Conservation and Society 16(4): 397-408, 2018

Article

Edenic Views in Wetland Conservation: Nature and Agriculture in the Fogliano Area, Italy

Paolo Gruppuso

Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

E-mail: paolo.gruppuso@abdn.ac.uk, p.gruppuso@live.it

Abstract

The article explores the genealogy of Edenic narratives about the Pontine Marshes in Agro Pontino, Italy, and the imaginary of the *Bonifica Integrale* (integral reclamation). This process of reclamation, implemented by the fascist regime throughout the 1930s, drained the Marshes transforming their ecological, economic, and social structure. The dominant reading of Agro Pontino's history is polarised through a dualistic view that sees the Marshes as the realm of an almost pristine nature and the *Bonifica Integrale* as a life-giving event that transformed that environment, making it cultivable and inhabitable. This view reflects a modernist understanding of time as a series of punctuated events in a linear trajectory that leads to environmental degradation. In conservation, this interpretation produces problematic political effects resulting in a specific approach that positions agriculture and nature on opposite sides. The article presents ethnographic materials that challenge this view and suggests a different approach, an 'Anthropocene conservation', which looks at the sustainability of the future rather than defining an ecological baseline to restore.

Keywords: anthropology; conservation; farming; Anthropocene; environmental conflicts; Agro Pontino

INTRODUCTION

Different narratives of the past are often at the core of environmental contestations in conservation areas, where nature is frequently portrayed as wild, pristine or untouched by humans (Cronon 1995a,b; Escobar 1999; Adams 2003; Anderson and Berglund 2003; Brockington et al. 2008; Nustad 2011). This pristine imaginary produces problematic political effects (Campbell 2005: 303; Ingold 2005: 502) as conservationists look "to the past to evaluate how landscape should be" (Whitehouse 2009: 167). My contention is that one of the main reasons behind the environmental contestations in the protected wetlands of Agro Pontino, Italy is due to this approach, which is epitomised by the Edenic view adopted by conservationists, who imagine the region as almost unspoiled until the 1930s, when it was transformed by the *Bonifica Integrale* (complete reclamation). This view involves a particular understanding of time as a series of punctuated events in a linear trajectory that leads to environmental degradation (Adams 2004: XII). Within this temporal orientation, the *Bonifica Integrale* exemplifies modernity: it represents *the* 'modern' event as it designates "a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture" (Latour 1993: 10) and it is defined by contrast to an archaic and stable past (Latour 1993).[1]

This view resonates with concerns raised by the concept of the Anthropocene, introduced by Earth scientists (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Steffen et al. 2007) to name the current geological epoch in which human activity emerges as a dominant Earth-shaping force (Whitehouse 2015: 53). Indeed, the highly engineered landscape created by the fascist regime during the *Bonifica Integrale* represents a prime example of an Anthropocene landscape (Irvine 2017), exemplifying the role of humans in refashioning geology, although on a local scale. Through this process, the fascist regime drained the Pontine Marshes, one of the largest marshlands in Italy, situated

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code:	Website: www.conservationandsociety.org
	DOI: 10.4103/cs.cs_17_130

70 km south of Rome, transforming the socio-cultural and environmental context of the region from an economy based on the use of local natural resources, to one based on industrialised agriculture. The *Bonifica Integrale* also involved the foundation of three new towns, Littoria (renamed Latina after World War II), Sabaudia, and Pontinia,[2] and the colonisation of the region with settlers brought from northern Italy (Mariani 1976; Folchi 2000). Many people who previously worked and lived in the Marshes most of the year, following agricultural cycles and the pattern of transhumance, retreated to their residences in the surrounding hills and farther (see De Mandato 1933: 74). Some of these people also settled in the reclaimed Agro Pontino, according to the fascist colonisation plan (Vochting 1990). Others, however, have continued to live and carry out their traditional activities in particular areas that eventually became protected wetlands.

Despite the fact that the Marshes had long been cultivated and inhabited, the fascist propaganda portrayed the region as a deserted and malarial wasteland (Gruppuso 2013/2014; 2014; 2016). This idea is still common and the region before the fascist reclamation is often described as "nothing but a malaria infested marsh" (Harris 1957: 311; see also Caprotti 2006, 2007a,b). This image had a twofold result. On the one hand, it justified the *Bonifica Integrale* aimed at reclaiming the land in order to be cultivated according to a modernist and rational ideal of productivity (Huijbens and Pálsson 2009; Scott 1998). On the other hand, it triggered a process of nature conservation, epitomised by the establishment of the Circeo National Park in 1934 and by the creation of more recent protected wetlands (Gruppuso 2016). Conservationists nowadays think of these areas according to an idealised 'natural' and timeless landscape, the Pontine Marshes, described as a primordial and almost uninhabited environment. Their conservation efforts, accordingly, result in what Cronon (1995b) has called "Getting back to the wrong nature". This approach is problematic because it seems to deny the commingling of geological and socio-political forces that characterise the current epoch of the Anthropocene (Gruppuso 2017), thus obscuring the human-environment relationships that have shaped Agro Pontino's landscape since ancient times (Gruppuso 2016), and revealing a 'temporal lock-in' (Irvine 2017), a "fixation with the landscape of a single point of origin" (Gruppuso 2016: 154): the *Bonifica Integrale*.

The social memory of this process is still redolent of a creation myth that resonates with "The Beginning" of Genesis (verses 1:1-10), when God gives form and life into previously formless and lifeless matter. Likewise, the fascist reclamation appears to be a life-giving event performed by the demiurge Benito Mussolini, who by highly technological means drained the primordial and uninhabited marshland, creating 'new' cultivable and inhabitable land (Cavallo 2016: 117). Within this narrative, agriculture is associated with the *Bonifica Integrale*, it is understood as the outcome of a highly technological process that destroying the previous landscape, produced an unbridgeable divide between nature and culture.

This view is challenged by a 'hidden landscape' that emerges around the Fogliano Lake, the main protected wetland of the Circeo National Park, on the coast of Agro Pontino. Here, traces of a disappeared economy intermingle with the memory and the activities of the current farmers, revealing the fabric of a long-lasting productive agricultural landscape in which hunting and fishing were enmeshed. This 'hidden landscape' calls into question the temporal orientation of conservation, bringing out a different temporality in which the past has not disappeared; it rather seems to 'perdure' in the landscape (Ingold 2013: 75). The concept of 'perdurance' (Ingold 2013) highlights the relations between continuity and change resonating with the idea that "landscapes contain the traces of past activities, and people select the stories they tell, the memories and histories they evoke, the interpretative narratives that they weave, to further their activities in the present-future" (Bender 2001:4).

The 'perdurance' of the past is a contested argument in Agro Pontino because it conveys different and conflicting ideas about the present landscape and the correct use of nature (Macnaghten and Urry 1998: 134). This aspect emerges in the Fogliano wetland particularly with regard to buffalo farming, which in this area has always played an important economic, gastronomic, and social role. Moreover, buffalo have created and maintained the typical wetland pastures surrounding the lake, providing the right habitat for migratory birds. This is paramount in wetland ecology and highly valued by conservationists. Nevertheless, as I shall discuss, buffalo farming in the local wetlands retains an ambiguity that is worth inquiring: conservationists consider buffalo as a natural, 'passive' element in the landscape, whereas they look at buffalo farming as an anthropogenic, disturbing factor, which is deteriorating local wetlands. This approach reveals an idea of conservation that, reflecting a particular temporal orientation, positions nature, understood as a relic of a pristine environment in need of protection and restoration, in contrast to agriculture, understood as a creative and transformative practice. This idea is deeply rooted in the dominant Edenic imaginary of the Pontine Marshes and it is detrimental to any logic of environmental sustainability.

The article traces the genealogy of this view analysing ethnographic materials concerning the origin and evolution of Agro Pontino in relation to the global understanding of wetlands. It discusses the present imaginary of the Pontine Marshes and the fascist reclamation,[3] highlighting the 'retrospective' orientation of conservation (Ingold 2005: 502), and considering the political outcomes of such an approach. In the conclusion, the article suggests a different approach based on the reassessment of Agro Pontino's history, the acknowledgement of Agro Pontino as an Anthropocene landscape, and consequently on the necessity of a future-oriented 'Anthropocene conservation'. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on environmental conflicts and to the wider debate on conservation in the Anthropocene.

PRIMORDIAL MARSH

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
>
> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
>
> And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.
>
> And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.
>
> And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear'. And it was so. God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.
>
> (Genesis 1:10 New International Version)

In this way, the Bible portrays the beginning of the world: the Earth was in chaos and all the elements were confused and formless. On the second day of the Creation, God "separated the water under the vault from the water above it" and then, during the third day, He gathered the waters under the sky in one place, so that the land appeared; to be precise, 'dry' land appeared, which allowed Him to create plants, animals, and finally human life. 'The beginning' is represented as a big marshland; it seems that in order to create the world we live in, God carried out the most important intervention of drainage in the Earth's history: in Genesis we find the first account of a reclamation. To create Life, Genesis suggests, we need a marshland; then, as we saw, we need reclamation.

Similar ideas about marshlands as primordial ecosystems are quite widespread around the world (e.g., Coles 1984; Purseglove 1988; Breda 2001; Frascaroli 2009; Ogden 2011; Howarth 1999), and particularly in the ancient Mediterranean "the notion of progressive waterlogging seems completely missing.[…] Marshes were understood as the primordial chaos" (Traina 1988: 100).[4] This understanding resonates with my ethnographic materials concerning the origins of Fogliano Lake. This point emerges from an interesting conversation I had with two informants[5] old enough to remember in person the Pontine Marshes and the reclamation process:

> Archimede: When I left Fogliano, the lake was natural
>
> Ezio: It was still marshland
>
> Archimede: There weren't banks yet… where the water inundated the land, there was slime and filth… then, when the lakes were made, everything was dried…
>
> Ezio: the lakes were not like now… there were pools, puddles. Then the lakes were made by a company named *Impresa Cetonia*. It had a dredge, it went into the lakes and made both the Fogliano lake and the Monaci lake. It made two lakes. There were only puddles, big puddles, then with the dredge this company made the lakes, fished the lakes out.[6]

My informants told me that the formless marshland was dredged in order create the lakes, and that the material dredged from the bottom of the marsh was used to create the dry, cultivable land surrounding the lakes. This account resonates with the biblical Genesis; land and water were divided, put in order by means of mechanical devices used to minutely separate land from water in order to create dry land (see Cavallo 2011). My informants describe a chaotic, muddy, and formless landscape, associating marsh and the past, 'the beginning', in terms of naturalness.

In the science of ecology also, marshlands are positioned at the beginning of life, at the heart of its processes, as underlined by the following statement: "At the heart of every living landscape is, or rather was, a complex series of wetlands […]" (Dugan and IUCN 1993: 6; see also Helmreich 2009: 74). This statement, relating wetlands with the past, implicitly refers to these particular environments as endangered, entailing the necessity to restore and protect them, in order to preserve life (Howarth 1999: 521). In Agro Pontino, I found similar understanding of wetlands amongst conservationists, who describe these environments as places "where life manifests itself with an intensity greater than in any other natural environment, and where most of the important pages of evolution have been written" (Istituto Pangea Onlus 2006: 5).[7] This statement associates wetlands with life and with the past; in particular it refers to evolutionary processes, hence with a particular idea of genesis, of 'beginning', but in biological terms. This understanding of wetlands as the core of ecological processes is performed by environmental interpreters during the visits to the spring-time pools in the Circeo National Park forest. The publicity leaflet that advertises these visits describes the pools as a "seasonally flooded area that, even when it is dry, recalls a landscape that has now vanished".[8] In this view, the pools are strictly associated with the landscape of Agro Pontino before the *Bonifica Integrale*. However, this association goes behind a mere relation with the 'vanished past' of the Pontine Marshes: these pools are actually understood by the interpreters as owning a "primitive vigour" (Huijbens and Pálsson 2009: 297) that harbours the potential to generate life like the biblical landscape portrayed in Genesis.

Visitors usually perceive these pools as disordered and dirty; in fact one of the main pieces of information the interpreters give to visitors is that the pools' disorder and their apparent dirtiness is actually a sign of their vitality, of their richness in

terms of biodiversity. This information is often framed within explanations concerning the wider imaginary, ecology, and history of the Pontine wetlands:

> This is the last example of a swamp, understood as a forested wetland with stagnant water. Nowadays, we are used to clear the ground, removing fallen logs… but before human beings started to use the marshes they appeared as these pools: trees that fell down remained on the ground, nobody would have removed them… […].We usually misconceive organic matter, like decomposing trunks or leaves, calling it waste, […] we also think that this matter makes the environment dirty, but it does not, this is organic matter[…].[9]

In this excerpt, the interpreter linked the imaginary of marshlands with the historical presence of humans in the area, and also with the conservation policy of the National Park, which is not supposed to clear the ground of logs or fallen leaves. Indeed, stressing the concept of 'organic matter', the guide challenged the common understanding of marshlands as disordered and dirty wastelands (Giblett 1996; Blackbourn 2007: 46). Moreover, using the word 'before', the interpreter highlighted the association between the naturalness of the pools, restored and protected by the National Park, and Agro Pontino's past. With this statement, the guide was underlining that one of the most important features of the National Park is to rebuild what once upon a time was, "before human beings started to use the marshes". This interpretation sees human beings as a disturbing element in an environment described as 'natural'; it is then highly problematic, since the Agro Pontino has been inhabited for thousands of years (see Gruppuso 2016: 75).

The political relevance of this approach is exemplified in the following excerpts from two interviews I gathered from conservationists in Agro Pontino. The former is part of a conversation I had with one of the conservationists in the management committee of the Circeo National Park concerning the environmental contestations with farmers in the Fogliano wetland. He told me:

> The aim of a national park is to reconstruct natural ecosystems that have a particular dynamic; in our case a dynamic of recovery from a relatively short period of cultivation… because these areas were not cultivated that much … they were zones occupied only for one or two months a year, because there was malaria… these were impenetrable forests…[10]

The conservationist argued that Agro Pontino before the *Bonifica Integrale*, i.e., the Pontine Marshes, was a natural, almost pristine environment, covered in 'impenetrable forests'. The same idea emerges in the second example, excerpted from a conversation I had with a conservationist of the Latina Province's environmental department, which is the institution in charge of the implementation of the *Natura2000* network in the area. Our conversation concerned the contestations between agriculture and conservation in another wetland, known as Gricilli Lakes, which is a Site of Community Interest:

> The Gricilli is an area absolutely not ideal for agriculture, […] in the past, it probably made sense to farm there also, maybe… Surely! In that context of possibilities… because there was… the marsh… then that piece of land would have seemed dry to the people, compared to… there was the forest….[11]

Conservationists retrace a widespread and long lasting opinion that portraits the Pontine Marshes as a "waterlogged, malaria-infested marshland, backwards and seemingly uninhabitable" (Caprotti 2007b: 44). In this way of thinking, the Marshes, understood as a 'natural' ecosystem, are opposed to the current reclaimed Agro Pontino, perceived as an 'artificial', completely man-made, environment; agriculture is positioned in contrast to nature (Saltzman etal. 2011). In these examples, the Marshes, epitomised by the image of the 'impenetrable forest', becomes a metaphor of time, the obvious baseline from which to start thinking about nature conservation in Agro Pontino. These discourses pivot on the common imagery of wetlands as relics of a pristine, original environment; the point is that, as Blackbourn argues:

> When we consider these apparently pristine wetland habitats, the question arises: how pristine were they? […] was this, in fact a "land created by the hand of nature"? Not really is the answer. […] There is, in the end, no obvious baseline for measuring the world that was 'lost' during reclamation (Blackbourn 2007: 74-75).

Candace Slater uses the concept of 'new Edenic' or 'quasi-Edenic' narratives to analyse particular accounts that "may imply hopes for the rediscovery of paradise (the recovery, for instance, of an original state of innocence and plenty through a return to nature)" (1995: 115-116). The excerpts I presented above resonate with these kind of narratives that are particularly present in wetlands, usually described as "disappearing Edens" (e.g., Burt 2007). As Slater argues, the problem is that more than being false or exaggerated, narratives of this kind obscure both people and places that actually existed or still exist there (1995:114; see also Nustad 2011). Moreover, these narratives are deeply problematic in conservation areas because they resonate with ideas of wilderness that understand local people as "threats to nature's purity" (Ogden 2011: 2). This sort of 'new-Edenic' view is present in Agro Pontino, where you can find explicit associations between Eden and the Pontine Marshes in these terms: "In this Eden, flora and fauna were uncontested, the human being was extraneous" (Sottoriva 1982: 6).[12]

In order to proceed with further reflections, it is worth clarifying my reference to the images of Eden and to "The Beginning" of Genesis. On the one hand, there is the primordial swamp of the second day of creation, which God separates into land and water on the third day. This is the Edenic image to which the modernist reclaimers refer to,

continuing and perfecting God's creation according to the idea that "wetlands as both land and water […] were not only an aberration but also a vestige of, or throwback to, the first day of creation when everything was chaotic, disordered […]" (Giblett 1996:142).[13] On the other hand, there is the Garden of Eden, the idyll of harmony and pristine nature before the 'fall' of humanity that conservationists seem to want to restore.

These images reflect two different understandings of the Marshes: on the one hand as passive and raw material onto which form is imposed by a demiurge; on the other hand as realm of primordial potential. Despite their differences, these views are two sides of the same modernist logic that results from a conception of time as linear progression from a primordial simple/pristine state to the current complex and contaminated epoch. This understanding reflects the modernist conception of nature as a "single, timeless, and pure domain untouched by Society […]"(Lorimer 2015: 2), and generates a particular interpretation of Agro Pontino's history that affects the understanding and the conservation policy of the current protected wetlands.

MASTERING THE MARSHES: A DUALISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF AGRO PONTINO'S HISTORY

The common understanding of Agro Pontino's history is premised on a dualistic view that considers the Marshes as the realm of nature, a palimpsest for the inscription of cultural form (Ingold 2011: 47), namely the reclamation. Within this polarised interpretation, the people who inhabited the Marshes before the reclamation are understood as living in a state of nature, enmeshed, mixed, and confused within the wild environment of the Marshes. This idea emerges in a short poem written by a child and displayed in a local museum, called *Museo della Terra Pontina* (Pontine Land Museum).[14] This poem, entitled *La Palude Pontina prima della sua redenzione* (The Pontine Marsh before its redemption), reads:

> It is a marsh inhabited by shepherds, guitti,[15] charcoal-burners, and people who take care of horses.
> It is a distressing, entangled, and inaccessible landscape: a static, violent, inhuman society mixed up with the animal society composed of buffaloes, horses, and coots of the Caprolace[16] area...[17]

The inhabitants of the Marshes appear entangled, confused, blurred with the marshy environment, unable to emerge from a state of natural primordial disorder. In Ingold's words, they live "wholly at the mercy of the vicissitudes of nature" (2000: 312). This view suggests "the belief in the existence of pristine nature outside of history and human context" (Escobar 1999: 1). This aspect emerges clearly in a study of the Pontine Marshes conducted by the fascist anthropologist Mario De Mandato, who wrote that the Pontine Marshes' history is only the history of the land reclamation processes that have been attempted in order to reclaim them (1933: 64-65). Indeed, the Marshes, as well as the people who lived there, are still understood as a product of history, unable to produce history for themselves (cf. Ingold 2002: 5).

This dualistic view that places in opposition marshes and reclamation recalls nineteenth century ideas of social evolution (Ingold 1986; Helmreich 2009). In this particular evolutionary frame, Agro Pontino and its inhabitants seem to evolve from a state of 'primitive promiscuity' (Helmreich 2009: 75,76), epitomised by a view of the Marshes inhabited by humans in a state of nature (Ingold 2004:213) and without history, to a state of civilisation (see Miliucci 2016:204), represented by the fascist reclamation as a prime example of human triumph over nature. This linear and teleological view of Agro Pontino's history, usually presented as an example of "the inevitable march of progress towards a morally desirable end-state" (Ingold 1986: 26), is well-represented by the coat of arms of Latina.[18]. On the institutional website of the City Council, the coat of arms is described as follows:

> In the centre of a shield with a blue background, the city tower stands emerging from the marsh. Everything is surrounded by bundles of ripe wheat tied by a ribbon with the motto: LATINA OLIM PALUS. *"The coat of arms of Latina with the motto "Latina Olim Palus" represents the strength and commitment of its people, the reality of the progress achieved, the projection towards a future of development and modernity in line with the times*." (City Charter, article 1 paragraph 6)[19]

In the coat of arms, the Marshes' surface is represented as an endless wasteland that is counterposed to the white verticality of the city tower. This contrast, emphasised by the motto *Latina Olim Palus*, meaning 'Latina Formerly Marshland', resonates with a series of dualism that characterise the common reading of Agro Pontino's history: before and after (the reclamation); wild and tamed; progress and backwardness. On the one hand, the city tower as a symbol of civilisation and moral order; on the other hand the squelchy surface of the Marshes as a symbol of primitiveness and moral jeopardy. This dualistic view mirrors a linchpin of Western thought. Ingold (2000: 312) highlights this point arguing that Western thought has been dominated for centuries by the idea that the mission of humankind is to master nature. From this perspective, he contends, the world of nature is commonly characterised by its opposition to the domain of society, in which human beings realise their essential humanity as people; the term 'technology' is firmly rooted in this polarisation of society and nature. Within this understanding, the concept of technology refers to that field of activity in which reason is applied in order to exert control over nature. The verticality of the city tower represents a 'projection towards future and modernity'; it stands out from the uncertain and squelchy surfaces of the marshes as a symbol of the social and technological progress achieved through the reclamation. The primordial nature of the marshes appears as conquered (Blackbourn 2007).

The temporal and ideological perspective illustrated by the coat of arms of Latina exemplifies modernist narratives about a vanished nature overcome by human society. In spite of this hegemonic narrative, my experience with farmers in Agro Pontino reveals a post-natural environment where past and present, nature and society, are not placed in linear progression or in symmetric opposition. This is a hybrid Anthropocene landscape that emerges along with the shapes of the land, hidden by hegemonic narratives and conservation rhetoric.

HIDDEN LANDSCAPE

Far from being primordial, the Pontine Marshes were a highly cultivated landscape whose wealth was framed within a peculiar economy based on hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, forestry, and small scale agriculture (Gruppuso 2014, 2016). People have carried out these activities, even after the *Bonifica Integrale*, in particular areas of Agro Pontino that are nowadays protected. The most significant of these is the coastal area of Fogliano, composed of three lakes and pastures that are nowadays designated as wetlands of international importance. The whole area was purchased by the Circeo National Park in 1985, when the people who had lived and worked there, since the reclamation and before, were evicted. Since that period, harsh conflicts have affected the area where farmers, now considered 'illegal occupiers', are still working in animal husbandry and particularly buffalo farming for the production of milk used for making *Mozzarella di Bufala*. In this area, traces emerge that challenge the Edenic narratives about the Pontine Marshes, as well as the dualistic view that pivots on the myth of the *Bonifica Integrale* dividing the history of Agro Pontino in before and after.

The *Bonifica Integrale* affected this area too, altering most of its ecological features. In order to create a landscape in line with the productivity envisioned by the fascist regime, the whole area was strongly modified: the marshy areas were drained through the construction of new channels; the three shallow lakes were deepened and the surrounding pools filled; finally the lakes' perimeter was modified with the creation of artificial banks.[20] In addition, an array of structures was created in order to modernise and improve the traditional practice of fishing in the lakes. In spite of these transformations, the Fogliano area maintained a strong continuity with the Pontine Marshes' cultural and economic context until the 1980s, when it was acquired by the National Park.

Up until the expropriation of the area, the three lakes of Fogliano, Monaci, and Caprolace were part of the same property owned by the agricultural company *Società Bonifica di Fogliano*. The administrative centre of this property was situated around the Fogliano lake where also most of the company's employees used to live. Before the *Bonifica Integrale*, this particular area was one of the most important cultural, social and economic centres in the Marshes: there was a primary school, a medical office, a small general store, and more importantly, many people worked there in fishing, farming, forestry, gamekeeping, and animal husbandry (Busatto 2005). All these people worked first for the Caetani, one of the oldest and most powerful noble families of Italian history (Pitkin 1998: 59), who owned the area until the *Bonifica Integrale*, and then for the *Società Bonifica di Fogliano*, who improved the productivity of the traditional activities. The legacy of this history is still very present in the memory of local people as well as in historical buildings around the Fogliano Lake.

One of these buildings was built in 1742 by Michelangelo Caetani to host the grandchildren of James II King of England during the winter hunting season (Cecere 1989: 40). This building testifies to the notoriety of the Pontine Marshes abroad, in particular as a 'shooting place'. Richard Bagot, who travelled through the Marshes at the beginning of the last century, wrote about the Fogliano, describing the particular kind of hunting carried out in that area:

> A curious mode of shooting wild-fowl, and particularly coots, of which there are vast numbers, obtains in this district, and notably at Fogliano[…] The guns are placed in tubs submerged nearly up to their rims in open spaces in the lagoons. The immense forests of reeds and canes surrounding these tracts of water are then beaten through, and the duck and coot come in swarms over the heads of the guns. (Bagot 1911: 218).

This way of hunting was practiced in the Fogliano area until the 1970s when the Pontine Marshes were completely reclaimed. My informant farmers still remember this particular mode of hunting waterfowl, particularly coots (*Fulicaatra*), called *Cacciarella* or *Caccia con le botti* (hunting with barrels):

> Ezio: The barrels had been in the lake until Circeo National Park acquired the area. They were wine barrels which were cut and placed in the lake. Then they placed some decoys like *anatra* (duck – *Anas platyrhynchos*), *alzavola* (teal – *Anas crecca*), *morettone* (tufted duck –*Aythya fuligula*), and some real ones as calling birds. And the hunters went into the barrels. […] My brother-in-law's brother used to work during the hunting season; he attended hunters, accompanying them to the barrels.[21]
>
> Guglielmo: These barrels were placed in the lake, actually anchored in the lake, and concealed with branches. My brother used to work as a boatman for hunters.[22]

Similar narratives concern fishing, one of the most profitable activities in the Marshes and in particular in the coastal lakes (Gruppuso 2016). In 1926, just before the start of the *Bonifica Integrale*, the Italian writer Guelfo Civinini described the profitability of fishing particularly in the Fogliano lake:

> Christmas is the great fishing season: for a couple of months, between forty and fifty quintals[23] of fish are fished daily in the Fogliano lake. The traditional Roman *cottio*[24], on the day before Christmas, is mostly supported by the Fogliano's fish (Civinini 1926: 32).[25]

Also fishing was continued in the coastal lakes well beyond the *Bonifica Integrale*, which indeed implemented this activity through the construction of channels and sluice gates aimed at managing the exchange between sea water and fresh water. My informants have vivid memories concerning this aspect as well:

> Ezio: There were bass, bream, eels, sole, flathead mullet, […] they fed all Naples and Rome. […]. How did they do it? They constructed sluice gates in the channels which connect the lake to the sea. During the high tide they closed the sluice gates so that the fish couldn't escape to the sea. With the low tide, instead, they opened the sluice gates so that the fish went from the sea to the lake.[…] This had happened until the National Park acquired the area, then the story ended.[26]

> Guglielmo: Fishing was a very important activity. […] I remember in particular that my father, as a warden, had to run during the nightly storms to guard the lake. Because during the storm, fishing is particularly good, because fish move a lot, and there were many poachers. In particular during Christmas time the fishermen used to keep the eels in *Brocchielle* (fake boats) close to the lakeshore, and so during the night my father had to guard them… For Christmas, Fogliano had an impressive turnover of fish […].[27]

The Fogliano area still conserves material traces of these activities which mark that particular landscape, making it different from the rest of the region. Apart from the old buildings constructed by the Caetani family and from the general appearance of the area, redesigned during the *Bonifica Integrale*, there are other traces which are more difficult to recognise. These traces reveal a 'hidden landscape' in which memory and past intermingle with the present, questioning the future of the area. This 'hidden landscape' emerges in the daily life of the farmers who recognise the traces of these activities, particularly hunting and fishing, in spite of the fact that a long time has passed since they have been forbidden by the National Park.

Fishing and Hunting

Once, I was walking with Guglielmo, one of my main informant farmers, on the banks of the Fogliano Lake. On that occasion he showed me a black spot on the ground that was evidently caused by an intense and repeated burning. I knew that fire is forbidden in that area as throughout the National Park, and when I asked for an explanation, Guglielmo told me:

> Here fishermen used to put the nets inside a big cauldron in order to dye them and to make them more resistant. Imagine… this activity has not been carried out for so many years, nevertheless the mark has lasted so strongly in nature that it has not disappeared yet; mother nature cannot repossess this piece of land… and maybe that is good because this is history as well.[28]

There is an interesting aspect worth highlighting: Guglielmo seems to make a contrast between nature and history, between nature and human activities, thus retracing the dualistic perspective on Agro Pontino's history. Nevertheless, the 'mother nature' Guglielmo is speaking about is a particular kind of nature: an idealised nature, outside of history and separated from human activities, that is far from the nature with which he engages in his daily life, represented by the black spot on the ground. In my understanding, Guglielmo is not making a contrast between nature and history, but between two different kinds of nature. The former is the nature that conservationists are trying to restore in the National Park, which is purified by any human intervention**.** The latter is a hybrid kind of nature that resembles the idea of landscape as land shaped by the history of human engagement within a particular environment (Olwig 1993, 2008; Ingold 2012).

At another time, I was in the wet pastures surrounding the Fogliano Lake, where Ezio, another informant of mine, farms buffalo. That particular landscape is dotted with small ponds created by buffalo treading, which are often full of rainwater during winter and spring. Buffalo immerge themselves into these ponds, which are also used by migratory birds. That day we saw some mallard chicks swimming in the shallow water of a pond, and pleasantly surprised I asked, "Where is their mother?"; "Here she is", Ezio replied, pointing out an old decoy abandoned on the ground. Almost naively, I asked why the decoy was there, and he told me: "This is a fake bird that hunters used when the hunting was allowed. They put them in the water to attract other birds."[29]

These ethnographic anecdotes are interesting because they highlight the historical, cultural, and economic continuity between the Marshes and the fascist reclamation in the Fogliano area. In this particular place, the break with local history did not occur with the *Bonifica Integrale*, but with the inclusion of the area within the National Park's boundaries, and eventually with the designation of the lake as a 'wetland of international importance'. The traditional economy of the Fogliano area resisted the *Bonifica Integrale*, but it was crushed by conservation policy. The pristine and timeless nature that the National Park seems to be interested in restoring is overwhelming the agricultural and productive legacy of this area with heavy implications for its future. This aspect is particularly evident in the attitude of the National Park towards animal husbandry, particularly buffalo farming.

BUFFALO FARMING

Buffalo are traditionally farmed in the Fogliano area since before the *Bonifica Integrale* (see Gruppuso 2016). Buffaloes fascinated many of the travellers who visited the region, like the British painter A.J. Strutt who, in his diary, described a scene in exotic tones: "Herds of black buffaloes wade about in the mud, looking like hippopotamuses. They are sometimes very fierce; we saw many, however, reduced to obedience, being trained to the draught, and urged forward with long goads" (Strutt 1842: 8). A similar scene is described by another

traveller, who visiting the Fogliano area at the beginning of the last century, wrote: "Besides the wild-fowl, there are deer, boars, and other animals frequenting the vast tracts of *macchia*[30]; while the herds of buffalo and horses give an altogether un-European aspect to the scene (Bagot 1911: 218). Another traveller describes the buffalo in the Pontine Marshes as "a survivor of the Great Flood, relic of a remote creation […], a living fossil" (About 1861: 207).

These excerpts testify to the massive presence of buffalo in the area as well as to the particular imaginary that associates these animals with 'mud', wild 'un-European' landscapes, and primordial environments. It is arguable that the particular ecology of buffalo, which needs wet landscapes, and the imaginary associated with it, led the fascist regime to decrease buffalo farming after the *Bonifica Integrale* in favour of agricultural activities more in line with the new reclaimed landscape and with the idea of productivity expressed by the regime. The father of one of my main informants, Ezio, reintroduced buffalo farming in the 1950s, and his son now is still continuing this activity, 'illegally', in the highly contested wetlands of the National Park. These contestations are certainly due to a number of different factors; the most important is that the number of heads has increased in recent years, causing problems in some areas mostly related with overgrazing and animal waste management. For this reason, conservationists aim for a substantial reduction in buffalo numbers, if not the complete banning of husbandry, from the coastal wetlands. On the other hand, farmers defend their right to work in these areas, complaining about the fact that the National Park's institutional bodies do not allow the construction of structures for waste management, or stables for keeping animals inside.

Even if this conflict concerns pragmatic, material, and current ecological and political problems, I argue that it is based on more subtle reasons deeply rooted in the problematic imaginary of Agro Pontino's history. The following statement, taken from a longer conversation I had with one of the leading conservationists of the Circeo National Park, clarifies this aspect:

> We say that in those areas, which are wetlands, buffalo are important, because they maintain the lacustrine ecosystem, they keep vegetation under control and this fosters the presence of waterfowl. For all these reasons buffalo must be there, they are the managing element of that landscape, like the elephants manage the savannah in Africa. Hence buffalo and farmers are the managing element of the landscape, understood in this case as a passive element.[31]

Even if the conservationist recognises the ecological role of buffalo farming in the management of the wetlands, this role is in his words 'passive', 'like the elephants in the African savannah'. This approach reveals a particular understanding of landscape and buffalo farming that is worth exploring. It seems to me that when the institutions in charge of the National Park speak about buffalo they refer to the imaginary of these animals understood as wild and primordial like the environment they live in: buffalo are associated with the idealised pristine and timeless nature of the Pontine Marshes, imagined as a wild and almost uninhabited environment. This view denies the important, structural, role that buffalo have played in the past and present economy of the area, and it reveals a particular ethic and aesthetic of landscape.

In this landscape, agriculture is not a traditional productive activity to be managed and supported according to economic and environmental sustainability; it rather looks like part of a painting designed to satisfy an aesthetic of landscape tailor-made for the enjoyment of particular kinds of tourists in search of wild and pristine nature. The implications of this approach for nature conservation are dramatic. On the one hand buffalo farmers, especially the new generation, are abandoning the traditional activities with the resulting loss of an important historical, cultural, and gastronomic heritage, which also results in the loss of specificity of the local wetlands. On the other hand, the few farmers who still work in the area, like my informant, are producing high quality milk that is then sold to cheesemakers in southern Italy,[32] who make *mozzarella di bufala* that is then bought by big foreign retail companies, with the result of fostering an irrational and absolutely unsustainable food system.

CONCLUSION: FOR A FUTURE-ORIENTED 'ANTHROPOCENE CONSERVATION'

The genealogy of an Edenic imaginary of wetlands in Agro Pontino is deeply rooted in a linear conception of time and in the current understanding of marshlands as primordial 'disappearing Eden'. Within this view, the *Bonifica Integrale* is understood on the one hand as a technological process that destroyed the 'Eden'; on the other hand as a punctuated event that put order in a chaotic context, bringing life to an inhabitable malarial wasteland. In both cases, the reclamation results as an 'agricultural myth', and agriculture appears to be a threshold process that takes "humans out of nature and into culture" (Saltzman et al. 2011: 56). From this perspective the Pontine Marshes emerge as a 'natural' and untouched environment. These ideas about Agro Pontino's history shape a particular understanding of the present wetlands, seen as the remnants of a pristine and almost uninhabited landscape, which affects the way in which the National Park manages these areas, and environmental protection takes place.

As emerged throughout the article, in particular places of Agro Pontino, such as Fogliano, the break with the local history and economy did not occur with the *Bonifica Integrale*, but with the designation of these areas as wetlands of international importance. Imagining the Agro Pontino before the reclamation, conservationists established an imaginary baseline for conservation that corresponds with the idealised pristine nature of the Marshes and that does not consider agriculture as a part of that nature. This is more than just rhetoric or a view, it is a claim advanced in the name of nature (Ingold 2005: 502) "that would see the landscape revert to some image of what it was before humans arrived on the

scene" (Ingold 2005). As Ingold argues, these kind of claims are 'retrospective', they seem "more concerned to establish a universal point of origin than a final destination" (Ingold 2005), a baseline for conservation rather than a sustainable future. Indeed, the retrospective approach used by conservationists in Agro Pontino is detrimental to any logic of sustainability because it seems to position agriculture and nature in opposition, considering the former as a threat to the latter.

I argue that what is needed nowadays is a different approach to conservation that, starting from a reassessment of Agro Pontino's history, would look ahead to the future sustainability of environmental relations, rather than trying to restore a past imaginary baseline (Brightman and Lewis 2017). Taking heed of the past, such a future-oriented approach would acknowledge the intricate and long lasting intimacy of human and non-human beings, and would take on board the awareness that human inhabitants are part and parcel of an environment that needs care more than protection or conservation. This point was highly emphasised by the farmers with whom I worked during fieldwork, who stress the necessity of taking care of an environment that they perceive as neglected by conservation bodies. The following excerpt from an interview I had with my informant Guglielmo clarifies this aspect. We were walking along a path within the Fogliano area, when he started telling me:

> Now people talk about the Circeo National Park or any other Park, as it should be a memorable place, a beautiful and important place, but what I see is total neglect, and if they tell me that to run a National Park is just neglecting everything, then I do not agree, I don't like it. I don't like it because they think they are doing good to nature, but nature, you know.... think of a plant:it is just like a human person, it needs to be washed, to be dressed and so on… And here you can see these trees how are suffering with all these dead and messy branches. I don't understand what these National Parks are supposed to represent, what they mean.[33]

My informant Guglielmo, like all my informant farmers, reclaims the role of human beings in taking care of nature. These words certainly reveal a particular aesthetic of nature (Gruppuso 2016), but they also exemplify the need of "a new ethics of care" (Palsson et al. 2013: 11). The concept of Anthropocene can help to gain this 'new ethics of care' because it challenges "the rhetorical portrait of a wild and pristine nature, threatened and destroyed by human activities" (Gruppuso 2017: 76), to be protected or restored within the boundaries of a National Park. Deprived of its implicit and problematic anthropocentrism (Haraway et al. 2016: 539; Crist 2013), the idea of the Anthropocene can be particularly useful in conservation as it "highlights the interconnectedness of the human and non-human components of the environment" (Gruppuso 2017: 69). This aspect is even more important if we think that the Anthropocene has finally declared "the public death of the modern understanding of Nature removed from society" (Lorimer 2012: 593).

Indeed, one of the main criticisms of this concept, namely the reference to a generic *Anthropos* as driving force of environmental change (Moore 2017; Malm and Hornborg 2014), is in my understanding also its main strength. The idea of the Anthropocene is potentially interesting precisely because it pushes us to rethink the *Anthropos*, humanity as a whole, and its relations with the non-human world; it pushes us to rethink the boundary between social and natural allowing a genuine relational way of understanding, and managing environmental relations. Pálsson and Swanson argue that the Anthropocene "is a mode of scholarship" (2016: 167), likewise I suggest that this concept can also inform a "mode of conservation": an "Anthropocene conservation". Far from being a ready-made and formulaic solution to environmental contestations "Anthropocene conservation" is an orientation, a leaning, that embraces all the complexities and ambiguities of the Anthropocene (Whitehouse 2015) starting from the ontological repositioning of the *Anthropos* understood not as in relation with non-human entities (Kohn 2007), or with the environment, but as constituting one indivisible totality with them (Ingold 2000; Descola and Pálsson 1996:14).

Unlike a "Conservation in the Anthropocene" (Caro et al. 2011), the 'Anthropocene conservation' should begin from the premise that any landscape, any environment, is an Anthropocene landscape, and should acknowledge that we live in a multivocal, hybrid, and post-natural world (Lorimer 2015), thus embracing different kind of temporalities. In Agro Pontino, such an approach would dismantle the 'modernist' temporal orientation of conservation that positions Marshes and Reclamation, nature and agriculture, in a linear trajectory of environmental degradation. This approach would finally get rid of the fascist mythology about the *Bonifica Integrale* and would place the anthropogenic landscape created by the fascist regime within a longer non-linear history of environmental variation, thence making possible a sustainable and future-oriented conservation.

NOTES

1 The relation between land reclamation and modernity in the Italian context has been widely discussed by Cavallo (2011).

2 Established respectively in 1932, 1934 and 1935.

3 Fieldwork was conducted in Agro Pontino between spring 2011 and Autumn 2012, with many subsequent visits to the field. The material discussed in the article was part of a larger ethnographic study of conflicts between farming and conservation in two protected wetlands of Agro Pontino, Italy (see Gruppuso 2016). The author is native of Agro Pontino, and his family lives in the city of Latina, nearby the Circeo National Park.

4 Translation by the author.

5 The names of all the informants quoted in the article have been anonymised.

6 August 8, 2011.All the interviews are translated from the Italian by the author.

Original transcription:

Archimede: Quando me ne sono andato, il lago era naturale

Ezio: Era ancora Palude.

Archimede: Non c'erano gli argini ancora…dove l'acqua indondava la terra c'era fango e lezzo… poi quando hanno fatto i laghi, s'è ascugato tutto.

Ezio:I laghi non erano come oggi, c'erano pozze, pozzanghere. Poi i laghi furono fatti da una ditta; si chiamava Impresa Cetonia. C'avevano una draga che entrava dentro i laghi, e hanno fatto il lago di Fogliano e il lago di Monaci. Hanno fatto due laghi. C'erano due pozze, grandi pozze, poi con la draga questa compagnia ha fatto i laghi, ha tirato fuori i laghi.

7 Translation by the author.

8 Translation by the author.

9 April 10, 2011. Original transcription:

Questo è l'ultimo esempio di una palude, intesa come palude di foresta, dove l'acqua ristagnava. Oggi siamo abituati a pulire il terreno, a togliere i tronchi che cadono o le foglie… ma prima che l'uomo le utilizzasse, così dovevano essere le paludi, cioè gli alberi che cadevano, rimanevano sul terreno non li levava nessuno… […] Noi confondiamola materia organica, come i tronchi o le foglie, e li chiamiamo rifiuti […] pensiamo anche che sporcano, ma invece è materia organica […].

10 August 7, 2012. Original transcription:

Un parco nazionale mira a ricostituire ecosistemi naturali che hanno una loro dinamica; nel nostro caso una dinamica di ripresa dopo un periodo di coltivazione anche relativamente breve, perché poi queste aree non erano un granchècoltivate …erano zone che erano occupate un mese, due l'anno, perché c'era la malaria […]erano selve impenetrabili.

11 September 6, 2013. Original transcription:

Quella dei Gricilli è un'area che non è assolutamente ideonea all'agricoltura, […] nel passato poteva avere un senso coltivare anche là, forse… Sicuro! Nelle dinamiche di possibilità di quell'epoca… perché poi c'era la… la palude… quindi quel pezzetto di terra gli sembrava asciutta rispetto a… c'era la foresta…

12 Translation by the author.

13 This aspect emerges in the moral values conveyed by the Italian verb *Bonificare* (to reclaim), coming from the Latin *BonumFacere* (see Cavallo 2011:16) and literally meaning "turning into good" (see Frascaroli 2009:65).

14 This poem is part of a wider collection of works conceived by children of a local primary school during the period 1988 to 1989.These materials came out as a result of a project related to local history and memory, called *Voci e immagini di un tempo passato* (Voices and images of a past time), concerning the Pontine Marshes and the fascist reclamation.

15 People who took care of animals.

16 Caprolace is one of the coastal wetlands in the Circeo National Park. It is conceived by local inhabitants as part of the Fogliano area, but is officially designated as an indepent wetland by the Ramsar Convention (Site reference number: 7IT013).

17 Translation by the author. Original:

È una palude popolata da pastori, guitti, carbonai, cavallari. Un paesaggio desolante, aggrovigliato, inaccessibile: una società immobile, disumana e violenta che si confonde con la società animale delle bufale, dei cavalli e delle folaghe a Caprolace…

18 The coat of arms is visible here: http://www.comune.latina.it/lo-stemma/ (Last accessed 30/08/2017)

19 http://www.comune.latina.it/c-62/lo-stemma - (Last accessed 30/08/2017).Italics in the original. Translated by the author.

20 See the *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands* for each lake. https://rsis.ramsar.org/ (last accessed January 2016).

21 March 28, 2011. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

Le botti sono state dentro al lago fino a quando il Parco non ha fatto l'esproprio. Erano proprio quelle del vino tagliate e messe nel lago. Poi mettevano uccelli finti, come l'anatra, l'alzavola, il morettone, e alcunianimali veri da richiamo. E i cacciatori andavano dentro le botti […]. Il fratello di mio cognato lavorava durante la stagione di caccia; stava appresso ai cacciatori; li accompagnava alle botti.

22 March 23, 2011. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

Queste botti erano messe nel lago, ancorate nel lago e camuffate con ramoscelli. Mio fratello lavorava come barcarolo per i cacciatori.

23 1 quintal corresponds to 100 kilograms.

24 Traditional fish auction that took place in Rome the day before Christmas.

25 Translation by the author.

26 March 28, 2011. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

C'erano spigole, orate, sogliole, cefali, anguille […] sfamavano tutta Napoli e Roma […]. Come facevano? Avevano costruito delle paratoie sulle foci al mare. Durante l'alta marea chiudevano le paratoie, così che il pesce non poteva scappare a mare. Con la bassa marea, invece, aprivano le paratoie così il pesce entrava dal mare nel lago. […]. Questo sistema ha funzionato fino a quando il Parco non ha espropriato l'area, poi la storia è finita.

27 April 13, 2011. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

La pesca era un'attività importantissima. Mi ricordo in particolare mio padre che, come guardiano, doveva correre a sorvegliare il lago durante i temporali di notte. Perché coi temporali, la pesca è particolarmente buona perché il pesce si muove tanto, e c'erano tanti bracconieri. In particolare a Natale i pescatori tenevano le anguille dentro le brocchielle, vicino alle sponde, e così la notte mio padre doveva andare a sorvegliarle… Per Natale, Fogliano c'aveva una pesca impressionante […].

28 June 28, 2012. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

Qui i pescatori mettevano le reti dentro un grande calderone per tingerle e renderle più resistenti. Immagina… questa attività non si fa da così tanti anni, però il marchio è rimasto così forte nella natura che non è scomparso ancora; madre natura non si riesce a rimpossessare di questo pezzo di terra… e forse è un bene, perché anche questa è storia.

29 May 23, 2011. Translation by the author.

30 *Macchia* is the Italian generic term for wood, forest or scrub.

31 August 7, 2012. Translation by the author.

Original transcription:

Noi diciamo che in quelle aree, che sono, zone umide, i bufali sono importanti perché mantengono l'ecosistema lacustre, mantengono la vegetazione sotto controllo, e questo è importante

per la presenza dell'avifauna. Per tutte queste ragioni i bufali devono rimanere lì, sono l'elemento di gestione del paesaggio, come gli elefanti che mantengono la savana in Africa. Quindi bufali e bufalari sono l'elemento di gestione del paesaggio, visti in questo caso come elemento passivo.

32 A discussion about the gastronomic, historical and anthropological aspects of mozzarella making in Agro Pontino is beyond the scope of this article. Moreover, there is a paucity of available documents that makes this theme difficult to approach. Indeed, I am not aware of any study about it.

33 June 1, 2011.Translation by the author. Original transcription:

Ora le persone parlano del Parco Nazionale del Circeo, o di qualsiasi altro Parco, come se dovesse essere un posto memorabile, un posto magnifico e importante, ma quello che vedo è una totale incuria, e se loro mi dicono che fare un Parco Nazionale significa abbandonare tutto, be io non ci sto', non mi piace. Non mi piace perché loro pensano di fare un bene alla natura, ma la natura… pensa a una pianta: è come una persona umana, si deve lavare, acconciare e così via… e qui tu puoi vedere questi alberi come stanno soffrendo con tutti questi rami morti e disordinati. Io non capisco cosa vogliono rappresentare questi Parchi Nazionali, che vogliono dire.

REFERENCES

About, E. 1861. *Rome of today*. New York, NY: James O. Noyes.

Adams, C. 2003. Pitfalls of Synchronicity. A case study of the *Caicaras* in the Atlantic rainforest of south-eastern Brazil. In: *Ethnographies of conservation. Environmentalism and the distribution of privilege* (eds. Anderson, D.G. and E. Berglund). Pp. 19–31. New York, NY; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Adams, W.M. 2004. *Against extinction. The story of conservation*. London: Earthscan.

Anderson, D.G. and E. Berglund. 2003. Introduction. Towards an ethnography of ecological underprivilege. In: *Ethnographies of conservation. Environmentalism and the distribution of privilege* (eds. Anderson, D.G. and E. Berglund). Pp.1–15. New York, NY; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Bagot, R. 1911. *My Italian year*. New York, NY: James Pott & Co.

Bender B. 2001. Introduction. In: *Contested landscape: Movement, exile and place*. (eds. Bender, B. and M. Winer). Pp. 1–18. Oxford; New York, NY: Berg.

Blackbourn, D. 2007. *The conquest of nature. Water, landscape and the making of modern Germany*. New York, NY; London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Breda, N. 2001. *Palù. Inquieti paesaggi tra natura e cultura.* Verona: CIERRE edizioni.

Brightman, M. and J. Lewis. 2017. Introduction. In: *The anthropology of sustainability. Beyond development and progress* (eds. Brightman, M. and J. Lewis). Pp. 1-34. New York, NY: Palgrave.

Brockington, D., Duffy R. and J. Igoe. 2008. *Nature unbound. Conservation, capitalism and the future of protected areas*. London-Sterling, VA: EarthScan.

Burt, W. 2007. *Marshes*. *The disappearing Edens*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.

Busatto R. (ed.) 2005. *Villaggio Fogliano. Di storia in storia, naturalmente…* Cisterna di Latina: Associazione Villaggio Fogliano.

Campbell, B. 2005.Changing protection policies and ethnographies of environmental engagement. *Conservation & Society* 3(2): 280–322.

Caprotti, F. 2006. Malaria and technological networks: medical geography in the Pontine Marshes, Italy, in the 1930s. *The Geographical Journal* 172(2): 145–155.

Caprotti, F. 2007a. Destructive creation: fascist urban planning, architecture and new towns in the Pontine Marshes. *Journal of Historical Geography* 33(3): 651–679.

Caprotti, F. 2007b. *Mussolini's Cities. Internal colonialism in Italy, 1930-1939*. Youngstown, New York, NY: Cambria Press.

Caro, T., J. Darwin, T. Forrester, C. Ledoux-Bloom, and C. Wells. 2011. *Conservation Biology*. 26(1): 185–188.

Cavallo, F.L. 2011. *Terra, Acque, Macchine. Geografie della bonifica in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis.

Cavallo, F.L. 2016.Visions littéraires des paysages de la bonification en Italie. *LE GLOBE*. 156: 111–134.

Cecere, C. 1989. *La Villa Caetani a Fogliano. Il Luogo - L'Architettura- La Storia*. Roma: Fratelli Palombi Editori.

Civinini, G. 1926. Nel regno della febbre. In: R. Sciarretta (ed.), *Le Parole della Bonifica. Narrativa, Poesia, Teatro e Agro Pontino. 1922/1942*. Latina: Novecento. 31–33.

Coles, J.M. 1984. *The archaeology of wetlands*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Connerton, P. 1989. *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crist, E. 2013. On the poverty of our nomenclature. *Environmental Humanities* 3(1): 129–147.

Cronon, W. 1995a. Introduction: in search of nature. In: *Uncommon ground: towards reinventing nature* (ed. Cronon, W.). Pp. 23–67. New York, NY: Norton.

Cronon, W. 1995b. The trouble with wilderness; or getting back to the wrong nature. In: *Uncommon ground: towards reinventing nature* (ed. Cronon,W.). Pp. 69–90. New York, NY: Norton.

Crutzen, P.J. and E.F. Stoermer. 2000. The Anthropocene. *IGBP Newsletter* 41: 17–18.

De Mandato, M. 1933. *La primitivita' dell'abitare umano. Studi e ricerche*, Torino: Fratelli Bocca.

Descola, P. and G. Pálsson (eds.). 1996. *Nature and Society. Anthropological perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Dugan, P.J. and IUCN. 1993. *Wetlands in danger*. London: IUCN.

Dugan P. 2005. *Guide to wetlands*. New York, NY: Firefly.

Escobar, A. 1999. After nature: steps to an antiessentialist political ecology. *Current Anthropology* 1(40): 1–30.

Folchi, A. 2000. *I Contadini del Duce. Agro Pontino 1932-1941*. Roma: Pieraldo Editore.

Frascaroli, F. 2009. *Do not move Camerina. Italian wetlands from reclamation to restoration*. M.A. thesis. University of Iceland. Reykjavik. Iceland.

Fraser, L.H. and P.A. Keddy. 2005. The future of large wetlands: a global perspective. In: *The world's largest wetlands. Ecology and conservation* (eds. Fraser, L.H. and P.A. Keddy). Pp.446–468. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giblett, R. 1996. *Postmodern wetlands. Culture, history, ecology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Gruppuso, P. 2013-2014. Le Rane e le Spighe. Note sulla retorica fascista delle Paludi Pontine, della Bonifica Integrale e della Colonizzazione. *Latium*. 30/31: 225–241.

Gruppuso, P. 2014. *Nell'Africa tenebrosa alle porte di Roma. Viaggio nelle Paludi Pontine e nel loro immaginario*. Roma: Annales Edizioni.

Gruppuso, P. 2016. From Marshes to Reclamation: there and back again. Contested nature, memories and practices in two wetlands of Agro Pontino, Italy. Ph.D. thesis. University of Aberdeen. Aberdeen. Scotland, UK.

Gruppuso, P. 2017. Geologic and historical, surface and depth. Entanglement of water and temporality in a contested wetland of Agro Pontino'. *Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo* 19(2): 69–79.

Haraway, D., N. Ishikawa, F.S. Gilbert, K. Olwig, A.L. Tsing and N. Bubandt. 2016. Antropologists are talking – about the Anthropocene. *Ethnos* 81(3): 535–564.

Harris, L.E. 1957. Land Drainage and reclamation. In: *A history of technology*. (ed. Singer, J.C.). Pp. 300–323. London; New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Helmreich, S. 2009. *Alien ocean. Anthropological voayages in microbial seas*. Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press.

Howarth, W. 1999. Imagined territory: the writing of wetlands. *New Literary History* 30(3): 509–539.

Huijbens, E.H. and G. Pálsson. 2009. The Bog in our brain and bowels: social attitudes to the cartography of Icelandic wetlands. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 27(2): 296–316.

Ingold, T. 1986. *Evolution and social life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ingold, T. 2000. *The perception of the environment. Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London: Routledge.

Ingold, T. 2002. On the distinction between evolution and history. *Social Evolution & History* 1(1): 5–24.

Ingold, T. 2004. Beyond biology and culture. The meaning of evolution in a relational world. *Social Anthropology*. 12(2): 209–221.

Ingold, T. 2005. Epilogue: towards a politics of dwelling. *Conservation & Society* 3(2): 501–508.

Ingold, T. 2010b. *Bringing things back to life: creative entanglements in a world of materials*. NCRM Working Paper Realities/Morgan Centre, University of Manchester. http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/1306/ [Accessed on October 25, 2014].

Ingold, T. 2011. *Being alive. Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. London: Routledge.

Ingold, T. 2012. The shape of the land. In: *Landscape beyond land. Routes, aesthetics, narratives*. (eds. Arnason A., N. Ellison, J. Vergunst,. and A. Whitehouse). Pp. 197–208. New York, NY; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Ingold, T. 2013. *Making anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge.

Ispra (Istituto Superiore per la protezione e la ricerca ambientale). 2011. *Contributi per la biodiversità delle zone umide*. Ispra. http://www.isprambiente.gov.it/files/pubblicazioni/rapporto-ispra-153-11-new.pdf [Accessed on October 27, 2014]

Irvine, R.D.G. 2017. Anthropocene East Anglia. *The Sociological Review Monographs* 65(1): 154–170.

Istituto Pangea Onlus (ed). 2006. *Esplorare un confine. Spunti e proposte di attivita didattiche per lo studio delle zone umide e degli ambienti acquatici di transizione*, Roma: Universita degli studi di Lecce.

Kohn, E. 2007. How dogs dream: Amazonian nature and the politics of transspecies engagement. *American Ethnologist* 34(1): 3–24.

Latour, B. 1993.*We have never been modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lorimer, J. 2012. Multinatural geographies for the Anthropocene. *Progress in Human Geography* 36(5): 593–612.

Lorimer, J. 2015. *Wildlife in the Anthropocene: conservation after nature*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press.

Macnaghten, P. and J. Urry. 1998. *Contested natures*. London: Sage Publications.

Mariani, R. 1976. *Fascismo e "città nuove"*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Malm, A. and A. Hornborg. 2014. The geology of mankind? *The Anthropocene Review* 1(1): 62–69.

Masi, F. and Martinuzzi N. 2007.Constructed wetlands for the Mediterranean countries: hybrid systems for water reuse and sustainable sanitation. *Desalination* 215: 44–55.

Miliucci, F. Una geografia letteraria inedita. La bonifica delle paludi pontine. In: *Nuove (e vecchie) geografie letterarie nell'Italia del XXI secolo* (eds. Contarini S., M. Marras, and G. Pias). Pp 199–207. Firenze: Cesati.

Moore, J.W. 2017. The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis. *The Journal of Peasants Studies* 44(3): 594–630.

Nustad, K.G. 2011. Performing natures and land in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, South Africa. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 77(1): 88–108.

Ogden, L. 2011. *Swamplife. People, gators, and mangroves entangled in the Everglades*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Olwig, K. 1993. Sexual cosmology: nation and landscape at the conceptual interstices of nature and culture; or what does landscape really mean? In: *Landscape, politics and perspectives*. (ed. Bender, B.). Pp. 307–343. Providence-Oxford: Berg.

Olwig, K. 2008. Performing on the landscape versus doing landscape: perambulatory practice, sight and the senses of belonging. In: *Ways of walking: ethnography and practice on foot*. (eds. Ingold, T. and J. Lee Vergunst). Pp. 81–91. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Pálsson G. and H.A. Swanson. 2016. Down to earth. Geosocialities and geopolitics. *Environmental Humanities* 8(2): 149–171.

Pálsson, G., B. Szerszynski, S. Sörlin, J. Marks, B. Avril, C. Crumley, H. Hackmann, et al. 2013. Reconceptualizing the 'Anthropos' in the Anthropocene: integrating the social sciences and humanities in global environmental change research. *Environmental Science and Policy* 28: 3–13.

Papayannys, T. and D. Pritchard. (eds). 2011. *Culture and wetlands in the Mediterranean: an evolving story*. Athens: Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (Med-INA).

Pitkin, D. 1998. *La ruota gira. Vita a Sermoneta 1951-1952*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Purseglove, J. 1988. *Taming the flood. A history and natural history of rivers and wetlands*. Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press in association with Channel Four Television Company.

Saltzman, K., L. Head, and M. Stenseke. 2011. Do cows belong in nature? The cultural basis of agriculture in Sweden and Australia. *Journal of Rural Studies* 27: 54–62.

Slater, C. 1995. Amazonia as Edenic Narrative. In: *Uncommon ground: towards reinventing nature* (ed. Cronon, W.). Pp. 114–131. New York, NY: Norton.

Sottoriva, P.G. 1982. *Il Parco Nazionale del Circeo*. Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini.

Steffen, W., P.J. Crutzen, and J.R. McNeil. 2007. The Anthropocene: are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature? *Ambio* 36(8): 614–621.

Strutt, A.J. 1842. *A pedestrian tour in Calabria e Sicily*. T.C. Newby, 65 Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square.

Traina, G. 1988, *Paludi e Bonifiche del Mondo Antico. Saggio di archeologia geografica*, Roma: «L'Erma» di Bretschneider.

Vochting, F. 1990. [1942] *La bonifica della pianura pontina*. Roma: Edizioni Sintesi Informazione.

Whitehouse, A. 2009. 'A disgrace to a farmer': conservation and agriculture on a nature reserve in Islay, Scotland. *Conservation & Society* 7(3): 165–175.

Whitehouse, A. 2015. Listening to birds in the Anthropocene: the anxious semiotics of sound in a human-dominated world. *Environmental Humanities* 6(1): 53–71.

Received: September 2017; **Accepted**: March 2018