

Abstract

Geoethics and Geography, as “channels” between the social and physical sciences, interact between areas of knowledge which allow quantitative measurement and others which instead mainly rely on qualitative considerations.

Due to their educational values and the methodological possibilities they open up, such possibilities for interaction would be most valuable in educational environment, as they would represent a significant step toward educational-methodological settings that permit the acquisition of skills and competencies of immediate spendability, for example the importance of “knowing how to translate quantitative elements into qualitative and vice-versa”. In a context of alternation between quantity and quality, the concept of resource is open to a multiplicity of ideas. If we consider the mountains as a resource, ideas develop from that of the riches of the mountains as being measurable through quantitative indexes (but not always) and reach one of the mountains as a whole as a resource, valuable mainly through qualitative criteria (but not only). This game between quantity and quality leads to informed evaluation of environmental conditions and human actions. In addition, the signs of the past, etched into the mountains and often still influential in the present, constitute the fourth dimension of space, of which the teaching of Geography can not do without. However, the exploration of time also concerns the future, especially with regard to the ethics of responsibility: it investigates the consequences of choices made in the present and how they can affect the future. Due to its many specificities (especially, but not exclusively, in terms of resources and risks), planning for a mountainous territory leads to an inexhaustible series of educational applications.

The building of an “education about the mountains” project for primary and secondary school children through a series of learning units, from direct and indirect observation to territorial analysis, could bring out the range of perceptions that mountains can arouse in a child or pre-adolescent: from images of sadness and unhappiness to others of joy and elation. Perception is, of course, the first operational level and is essential in the exploration and understanding of space. This exploration and understanding is initially based on sensory perceptions and is then added to by perceptions of the environmental condition of the mountains, the weaknesses and risks, the links to history and to demographic, economic, social and cultural trends.

The school, traditionally delegated to the training of the boy, can contribute to the acquisition of a new consciousness that can change the current image that the public has of the mountain and the phenomena connected with it as, indeed, the transhumance. Transhumance is a technical term of the pastoral economy, the “best” that is to point out a typical aspect of life, almost symbiotic, leading, for the whole year, men and flocks, with a double seasonal allocation, in mountain and plain, and a dual path (outward and return), almost always quite long, and for particular routes. In Calabria, the most significant and sustained transhumance settled between Sila plateau and Crotona plains.

Methodology

A Learning Unit to fifth class pupils of primary school, Istituto Comprensivo “Cicco Simonetta” of Caccuri, Calabria region, Southern Italy, was realized. Caccuri, located in the presilana area, is still crossed by those few shepherds who still practice transhumance. The project started by drawing up some thesis in Geography with our scientific supervision, carried out in the context of the Laurea degree in Primary Education Sciences, University of Calabria, aimed to call the school the consciousness of a new environmental pedagogy, understood as the analysis of the relationship between education and human environment, with particular reference to the mountain, to the phenomena and natural resources that characterize it. The theme of transhumance, closely related to the mountain because of the exploitation of complementarities between different natural environments (mountain pastures and grassy plains), founds at the beginning some concerns in the teachers of Caccuri primary school, a sign of a lack of awareness of the landscape value (natural, aesthetic and economic) of the mountain and a lack of awareness of the importance of a healthy environment education that shall be given to learners since childhood. The project involved the administration of a questionnaire to pupils on transhumance to verify the initial knowledge of the topic. From the answers to the questionnaire - some pupils possessed a superficial knowledge of the phenomenon. In fact, they found themselves in the past to observe large herds of cows, in passing, but really did not know the real reason why they were to move. Subsequently, it was held in a lecture in class supported by some slides in Microsoft Powerpoint and from watching some movies, explaining what transhumance was and because it was practiced. Starting from the basic definition of transhumance and *tratturo*, we have shown, always so simple, what was the historical evolution of the phenomenon. The paths of transhumance were crossed directly by pupils in Cerenzia, Southern Italy, on the occasion of the educational output; seemed clear, before the teaching, the need for a visual representation of the transhumance paths, the object of study, and the areas where it has spread and more established.



Fig. 1. Transhumance path near Cerenzia, Calabria, Southern Italy



Fig. 2. Podolica on the road during the descent



Fig. 3. The herd when passing on a dirt path

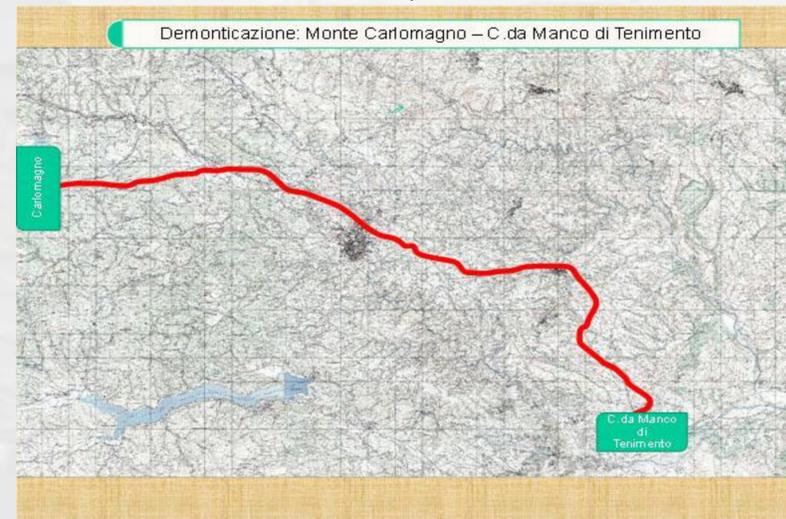


Fig. 4. Path of “transhumance” during the descent, drawn on map in scale 1: 25,000: from Monte Carlomagno to Contrada Manco Tenimento.

Results

The final test on transhumance completed by pupils, it turned out that these were impressed and fascinated by a practice, like that of transhumance, which as a whole knew little. The children have learned a lot from this educational project. They have “discovered” a world, pastoral, all new except for those two or three children who have grandparents who held this job. From the answers to the two questions of the final test on experience teaching on transhumance, showed positive feelings and gratification by children. There who simply liked the teaching experience, who was impressed by the “giant” bull and “how to put the bolus into the stomach of cows, bulls and calves”, who is happy to have acquired a terminology first unknown, connected to transhumance, who would redo the experience again, who would propose to do transhumance with other people and finally, there are those who, like Michele, who would grow up to be a shepherd. By comparing the knowledge emerged in the input questionnaire and in the output questionnaire, it was found a medium / superficial degree of knowledge of the students in the responses to the input test.

Pupils, in fact, knowing what transhumance, are not educated about the reasons why you practice. In the output questionnaire, however, the pupils are to know the topic and understand the importance of it to the point that some have expressed the will to carry out this job for adults. If we make the division by biological factors within the Bailly classification (Carre, 2008; Lovigi, 2013), following the line of the geography of perception and only considering sex as influential (since the age of the students is the same), we observe that males demonstrate a greater mastery of the subject in the responses to the input test, while females reach the level of knowledge of the males in the output questionnaire. Analyzing mental maps, we divided drawings of pupils who have directly observed the phenomenon, participating in the so-called “descent”, and those who have never attended a transhumance, but viewing the films on the topic during the lectures; we note that although pupils drew simple maps, they can trace the path that concerns the symbolic descent of the shepherds from the mountain to the plain (Fig. 5-6). Among the maps of pupils who have not attended a transhumance, however, there is above all a kind of rough drawing that covers the depiction of the shepherd usually on a flat road in the company of animals (Fig. 7). Therefore, pupils who participated in the educational output, have a more complete perception of the phenomenon, recognizing the reality corresponding to the symbols, in which each element of the observed territory induces deepening.



Fig. 5-7. Transhumance mental maps drawn by pupils of Caccuri primary school

Conclusions

The school and educational facilities, traditionally delegated to the training of the pupils, can contribute to the acquisition of a new consciousness that can change the current image that the public has of the mountain and the phenomena connected with it as, indeed, the transhumance. The mountain, in fact, is increasingly perceived as a place of life and marginal accessory. In contrast, only a careful observation of the phenomenology of space mountain allows a constructive approach to education for the individual who is breaking from the company (Consoli, 2008).

References

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