting, like any other setting, requires an attention to power dynamics and positionality.

I draw out Sicily as a liminal space for two purposes: 1) Sicily's many identities contribute to a debate about which heritage deserves protection and promotion, and therefore whose histories and identities are linked to PGI olive oil, celebrated or glossed over, and sold, and 2) that, like Sicily, my ethnographic research is located in the gap, the back-and-forth, and the interstices, and involves a chaotic confusion of categories. In the end, being liminal may mean also being central, the focal point, at the crossroads of difference and similarity.

Defining cultural heritage for its protection through legal and market mechanisms is a tricky business. The *disciplinare*, or legal document which sets out exactly which olive oil may be designated Protected Geographic Indication "Sicilia," itself emphasizes Sicily's liminality – and therefore its cultural diversity – as a source of pride and strength:

> Due to its central position in the Mediterranean, the island of Sicily has changed hands multiple times over its history and been subject to many different influences (cultural, architectural, religious, culinary etc.). The olive-growing sector, in particular, is symbolic of this long process of enrichment in terms of crops, cultivation techniques and varietal biodiversity. These conditions have made Sicily rich both in terms of the number of varieties grown and the cultivation techniques used, helping to create a unique olive growing and olive oil producing profile that cannot be reproduced elsewhere (Official Journal of the European Union 2016, C186/16).

In fact, this narrative attachment to diversity is significant not only to culinary traditions in Sicily, but to the current migration situation and responses to populist and xenophobic political trends in Italy and in Europe. Sicily, over the long dureé, has been demographically diverse, drawing people and conquerors from all over the Mediterranean (Phoenicians, Arabs, Greeks, Romans) and from further away (Lombards, Swedes, Normans) in addition to its own indigenous populations (Pellitteri 2015, Schneider and Schneider 1976). It would therefore be ridiculous to maintain that Sicily and North Africa have no cultural, linguistic, or other bonds (see Blake 2016).

However, a narrative celebration of diversity born out of a confusion of categories can also serve as a way to gloss over the power-laden decisions of representing whose histories matter and whose stories are celebrated, and whose are not. There are over 320 registered food products with EU-level geographic indications, like PGI "Sicilia," in Italy – more than in any other European member state ("DOOR" 2018). GI foods add to a national arsenal of "typical" or place-based, high-quality food products which strengthen Italy's reputation in the international market as a power house for luxury food and beverage, at the same time contributing substantively to the construction of a coherent national (as opposed to regional, city-based, or other) identity. Pursuing GI certifications, therefore, can be a double-sided coin: on one side a firm presentation of Italian identity linked to place and culinary traditions. As with any authoritative, or even hegemonic, assertion of meaning or identity, though, there are counter-narratives. So, on the other side of the coin—which places, whose culinary traditions and values, which identity matters?

In the case of PGI Sicilian olive oil and my research, the debate about which cultural heritage deserves protection and promotion, and whose histories and identities are linked to PGI olive oil, operates on at least two levels – the level of whose interests are represented by the PGI and who participates in and benefits from it, and therefore whose stories are represented as emblematic of an authentically Sicilian product, and at the level of my ethnographic research. In the first case, the *disciplinare* relies on Sicily's unique history of colonization and conquest to justify a claim to uniqueness. Every step of the production process (cultivation, harvest, and oil extraction) must be carried out on the island of Sicily to qualify for the PGI, and Sicilian cultivars of olive tree must be used (see Zerbi 2013 on trees as cultural heritage) – but what story about place and the identity of a diverse people does this tell? Where, in fact, are the people in the *disciplinare*? What of the laborers who cultivate, harvest, and extract? Considering producers must pay for certification, which producers are able to amplify their brand-stories to an international market by adding another guarantee of authenticity, always as ever hotly contested,[5] to their labels?

As regards my own research, as an anthropologist engaged in witnessing and collecting stories from the people who are both present and absent from the *disciplinare*, my work and its publication and dissemination becomes a strand in the weaving of narratives about Sicily. As discussed, my positionality impacts whose stories I am able to collect, and the context in which I am able to witness them. Therefore, the simple collaborative act of working alongside participants harvesting olives or asking how they came to produce olive oil is still one that has its own power dynamics at play. Participants have the power to speak to me, to befriend me, or not, and anthropologists, in the act of analysis and write-up but also in figuring out with whom we want to work, decide, on some level, whose stories matter. It is impossible to collect all of the stories or to know when the stories are told to us how our presence is altering them – but the human interaction, the learning from others, the listening, and then the other acts of sociality that contextualize the conversation – a ride, a meal, a coffee, looking at a photo of a new baby – are small, everyday acts of collaboration. Furthermore, I mirror Sicily's liminality with my own liminality and insider-outsider status, and my work also exists in the in-between spaces of everyday life and work. I represent a confusion of categories, my own and Sicilian–foreign but "adopted," woman doing "man's work," native English speaker with a Sicilian accent in Italian researcher who works. In the end, the confusion of categories characteristic of liminality describe Sicily geopolitically and they also describe me.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

What is the value of anthropology, and why should anyone want to work with anthropologists? What do we offer the people who let us in, who show us around, who teach us, who feed us, who talk with us, laugh with us, fight with us, work with us? These are questions anthropologists have been grappling with since the beginning of anthropology as a discipline. Here I have painted a brief overview of different approaches to collaboration in anthropology, the debates they emerge from, and my own grappling with questions of the value of anthropological knowledge and for whom it is produced. Perhaps what anthropological collaboration offers is our ethical commitment to the cause, whether that cause is promoting environmental justice in the U.S. (Checker 2005, Harrison 2011) or working with indigenous activists in Columbia (Escobar 2008), or perhaps it is as simple (or as complicated) as the human act of witnessing, listening, or sharing. In all cases, if we lose an eye to the power dynamics inherent in all social interactions, including in our own research and writing, we risk recreating the problematic extractive construction of knowledge from which we have tried to move away.

In order to add a bit of ethnographic texture to these questions, I have considered my own approach to collaboration in my research with Sicilian olive producers. In this case, I have called on practice theory and praxis as primary means of anthropological collaboration. Practice theory rejects a unilinear and dogmatically positivistic approach to the development of anthropological theory, which privileges the production of theory that is discon-

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[5] Because of space limitations, I cannot fully address the issue of contested authenticity here, but it is key to my research and will be more fully explored in a future publication.

nected from grounded, lived experiences, or, if it is connected, it is considered the primary goal of the anthropological endeavor to produce theory which informs practice, but not vice versa. Instead, practice theory invokes the importance of everyday living, and how anthropological participation in everyday life can and should inform theory, in a co-relational process instead of an atomized and disarticulated separation between anthropological theory and anthropological practice. In short, practice theory considers the importance of structural power dynamics on the human experience, the lived, everyday experience. The Gramscian and Freirean schools of praxis take this one step further by expecting the researcher to not only reflect on these power dynamics, but to act in consideration of them – reflection in action, theory wedded to practice.

An anthropology devoid of practice is an anthropology unable to grapple with basic anthropological concerns like meaning, universals, and difference, much less with the perilous navigations of what collaboration can mean in and out of the field. Practice needs to be part of the equation in the anthropological endeavor because practice is, after all, «human action in the world» (Sahlins 2009: 6). In my case, I have thus far sought out collaboration in everyday forms of work and of being in order to «join with others in an ongoing, speculative and experimental exploration of what the possibilities and potentials of life might be» (Ingold 2017b: 20).

The primary locus of my collaborative effort has been in the productive efforts of Sicilian olive oil producers, working in olive harvesting and olive oil bottling and packaging, along with transportation and office-work stints. In the framework of this type of labor, my contribution is my labor, but there is no guarantee that this effort on my behalf makes it worthwhile for participants to teach and involve me, if my presence is considered in a transactional sense of what my involvement might offer and what it might require in terms of investment of time and energy on the part of participants. Because of this fuzziness of who is really providing the labor, I have included an attention to the types of labor involved in my attempt at ethnographic collaboration more generally, which are informed by feminist anthropology and go beyond what would under normal circumstances be wage labor (harvesting olives, translating documents) to emotional and linguistic labor (building relationships, emplacing me, and naming me). Because my fieldwork is ongoing, these are necessarily preliminary ruminations on this ethnographic research. I plan to work in the next olive harvest, beginning in September of 2018, as a somewhat more skilled olive picker, and to otherwise offer whatever professional skills and human presence I can to those who are willing to share their lives with me, although what exactly this will bring I cannot specify. I can with certainty say that I feel a responsibility as an anthropologist to the people who share their lives with me, not only to *not* harm or misrepresent them, but also to provide something back to them of value, perhaps even that transforms each of our lives, even if only in small ways – be that a shared poignant experience during fieldwork (e.g., Feldman and Mandache 2018) or in the sharing of my findings, only possible because of them.

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