SACRED PLACES IN SARDINIA
CUMBESSIAS VILLAGES, SACREDNESS, AND THE DIALECTIC OF THE WORK OF ART

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Abstract

This study is an interdisciplinary investigation into the notion of place and, particularly, a sacred place. Disciplines such as Architecture, Philosophy, and Social Anthropology converge to explore the concepts of space, place, sacredness, *genius loci*, sacred architecture, and work of art, with particular reference to the *cumbessias* villages that represent important sites of popular religiosity in Sardinia (Italy). The analysis, which focuses on six of these villages mainly distributed in the central inland territory, has started from the premise that a sacred place, hence a *cumbessias* village, should be intended as a *work of art*. In this regard, we have welcomed and adopted the Heideggerian elaboration of the concept of 'place' together with that of 'work of art'. Places and works of art are both the outcome of a hermeneutical engagement, they are the result of a creative process. Yet, they are not inanimate objects but rather disclose a world of their own. The encounter between these worlds and the human creative agency disclose every time a new horizon of meaning nurturing both subjects of this relationship. We have been asking what kind of experience is lived by the people, the devotees, within these sacred places (i.e., *cumbessias* villages). Through what kind of process is this experience lived? And, eventually, what is the effect it produces on both the interlocutors, people and sacred places? Through the adoption of the Gadamerian metaphor of 'play' we have argued how the recurrent encounter between devotees and their sacred places (works of art) during the religious occasion of a novena is mutually constitutive on an existential level. It is precisely through devotees' complete participation in the alterity/otherness of the work of art or *cumbessias* village's own world that a so called 'enlargement of consciousness' and an increase of being/transformation can be achieved.
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321. 322. 323. Rimedio. The village as a church.
324. 324a. Rimedio. Attending the mass outside.
325. Annunziata. The altar with the archangel positioned in one of the nodal points of the village.
325a. Annunziata. Celebrating the mass at the altar.
326. 327. Annunziata. Attending the mass at the outside altar.
328. Annunziata. Attending the mass at the external altar.
329. Annunziata. The white angel positioned at the entrance of the village.
332. Gonare. Men generally sit quite distant from the main area of the mass which is almost exclusively reserved to women.
333. Gonare. Attending the mass from under the porches.
334. Miracolo. Sign indicating the shop where sacred objects are sold.
335. Rimedio. The children of priorato selling sacred objects.
336. Rimedio. Entrance to the souvenirs shop.
338. Rimedio. A wax hand as an ex voto given by a devotee to honour the Virgin for the granting of a favour.
342. Annunziata. The statue of the angel at the entrance of the village.
343. Annunziata. The procession of the daily Via Crucis.
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346. 347. Annunziata. Men usually stand aloof from the body of women who represent the head of the group.
348. Annunziata. The procession early in the morning along the village’s paths.
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363. *Gonare*. Cave-like shrines.
365. *Gonare*. Carved rocks along the ascending path with the initials of devotees.
367. *Gonare*. A woman indicating the points where the Virgin stopped while ascending the path to the top of the mountain.
370. *Gonare*. *Su imbaradorju* (the resting place) where the Virgin has stopped and propped herself on the rocks. Nowadays devotees ascending to the church still lean against the same rocks to obtain relief from physical pain.
373. *Gonare*. The point of the rock where the Virgin put her hand has been literally scratched to obtain a powder with which devotees sign themselves.
375. *Annunziata*. ‘This garden has been cleared for those who in this holy place look for solace’. An expression of care.
Introduction

In this thesis I intend to explore six historical sacred places of inland Sardinia, an Italian island situated at the centre of the Mediterranean basin. In particular, I shall be focusing on their anthropological, religious and architectural aspects. Throughout the work, I refer to these locations as ‘cumbessias villages’, which are sanctuaries dedicated to the Virgin and must be viewed within the context of the deeply religious catholic traditions that permeate the whole Sardinian culture.

*Cumbessias* villages are important sites of a popular religiosity, which is particularly evident during the months of May and of September. Once a year, more than eighty devotees and their families move to a *cumbessias* village in time for the beginning of the religious celebration or *novena*: nine days of public devotion (Hilgers 1999). Each ‘novena’ attracts numerous pilgrims to these centres. The pilgrims and their families reside in the *cumbessias*, which are small, single-room edifices specifically built for this purpose during these religious occasions. Devotees bring food and all conveniences necessary for their long stay. After the nine days, they leave the sacred place and return home with all that they had brought with them for the length of the visit.

*Cumbessias* villages are unusual in that they are small religious hamlets characterised by their isolation from other urban centres. Their natural surroundings and unusual structures characterise these places as sites for the religious experiences to be lived. It is precisely through these experiences/relationships that these natural *locales* attain their intrinsic quality of sacred *places*. Devotees act as fundamental mediator
agents in this relationship. It is, in fact, this relational dimension of existence from which these sacred places are created that has constituted the point of departure of my analysis.

At the end of the 1960s the Italian anthropologist Clara Gallini first attempted to explore the logic underlying this kind of religious experience. In her *Il Consumo del Sacro* (1971), whilst recognising the specificity of this type of experience she emphasises the underlying changing social and cultural tangential points, derived from an external cultural hegemony, strained through the close circle of Sardinian society. Her interpretative stance, however, departed from a consideration of this religious experience in close relation to the sacred places in their environmental and architectural connotations. In this experience, place has not been judged meaningful. Her ethnographical account provides a variety of detailed social, economical, and demographical data elaborated in the attempt to display the working of the novena in light of the changing social conditions in Sardinia. Apart from the research conducted by Gallini, more than 30 years ago, mine is the only further attempt to conduct a systematic exploration of this topic. The viewpoint I adopted in this exploration is, however, rather different from that proposed by Gallini. I have instead chosen to focus my enquiry on the basic relationship between people and places. The fundamental questions that underpinned the whole work have been: what kind of places are the cumbessias villages? What kind of experience is lived by the devotees in these sacred places? Can this experience be lived or conceived apart from the devotees' deep involvement not just in the religious rituals but also in the very placial meaningfulness of these places? Are architectural and environmental features affecting, and indeed are they themselves affected, by this experience?

The new perspective advanced in this thesis, is that cumbessias villages, as sacred places, should be intended as works of art. Art, being symbolic, is an
inexhaustible source of ontological possibilities. Art allows an *increase* of being. I have considered the relationship between devotees and *cumbessias* villages as an artistic experience and, as such, as a hermeneutical engagement between the work of art and the beholders. I have started from the theoretical premise that there exists an existential proximity between these places and the people who live them, a proximity expressed in the Heideggerian formulation of *Dasein*. Our existence as Beings-in[/with]-the-world is already a hermeneutical engagement/dialogue itself, that is constantly producing new meanings. This Heideggerian concern is better clarified when conveyed in the subsequent philosopher’s formulation depicting human beings as inherently dwellers: the verb *to be* is etymologically linked to the old German *bauen* (to build) and *buan* (to dwell). We are, in that we build and dwell: it is through our bodily dwelling and our nature of dwellers that we can hermeneutically relate to an environmental given and enable a certain meaningful place to come to light. Our relationship with places is a hermeneutical engagement, an interpretative act, and hence a creative/artistic process. *Cumbessias* villages as works of art are the symbolic outcomes of this hermeneutical dialogue and, being symbolic in nature, are sources of other and future meaningful responses enhanced by the devotees during the novenas.

I have considered a phenomenological approach as the more suitable one to guide the evolution of this study. As stated previously, the specific dimensions that have absorbed my attention have been: the human experience of natural environment, the human experience of sacred architecture, the ritual practices, and different uses of sacred places. It is the phenomenological approach, intended as a theoretical support and concrete method to arrive at an understanding of those dimensions in concrete and existential terms, that has provided me with the mental ‘freedom’ needed to deal and engage with these complex and different, although closely related, phenomena or fields of experience. My reference to an understanding of the aforementioned experiences in
existential terms should be read in terms of an ‘ontological inquiry’ which goes directly to the ‘existential modalities of beings’ and the way in which these beings clarify, give themselves to and through ourselves (Zene 2001: 2).

Throughout the anthropological enquiry mainly conducted through fieldwork, I purposely tried to eschew a ‘prejudiceless understanding of the world’ or of some of its parts and regard them as objects waiting there to be revealed in their univocal significance (Jones 2000: 8). The important shift registered with the Heideggerian philosophy, in fact, signalled the end of the distance of the self-reflective and alienated human subject from a world conceived or ‘reduced’ to ‘objects of experience and reflection’. Rather, in the process of understanding, as intended by Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (1927), the interpreter is always directly involved with the phenomenon he is experiencing, or interpreting. His position is not ‘above’ but rather ‘among’ other beings: ‘For Heidegger, hermeneutics is not a strictly academic method, but rather a social and practical activity, a mode of being in the world’ (Jones 2000: 8).

By taking a phenomenological approach as concerns the sacred places and built environment (in this case *cumbessias villages*), I have been able to avoid reducing the concrete buildings or natural environment to a mere sum of their material components, instead considering them in their essential character, in seeing their ‘how’. The character unveils the true ways in which a thing is done: ‘We intend a whole, made of concrete things and their material substance, form, texture, and colour. All of these things taken together, define an ‘environmental character’, which is the essence of a place. . . a place is defined by its character or ‘atmosphere’ ’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 6). Borrowing from Norberg-Schulz’s explanation, ‘character’ may indicate either a comprehensive atmosphere, or the concrete shape (formal) and substance (material) of the elements that define a natural and an ‘artificial’ place (or building). ‘Every real
presence is intimately connected to a character’ (1979: 13). The character is dependent on the ‘how’, that is to say, the way in which things are naturally given (in the case of a landscape) or realised (in case of a building). So we should ask ‘how is the ground on which I am walking?’, ‘how are the boundaries of this place?’ ‘how does this building rest on the ground, how does it rise up?’. ‘The kind of delimitation (we find in nature and in built environment, that the ‘how’ helps us to see) depends on its formal articulation, which is itself linked to the modalities of the building process [in case of edifices]’ (1979: 14).

This phenomenological approach is again one, which, in the instance of human beings, has allowed places and beholders, including myself, to be dynamic partners engaged in a dialogue: this mutual exchange first happened because of our, to borrow Merleau-Ponty’s expression, ‘permanent rootedness’ in the world, and then continued in and by means of the creative symbolisation and concretisation through, quoting Norberg-Schulz, the ‘art of place’ (i.e., architecture), flowing endlessly in the continual use of these places. Yet, this dialogue cannot begin if we do not recognise our interlocutor’s own ‘voice’: ‘...affording religious buildings personalities [character], lives, and voices of their own is actually essential if we are to deliver rigorously, empirically accurate interpretations of the use and apprehension of specific sacred architectures’ (Jones 2000: 46).

So far, we should have acknowledged the unusual cross-disciplinary nature of this study. The methodology and contents of the research have necessarily been informed by the inevitable interplay of disciplines such as architecture, anthropology, and religion. Moreover, as outlined previously, phenomenology represents a valid

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, the translations from Italian into English are my own.
2 Zene has rightly reminded us that Religion should not be considered a proper discipline, but rather a ‘field of study’ because it relies on other disciplines and methodologies (e.g. philosophy, linguistics, philology, history, etc.). We shall continue, however, to use the term Religion throughout the proposal for the sake of clarity (Zene, personal communication).
methodological (and theoretical) instrument that easily cuts across these disciplines. I have, until now, been talking about ‘dynamic partners engaged in conversation’: I should, then, ask how can these disciplines engage in conversation? Do they share the same language or do they need a ‘translator’ or ‘mediator’?

Architecture, considered as ‘the art of place’ is ‘a peculiar sort of cultural production’ (Jones 2000: xxv). So it is place. Place (as well as sacred place) is the meaningful outcome of a process of interpretation which brought ‘into being something that previously had not been’ [transformed a given locale into place] (Jones 2000: 110). In this process of understanding, which is at the same time an interpretative act, who plays the role of ‘translator’? The ‘connection’ is operated by ourselves through the agency of our bodily existence and our corporal modalities of interaction with the natural datum: ... ‘there can be no disembodied experience of landscape...’ (Casey 1993: 31).

In the same moment in which we are engaged in a relationship of apprehension of a certain natural locale, it is through being imbued with ‘cultural determinants’ that we discover a certain significance and translate it into a culturally significant place. A given natural landscape then becomes a ‘cultural screen’ every time we use it, experience it, engage concretely with it through our bodies. ‘Places, like bodies and landscapes, are something we experience—where experience stays true to its etymological origin of “trying out”, “making a trial out of” ’ (Casey 1993: 30).

The cultural dimension of place (and sacred place) is intrinsically bound by history and circumscribed within a certain social and historical changing context. The same ‘interpretative play’ is inserted and itself constitutes a historical moment. Acknowledging that a certain ‘meaning is the result of an interaction of convergence between text and reader’ and if sacred places alike, are themselves meanings resulting from the convergence (or interaction, experience, apprehension) of beholders and a
natural given, we cannot reject the multiplicity of experiences of reception throughout time. A place is re-apprehended from the very moment of its coming into being, in every subsequent experience of it ‘through one’s bodily agency’ (Casey 1993: 33).

...The history of a work of art ought to be the history of its reception(s) – that is, an accounting of the concatenation of “literary [or architectural] events” in which the work participates....a description of the successive unfolding of the potential for meaning that is embedded in a work and actualised in the stages of its reception’ (Jauss, H.R. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1982: 30. Quoted by Jones 2000: 190).

In my research I will therefore engage in a comparative “diachronic charting of transformations and continuities in the ritual usage” of the sacred places in which I am interested (Jones 2000: 186). It is, therefore, the human experience of place that is the underlying framework for the union of the three interrelated perspectives (architectural, anthropological, and religious) presented in this work.

It is true that when talking about sacred places and architecture I should start the analysis by considering the relationship between the beholder and the sacred place. It is, in fact, in their mutual interaction, generally through daily and special religious rituals, that people, once attracted by a process of ‘allurement and coercion’ engage productively with the place. Moreover, if we assume that, due to his engagement in a hermeneutical play, the player is himself played, I should then ask: how are the beholders changed by their interaction with a sacred place? How does the built

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3 Allurement, as Jones defines it, is the ‘magnetism’ or ‘invitation’ that a work of art and architecture exercises upon viewers (2000: 79). For a hermeneutical conversation (in this case between people and sacred places) to begin, the sacred place should first attract people, ‘elicit the admiration of the viewers’ by the very fact that it is familiar, it reaffirms their tastes. But for this conversation to continue, there should be a ‘component of variation, originality or novelty that forces those viewers to adjust their tastes’. Once wholly engaged with the ‘familiar’ work of sacred architecture, the devotee is in a sense without any protection and his ‘being is transformed’: now he/she experiences strange, unfamiliar aspects that have been previously concealed or taken for granted. This forces a sort of creative enlargement of the self of a person (Jones 2000: 63, 65). This twofold process of ‘reassurance and disruption’ of sacred architecture and the inherent transformative process are close to what Gadamer called “self-forgetfulness” and “reconciliation with self”: ‘Precisely that in which he loses himself as a spectator requires continuity. It is the truth of his own world ... in which he lives, which presents itself to him and in which he recognises himself...[S]o the absolute moment in which a spectator stands is at once self-forgetfulness and reconciliation with self” (Gadamer, H.G., *Truth and Method*, New York, Crossroad, 1975: 113. Quoted by Jones 2000: 76). The above mentioned transformative effect or “double mediation” of a work of art or architecture is a notion borrowed from Gadamer. It is derived from what he calls the nature of “decoration” in architecture. With this concept he refers to ‘the architectural
environment (itself a product of beholder’s interaction with the natural datum) modify, produce, and influence the community (the player that becomes played)?: ‘The human function of symbols ... is to confer meaning to the same subject who is living them as the existential ground of his own being as such’ (Tullio-Altan, *Soggetto, simbolo e valore*, Per un’ermeneutica antropologica, Milano, 1992: 43-44. Quoted by Massenzio 1997: 183).

If it is true that human beings represent the point of departure and subsequent convergence of the cross-disciplinary dimension of this study, it is also true that the specific disciplines should, at least for the extent of the ‘specificity’ of their own methods of inquiry, be separated. For this reason I have structured the analysis in different directions. As concerns architecture, the notions of space, place, building, and dwelling are explored. The analysis has been articulated towards two main directions: *formal structure* and *moments of use*. In order to present the ‘formal structure’, I conducted a survey of cumbessias villages as built places and their surrounding natural contexts.

Having acknowledged the validity ofNorberg-Schulz’s concept of ‘character of place’, I then analysed the constitutive elements that created that totality, that character. Of the above-mentioned sacred places I have investigated the visual properties of the form (built form) analysed through:

-configuration, orientation, visual inertia\(^4\), texture, colour, light;

-the organisation of internal spatial articulation of place intended in terms of the different elements that delimit, form, define the place;

-the organisation of the paths (internal/external paths), paths-space relationship.

\(^4\) Ching defines visual inertia as ‘The degree of concentration and stability of a form. The visual inertia of a form depends on its geometry as well as its orientation relative to the ground, the pull of gravity and our line of sight’ (Ching 1996: 35).
I have created six ‘forms’ (one for each cumbessias village) in order to provide a meaningful order to the information gathered for each of the sacred places visited during fieldwork.

The analysis of formal data has been completed by the study of the ‘moments’ of use. In particular, I have analysed the ‘link between life and place’ or, in other words, ‘how’ the place is used by people. My direct interaction with local residents has been extremely useful in understanding how they related (in use) and what their personal understanding of the sacred places was.

The study of the use and formal structure of these places represented an important methodological tool to reach a comprehensive understanding of how they worked and how people actually engaged with them. The interaction between openings and enclosures, that could be seen through the formal articulation of windows, doors, boundaries, walls, etc., revealed, on the one hand, how and what people have learnt and visualised (of) the qualities of the landscapes, where the artificial structures (or built places) are the concrete expressions of these processes. On the other hand, and on a more practical level, the articulation of openings and enclosures together with the interplay between concealment and revelation, showed us how people perceived the public and private spheres of their own lives.

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5 (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 34). ‘[T]he journey’, ‘the arrival’, ‘the meeting’, ‘the sojourn’, ‘the gathering’, ‘the institution’, ‘the retirement’, and the moment of ‘isolation’: The author employs these ‘moments of use’ in order to explain the profound and close bond existing between men and places; for the very fact that to live means essentially ‘to take place’ our identity as human beings takes place in a determinate place with which it identifies itself: ‘...we can understand how our identity finds itself in the taking place of life ... To be Viennese, means either to be a person or to come from (to be) from Vienna....We will have to analyse which is the hidden structural characteristic of the taking place. We should ask what does it happen when we arrive at a place, during our journey, when we meet someone and we do some of our tasks. In other words we should explain what I called the "use of place"’ (1996: 34). We identify ourselves with a place not only actively ‘using’ it but, first of all, also because we are born in close proximity to it: ‘History teaches us that man first identify himself with concrete environmental properties and that the relations he has with them, are generally developed during early childhood. A child grows among green, white, or brown spaces, walks on the sand, rocks, soil, ... listens to sounds like that of the wind ... feels cold and warm’. We are friends of our place: ‘.. “identification” means to become “friends” of a given environment. Northern peoples have to be friends of the fog, ice, and cold winds; they should rejoice themselves in hearing the creaking of the snow under their feet ....On the contrary, Arab peoples must be friends of the infinitely wide desert and of the burning sun’ (1979: 21).
The ‘anthropological inquiry’ has raised some inevitable concerns regarding the position of the researcher. With this regard, Gadamer reminds us of the implicit transformations that take place in all processes of understanding, emphasising that ‘all playing is a being-played’ (Gadamer 1975: 95. Quoted by Jones 2000: 55). Why should I not be played by the game in which I am engaged? The game has inevitable consequences. Moreover, my position as researcher at home has undoubtedly produced difficulties in relation to my sharing with people the same cultural heritage, language, experiences, and ways of relating to the sacred and sacred places. Mine has thus been a delicate position, one which could easily lead me to an interpretative route that has already been covered, an interpretative direction which is far from being personal. Yet, is it legitimate for me to affirm that I am undertaking a completely new direction in understanding? Could I really avoid my cultural and social background or intentionally reject it? And, can I say that the result of my understanding (the answer I get from my questioning) is neutral, in no way influenced by my own methods of questioning and understanding?

The answer I receive is itself informed by the way in which I have asked the question. It is, then, essential for us to recognise that our interpretative activity and understanding cannot be freed from presuppositions and prejudices. It is also true that this consciousness, our scrutiny of the cultural-historical background we carry and our initial standpoints, are already modalities by which we can critically address ourselves out of the ‘average understanding’ into which we are first thrown. This does not mean, however, that we can reject it completely: it is rather a matter of inscribing it together with our self-awareness of its limits into our conversation and knowing process: ‘to get into [the hermeneutical circle] in the right way means that the first priority and the continual task of conscientious interpretation are always to work through one’s own fore-conceptions for oneself and bring them to interpretation’ (Zene 2001: 11). Getting
close to religious events that in some way I already knew, to people who shared with me the same language, to places into which I have already entered, required an extreme critical effort, one by means of which I had to be able to highlight what I was bringing with me, what I shared with these places, peoples, and events.

Mine has been an attempt to apply the Levinassian ethical concern for 'alterity'—from the Latin alter meaning the 'other ...(l'Autre)' (Moran 2000: 320, 337). I have tried to overcome what Levinas had identified as the Western philosophical totalising project that he summed up as 'Know Thyself', intending a way of apprehending and knowing the other as essentially a self-knowledge, a projection towards ourselves as knowing subjects, a mere possession of what we have (not what is) in front of us, a violence. In Levinas's thought, we exercise violence when our knowing is reduced to 'whatever is thought-of...pensé... or represented in thought', when we absorb beings reducing their otherness to what we are, make them similar to ourselves, bringing their otherness into the 'sphere of “the Same” (le Même)' (Moran 2000: 341, 337). Rather, my attempt shall be that of experiencing, hence knowing, the other as a ‘face’, in his or her proximity, whereas face is intended as a 'real concrete presence of another person'. Moreover, ‘face’ is used by Levinas as a ‘metaphor for all those aspects of human personhood and culture which escape objectification, which cannot be treated in the manner in which we treat objects in the world, which cannot be the object of an intentional act' (2000: 347). This ‘proximity’ is intended not only as a vicinity or a sharing of the same places, but rather as an existential ‘proximity’ to a certain place and ways of being It can probably disclose other possibilities of interaction totally prohibited to an outsider. ‘For Levinas, the face can never be fully characterised, never

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6 Levinas (1906–1995) criticises the progressive egoistic absorption of the other person and ‘otherness’ into ‘the sphere of ego’ and self, operated throughout Western philosophical thinking, a grand project of ‘totalisation’. He rejects this process and opposes to it a non-violent and ethical concern for the other which ‘involves the effort to constrain one’s freedom and spontaneity in order to be open to the other person, or more precisely to allow oneself to be constrained by the other’ (Moran 2000: 321).
fully represented', his/her otherness calls for an infinite range of possibilities (2000: 348).

Methodology in practice

As previously mentioned, my research work has been fairly delicate, not only for the role of anthropologist, but much more so, due to the necessity of sharing experiences and common feelings with the people and places. The research work has, therefore been largely an experience of nearing myself to the subject.

From an operative point of view, the fieldwork was divided into two phases: decisional and operative. In fact, following the choice of 'subject' for my research, I then had to face the problem of having to articulate a study that offered a comparative and exhaustive vision, though limited by the terms imposed by research of this type, of the theme of sacred places in Sardinia. Above all, I had to provide a comparative vision of 6 different realities, 6 different communities and different ways of relating to the sacredness of these places. This is, therefore, how, having identified the first 'cumbessias village', I then chose a further 5, all situated within a territorial context that we can consider as being culturally and socially defined. This territory is that known as Barbagia, located at the heart of the island of Sardinia. It was, in fact, a visit to the sanctuary of the Madonna di Gonare that inspired me to make this, and other sacred places, the subject of my research. What interested me in particular was the exceptionalness of their location within the territory, their distance from the urban centres, and the uniqueness of the natural environment combined with the architectonics.

Gallini's research towards the end of the 1960s was concerned with four out of the six sanctuaries that I have chosen to study. As hers, as previously mentioned, was the only anthropological research that had been carried out thus far on this type of
reality on the island, I was able to take an important retrospective analysis view, that also helped me to understand the changes that have taken place of the last 30 years. In my opinion, however, Gallini’s analysis failed to assign sufficient importance to the ‘place’, to recognise the ‘built place’ within the ‘natural place’, and to see the elements that come together within the religious practises to form the complex reality of cumbessias villages.

This awareness lead me thus to direct my decisional phase fieldwork in such a way as to include not only the study of the religious practises and daily activities lived in the various sanctuaries, but also the contexts in which these took place. For this reason, I was obliged to use a camera, in order to better understand how such religious practises could really be lived in the villages, and how it was often true that the whole village itself, became the ideal scenario for the carrying out of numerous religious ceremonies.

Following the choice of sanctuaries to study in the research, I then began creating a network of relationships with people from each of the towns to which the sanctuaries were linked. This was in order to have prior knowledge as regards the dates of the ‘novenas’, their general management (for example, if a pilgrimage at the start and end of the novena was included), from whom I could rent a cumbessia, and when I could do so. To this end, I made the most of family friends and other acquaintances, who could help me meet these people. I then contacted those responsible for the celebrations for the year in course, not only to rent, when possible, the cumbessia, but also to inform them of my intention to carry out research there during the novena.

I then proceeded to plan out the working days. These were arranged on the basis of the dates of the start and end of the novena. As previously mentioned, in fact, most of the novenas take place during the months of May and September and, in my case, 5 sanctuaries held their novenas during the month of September. This certainly posed a
problem both in the decisional phase, and, as I shall be mentioning later, in the research phase. The fact that I had just one year available for the fieldwork did not make it easy to study such a transitory and short-lived phenomena as the novenas. It is also important to remember that the very nature of these events makes it possible to re-live them only after a year, and that the second time around, there would certainly be some changes in conditions. The brevity of these events, and the fact that they are not repeated after a short period of time, meant that the fieldwork had to be carried out with fairly selective criteria, and I was often obliged to adjust or correct findings in real time, in relation to changes within these same events. The novenas did, in fact, despite their brevity, reveal themselves to be really quite eventful. In the time between the first and the last novena, I was able to look again at the plans I had thought to adopt, both in relation to the type of approach to take with the devotees, and as concerns the use of the camera for the development, and for the interviews themselves. The further I proceeded with my fieldwork, the more I realised that it would have been important for me to try to enter into some groups of devotees (usually those of my *cumbessia* neighbours) much more quickly than I had done at the beginning, thus trying to obtain as much information as possible on the religious practises, daily activities, architectural development of the area, tales and legends relating to the foundation of the sanctuary and festival logistics, etc.. I did, in fact, notice after my first experiences ‘on the field’, that I could not afford to miss the precious information whilst at the sanctuaries, and that all those events in which I could not take part, because I was involved in another event in a different part of the village at the time, would have had to be explained and described to me at a later date, by informers.

One very clear example of this ‘correspondence of events’ is provided by two pilgrimages at the start of the novena heading towards the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Sauccu of the town of Bortigali. These are two very different pilgrimages, each of
which brings a different statue of the Virgin through a procession. Having had to make a choice between the two, I decided that the most important one for me to follow, would be that which lead me on foot along an old mountain path, with the ‘true’ statue of the Madonna which, legend has it, was found where Sauccu now springs from, and, above all, where I would have had the opportunity to participate personally, together with the believers. The other pilgrimage carried a large statue of the Madonna in a procession, with a group of people on horseback, along a tarmac road, followed by believers on foot and in cars.

The last two days of some of the novenas overlapped with the first two of another novena in another sanctuary, which was often held at quite a distance from the first. These were usually festivals or pilgrimage days, given that some of the novenas started and finished with the ritual of a pilgrimage, or kept the last few days for the important celebrations and community events. In this way, I managed to combine the fieldwork days for each novena, so as to have the six novenas divided up into blocks of three for the September of the start of the fieldwork and the September of the end of the fieldwork. This archway of time between the two blocks of events had important practical consequences. In particular, in modifying the type of relationship which I would have formed with the devotees, the choice of elements relevant to my research, leaving out others that, from previous experiences, had shown themselves to be accessories to more important events, etc..

I chose to follow a line of questioning during the interviews with the devotees. The questions were not intended as being exhaustive in order to understand the reality of these ‘worlds’, but rather as auxiliaries to the development of the investigation. In truth, the questions were tools to help me understand:

- what type of experience was lived by the devotees in these places;
- what memories they had of these places, and therefore, what relationship there was between the devotees and the cumbessias villages;
- how the devotees themselves saw these realities;
- what type of relationship was lived by these people with/in these places;
- if these same devotees had had experience of other novenas in other sanctuaries with cumbessias;
- what type of relationships were created with the other people attending the novena, who came from other towns;
- what, for them, was the sacred character of the sanctuaries.

It was also important for me to understand what, of these experiences and relationships, stayed with them, and how the related to the places in such a way as to change them, and in the end, themselves.

I used various methods of sampling of informers to be interviewed, depending on the different contexts of the novenas. There were often significant differences in affluence, both in terms of number, and age, of the devotees. I tried, in any case, to isolate age groups of reference: elderly (70-90 years old), adults (35-60 years old), and young adults (15-35). I was able, however, to note that it was only in a few contexts, such as, for example, that of Nostra Signora del Rimedio (Orosei), Santa Maria de Sauccu (Bortigali), and Santi Cosma e Damiano (Mamoiada), that all three age groups were present. In the other sanctuaries, one group or another had few, or no, representatives. I then counted the number of people attending the novenas, recording name, surname, age, sex, occupation and town of origin. This was, in a certain sense, limited by the impossibility of being able to access parochial registers (except for partial access which was granted for the cumbessias village of Santi Cosma e Damiano). An approximate annual count of novena attendees is usually held in the cumbessias, but these registers were often unused or inaccessible.
The variation of the age groups present in each novena, whilst not compromising the results of the research, certainly represented a limit to the type of information that I was able to obtain.

I tried to define a line of questioning and subjects to be investigated, at the beginning of the research, that was, however, not fixed, and that I could modify by interacting with these people, on the basis of what they had to say that was relevant, and that often did not coincide with that which I, as researcher, had presumed, or searched for within their words. This realisation of how a question can limit the answer obtained, allowed me, therefore, to achieve a greater 'nearness' to the meaning that the people gave to these places, more than I would have been able to, had I used rigidly defined questionnaires. During the fieldwork, in fact, I noticed that some of my questions did not obtain the desired response, because they had been formulated on the basis of my personal reading of the phenomenon prior to my experience in the field.

The questions formulated included those relating to:

- past experiences related to the novena, own memories and those of others;
- motivations that tied the subject to the sanctuary, promises, thanks for graces obtained;
- people awareness of the natural/built sacred place; any eventual influence of the natural environment on feelings, thoughts and people’s devotion to a given sanctuary.

**Example of a few of the questions asked during the interviews**

- do you come to the novena every year?
- have you come to the sanctuary since you were a child? And what do you remember of your experiences in this place?
- why do you come to the sanctuary now? What do you ask the Madonna/Saint?
- how important is it, for you, to live here for the entire duration of the nine days?
- do you feel closer to the Madonna/Saint here, in this place?
- what do you like about this place?
- in your opinion, why do you think the sanctuary was built here, in this particular location?

I divided the interviews up into two blocks: one part during the novena, within the sanctuaries, and the second part at the people's houses, once the novena was over. This allowed me to reach a certain 'lucidity', as I was no longer under pressure to attend the events of the novena, but also, and above all, to clarify any doubts, and get confirmation of a few certainties, as regards aspects of the novena that I had not been able to analyse prior to the event. For this exact reason, I often found support from some of the attendees, with whom, in the months following the novena, I was able to plan a series of meetings that enabled me to clarify those points that had not been made clear to me. I also thought it necessary to return, with these devotees, to some of the places I had visited, such as, for example, parts of pilgrimages, or areas surrounding the sanctuaries that I felt it was important to know, or to which each community assigned a certain importance, because they were connected to experiences that had been lived during the novena by these devotees, in the past (e.g., trees underneath which they had slept when arriving by horse or on foot to the novena, tens of years ago, but which are, still today, remembered as important points of the sanctuary; natural spaces located along the pilgrimage paths, where they used to stop, take refreshment, and dance, along the way to the sanctuary, etc.).

As previously mentioned, in fact, the sheer quantity of events taking place within each novena, meant that most of my attention was taken up with these.

During the course of the fieldwork, I also had to modify my idea of using devotees' mental maps, that I had envisaged whilst formulating suitable research lines. I had thought that mental maps, described by the devotees, would form an important element in understanding just how these people had conceived, understood and re-
elaborated on a perceptive level, the space of the sanctuaries, those places. I had thought that these ‘maps’ would have been useful tools to help me understand if a sort of hierarchy existed of elements that, in their view, were more or less important, within these places, and that therefore had been retained to a greater level, and were represented in a drawing. I intended to ask each informer to draw me such a map. In reality, during the research and the first approaches with the devotees, I started to move my attention towards other factors that, in the long run, showed themselves to be more important throughout our conversations, factors that then slowly brought my research towards its definitive direction. From my first interest in obtaining a definition from the devotees, of the sanctuary space, I realised that their thoughts brought them to talk about events related to given places, and not about the places themselves. I also found that the devotees of the sanctuary of the Madonna di Gonare (where I started my research), were very reluctant to draw a map of the place. The mental map that appears in this thesis was obtained only when I had finally reached a certain level of intimacy in the relationship between myself and the woman who drew it. I allowed my figure within the village to be first understood for the role I was playing.

I also found that my ‘insistence’ in trying to find a certain definition or idea of the sacred, as concerned the cumbessias villages, in the words of the devotees, was modified throughout the duration of the research. I understood that I had preferred to talk, rather than to listen to their words. An early critical analysis of the way my research was going, allowed me to reach this understanding of the limits that the presuppositions a researcher inevitably has, and brings with him/her to his field of research.

The ways in which I chose to interact with the attendees of the novenas were determinant for the success of the research, although these too revealed their limits. One essential methodological supposition to my research was, in fact, to understand the
sacredness of these places, not only through others' experiences, but also through my own direct, and personal, experience. The first step I took in that sense, was to rent a *cumbessia*. I saw just how difficult it was to rent one of these rooms within the sanctuaries (in fact I did not always succeed in doing so), due to logistical problems (priority of allocation was given on an age basis and on the basis of continual annual attendance of the sanctuary or of the same *cumbessia*), and to a certain diffidence towards a researcher. In particular, the reason for which I needed to live in a *cumbessia* in order to carry out my research, was not immediately understood.

This, also physical, nearness during the novena, revealed itself to be a fundamental tool to my research, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the events and relationship created. In some contexts, such as that of *Nostra Signora di Gonare*, where there were a total of only 15 attendees, myself included, I succeeded in creating sincere friendships with many of the devotees. The fact that I was renting a *cumbessia*, meant that I was on an equal footing with them, I behaved as they did, welcomed visitors with drinks and sweets, went to mass daily, and took part in the many daily religious celebrations, sharing my days, eating with them, playing cards or simply chatting through the afternoons. I participated in the preparation of meals and in the organisation of supplies, welcomed visitors to the sanctuary for special occasions, shared items and exchanged food. Although the nearness was, in itself, a significant advantage, it also limited me in a certain sense: the writing up of field notes often lead me, necessarily, to seek refuge within my *cumbessia*, but this also meant, particularly if during certain periods of the day, that the other novena attendees were curious. Often some of the devotees had been told of my arrival to the villages, even before I got there, by the *priore*, or by the priest himself.

My first exchanges with the attendees required great discretion on my part. I understood straightaway that I would have had to take the most natural approach
possible, leaving camera and all other supports, such as tape recorders and notebooks, behind. In order to obtain the results I required, it was important that I succeeded in being, as strange as it may seem, a novena attendee just like all the others. Had I approached this reality as a mere scholar, the type of relationship that I hoped to create with the others living within the village, would certainly have been compromised. For this reason, I always spent the first few days of each novena, trying to limit, or even avoid entirely, my use of the camera. Only after a few days was it possible for me to begin to record events on film, and to interview the believers, who were often themselves the first to suggest such activities. Many of these people, who became my friends, showed themselves to be excellent guides, providing me with concrete help in many phases of the research. I should also add that in all of the sanctuaries, I was able to find at least one person, generally a woman, who became closer to me than all the others, both in my research, and on a personal level, for the entire duration of the novena. In general, the pilgrimages of the start of the novena provided excellent opportunities to meet with the devotees who were heading towards the sanctuaries. Where I was not able to participate in such pilgrimages, because I was involved in the end-novena celebrations of another sanctuary, I was able to do so on another occasion, many months later, at another pilgrimage.

I used different tools to study the architecture of these places. There was paperwork, such as detailed geographical maps of the territories where the sanctuaries were indicated (in particular those of the Military Geographical Institution), plans of the cumbessias villages where available, and photographs belonging to devotees, and then, of course, I also used my camera.

Both these means were extremely useful in understanding the quality of the natural/built place, and its morphological characteristics. They also provided me with important data for the reconstruction of the changes that had taken place in these places
over the last 50 years. It was difficult to obtain this type of information, and in particular that regarding restoration works and other structural works outside the sanctuaries. Not only was this documentation often missing, but it was also difficult to obtain access to such information, as I did not come from the sanctuary town. This was due to a sort of jealousy of documentary sources that is difficult to understand outside of a similar context, but which causes difficulties to a great deal of research in Sardinian territory. Here, knowledge is held by a few local scholars, who are often reluctant to collaborate in any way. This is probably because they need to protect their works that are to be published imminently, or, more simply, because they are convinced that such behaviour is in their professional or personal interests. What is more important to document is, however, that many of the works carried out, and in particular those of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, are not recorded on paper when they are carried out by committees that annually manage the novena celebrations. There is, therefore, no updated documentation on works carried out in the sanctuaries over the last 50 years, available. In order to have a clear picture of the changes that have taken place in such places, I therefore had to refer, in most cases, to oral sources, to those who remembered, in greater or lesser detail, the works and dates in which they had been carried out.

I used the camera in order to:

- study the construction character of each cumbessias village;
- study the type of relationship that the devotees had with the places (which places were privileged by them, and how these places were used);
- verify the absence of a clear-cut division between sacred and profane spaces within a village;
- verify the type of visual relationship between the internal spaces of the sanctuaries (relationship between internal and external);
- verify the type of visual relationship between the sanctuaries and the external countryside;

- verify ways and times of appropriation of some spaces;

- understand the different use of the spaces by the various age groups (adults, elderly, young adults and children);

- understand how the various activities within the sanctuaries defined, and were themselves defined by, the spaces themselves (e.g. Religious ceremonies and leisure activities);

- understand the type of visual approach to such places, from the various directions;

- understand the formal articulation of the paths within the sanctuaries, and the place hierarchies that these paths defined;

- understand the level of nearness and familiarity that the devotees showed towards certain places within the sanctuaries;

- report and describe ceremonies, religious rituals, moments of togetherness between devotees, processions and pilgrimages;

- describe the various moments of the day during the novena, and the working activities;

- describe the ways and times of meeting and socialisation between devotees.

The criteria followed for the use of the camera during the novenas, was that of searching for a point of view within the various contexts represented, that did not force behaviour or feelings. For this reason, some particularly personal and delicate moments, have not been photographed.

Outline of chapters

I have divided this work into seven chapters that explore the notions of space and place, the idea of sacredness, and how it is manifested in Sardinian places. I have also taken a concrete look at Sardinian *cumbessias* villages, outlining their birth and subsequent
historical and architectural evolution, as portrayed through legend and documentary sources. More specifically, I have documented the evolution of their formal structures with a look at their present management in order to reach an understanding of their current figures.

The central body of the thesis is dedicated to exploring the use of these places. I have compared devotees' past experiences with those that take place today within *cumbessias* villages: I have highlighted the changed modalities of relationship to these places and their spaces that intervened over the last few decades. Religious uses have also been charted. Specifically, in Chapter 1, I have outlined the long theoretical trajectory through which the basic notion of Place has been prized as theoretically valuable and independent especially in relation to the major notion of Space within the history of Western philosophical thinking.

The recognition of the existential importance of place and its proximity to human beings (portrayed as creators of places) historically delineated particularly with the rise of phenomenology, has enabled me to link its multifaceted character with the idea of sacredness. In Chapter 2, in fact, I outline my idea of Sardinian sacred places while exploring the very notion of sacredness and the modalities through which these places are created or recognised as such.

In Chapter 3 I turn my attention towards Sardinian communities in an attempt to outline their basic constitutive features, social dynamics and the modalities through which collective and individual identities are created.

Chapter 4 deals specifically with the historical and architectural evolution of the six *cumbessias* villages, providing a description of their formal characters and present-day internal and external spatial articulations and organisation.

Chapter 5 investigates devotees' past and present everyday customs within these spaces since the 1950s and '60s. Novena is explored in its civil connotation, and a
description of the required practicality of management is provided. Moreover, this chapter also investigates communal and individual practices identifying private and public dichotomies and spatial ambiguities in the light of changing communal and individual imperatives.

A *cumbessias* village is primarily a place for religious practices. Chapter 6 outlines the religious and ritual experiences lived by devotees in these sacred compounds. Again, special emphasis is placed on the architectural settings as fundamental elements through which the religious events portrayed attain their efficiency as meaningful experiences setting out participants' reformulation of their own existence. The Gadamerian formulation of 'play' is the framework within which this argument is developed. In Chapter 7, the concluding Chapter, the Gadamerian metaphor of 'play' is pushed further: the relationship between devotees and *cumbessias* villages is seen as mutually transformational, both for the devotees and for the sacred places. The long trajectory signed by the formulation of my original questions (posed in the first pages of this Introduction) begins harvesting the first fruits/responses of the dialectical engagement in which people and places commit themselves during each novena.

The Appendix, the final section of the work, includes four more documents: Appendix 1 includes a short overview of each of the six towns and communities to which the cumbessias villages are related. In particular, it gives a geographical description of the territory where each community is located together with demographic data and economic activities as they have evolved since the first half of the nineteenth century. Appendix two, concentrates on the historical origin of the six *cumbessias* villages derived from the very few documentary sources available. The third Appendix, called the 'Architectural Analysis', consists of six forms in which I have provided an architectural analysis of shapes and spatial articulations of the
cumbessias villages. These forms, which include text and numerous photos of the sacred places, have been conceived as a support for a more comprehensive reading and understanding of the work and especially of Chapter 4. The fourth document includes six forms providing the reader with a survey of the ‘Architectural Evolution’ of the cumbessias villages: here, special emphasis is placed on the edifices’ management activities that have been carried out in these compounds since the beginning of the last century. Again, they are useful documentary supports for the reading of Chapter 4 and of the whole thesis.

What emerges from the exploration of the relationship between Sardinian sacred places and people, is a profound transformation achieved by both in their encounter. Cumbessias villages have been intended as works of art and devotees as creative interpreters of these works: they have both been seen as deeply committed to a dialogue or play of which the major result is a mutual reframing of their own existence.
Chapter 1

Theoretical premises: recovering the meaningfulness of place

1.1 SPACE, SPACE, Place, non-lieux: account of a journey

In this chapter I deal primarily with ‘Space’ and ‘Place’. In particular I engage in a short survey of part of the long, theoretical trajectory that has seen these two basic notions as essential concerns within the history of Western philosophical thinking. The relationship between the two concepts has proceeded, to a great extent, almost unchanged throughout the whole path in which Space has played the major role. There has been a point in this relational story in which the two notions have been in a way united, and another point in which Place has become the ‘protagonist’. I intend to retrace this uneven relational process outlining how the rise of phenomenology as a philosophical and methodological perspective has revealed itself to be extremely apt for the retrieval of the existential importance of Place, the role of which goes far beyond its link with human identity, representing the ‘locality of Being’ (Heidegger, M. Seminare, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 15, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1986: 344. Quoted by Malpas 1999: 8).

These two concepts have represented the leit-motiv of numerous studies that endeavoured, on the one hand, to unfold the complexity of their nature while, on the other, made problematical the ‘apparent’ (usually unquestioned) conceptual ‘superiority’ and, I would add, existential viability, of space over place.\(^7\) A great deal of

\(^7\) The term ‘superiority’ is here intended to express a sort of a predominant ‘spatial’ position of the notion of Space over Place: superior in this case is intended as ‘a standing above’ (almost physically) the uniqueness of place. Moreover, in using the adjective ‘apparent’ we anticipate what will clearly result by the end of this chapter: in
these studies began questioning the nature of the relationship between space and place focusing on the Enlightenment-inherited ‘positivistic’ stance that supported the idea of the absolute primacy of ‘general’ knowledge over ‘local’ and particular knowledge: “‘General knowledge must always precede local knowledge . . . [because] without [general knowledge], all acquired knowledge can only be fragmentary experiment and not a science’” (Kant 1974 [1797], preface to Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. Quoted by Casey 1996: 16. His addition). As Casey clearly points out, the Kantian statement of generality or, I could say, abstractness, is referred to the consideration that it cannot be conceived a ‘general knowledge’, hence a ‘science’, wholly stemming from or arising ‘out of [human] experience’ (1996: 16).

This positivistic stance would somehow seem to keep a distance between human beings and their involvement in space, it ratifies their becoming ‘foreigners’: space is thus considered as vacuous, with human existence having no possibility of becoming a determining influence, or simply of leaving its mark, on it. ‘Absolute space’ exists without the actual, particular idiosyncrasies of human ‘bodily’ existence. ‘This’ Space is characterised as a priori, ‘sheer physical terrain’, a neutral container of possible contingent, humanised events (Casey 1996: 14). Tilley has briefly traced the ‘antagonistic history of past debates’ concerning ‘the usefulness of a scientific conception of space abstracted from human affairs’ within the disciplinary contexts of

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8 It is useful to quote the full statement: ‘As Kant insisted, “there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience” (1950 [1787]: B1). For Kant, to begin with means to be instigated by. Thus he must add the qualification that “though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience” (Kant 1950 [1787]: B1) (Casey 1996: 16).

9 I am aware that when talking in these terms of the possibility for human existence to leave a mark, influence or simply disturb in any sense the emptiness and abstractness of space, I could be accused of making use of the very same theoretical stance that I am trying to reject, that is, that space comes first and that human existence can merely leave its sign on it. In fact, I would clarify that I do not intend place as something ‘made from space’ or in any sense ‘posterior to it’, rather I position myself within a humanised space, as the ‘aborigine on the ground who finds this ground itself to be a coherent collocation of pre-given places—pre-given at once in his experience . . . ’ (Casey 1996: 15. Emphasis added).
human geography and archaeology. He has summarised in a few terms the major
differences existing between a ‘scientific or abstract, and a humanised space’: the result
is a general dichotomisation, a series of binary oppositions wherein subtle ‘surfaces’ are
contrasted by thick ‘densities’, the ‘universal’ becomes ‘specific’, the ‘objective’ leaves
its place to the ‘subjective’, a ‘neutral’ and ‘atemporal’ vacuum becomes an
‘empowered’ and ‘temporal’ space (Tilley 1994: 7–8). Looking back at the
seventeenth-century history of physics and philosophy, starting from ‘the first century
of modernity’, there would seem to be no trace of an existential place; moreover, the
division between space and place ‘seems’, in a sense, to disappear: ‘...the levelling-
down of space to strict dimensionality and measurability, isotropism and isometrism,
and homogeneity and immobility signifies that no vestige of the particularity of place,
its peculiar qualities and special tropism, remains within the monolithic space with
which it is now increasingly identified’. In other words, “place is nothing other than
empty space” (Casey 1997: 141). The rejection of the possibility for space to change its
immutable, infinite, and immobile dimension was a theoretical stance shared by the
major thinkers of the seventeenth century who, together with Gassendi, addressed the
issues of space and place. Among these figures are Newton, Descartes, Locke, and
Leibniz (Casey 1997: 137). With Gassendi (1592–1633) we thus witness the

10 Tilley criticises the new approaches that characterised what he calls ‘new geography’ and ‘new archaeology’: these
approaches adopted the stance that space was an ‘abstract dimension in which human activities and events
took place’, a space ‘indifferent to human affairs’, ‘divorced from humanity and society...from any
consideration of structures of power and domination’ so that ‘The space of the Palaeolithic was the same as
the space of late capitalism, that of Vancouver identical to that of Canberra’ (Tilley 1994: 9). The new
perspectives were translated in applied methodologies where ‘...the texts of new geographers would provide
source books in methods for future generations of archaeologists’. As a consequence of the shared theoretical
paradigm ‘the traditional archaeological distribution map of sites and artefacts now became clothed with
thiessen polygons, site catchments, regression lines, trend surfaces, and gravity models, all reflecting in
various ways the ‘friction’ and impact of space on human affairs’ (1994: 10)

11 Although these dichotomies are explicitly referred by the author to disciplines such as human geography and
archaeology, we purposely widen their application inserting them within the cross-disciplinary theoretical
‘debate’ concerning Space and Place.

12 While acknowledging the considerable importance of the theoretical trajectory that characterised the evolution of
the notions of space and place throughout the history of Western philosophical thinking, I shall not devote
special attention to it. The considerable complexity inherent in the notions of space and place would require a
deeper and extended analysis which is not the purpose of this limited chapter. Rather, I shall concentrate on
the recent theoretical developments of these concepts during the last century.
dissolution of place into space. Place has been swallowed by space; it has lost even its ‘nominal’ possibility to be thought as (at least) something ‘else’ from (being always within) space:

Gassendi wishes to quantify place . . . In contrast with Aristotle’s emphasis on the qualitative aspects of place (e.g., the directionality of up/down), Gassendi proposes that ‘place is a quantity, or some sort of extension, namely, the space or interval made up of the three dimensions length, breadth, and depth, in which it is possible to hold a body or through which a body may travel’. But precisely as quantified—as measurably dimensional in a non-corporeal manner—place becomes extremely difficult to distinguish from ‘space’ . . . (Brush, C.B., The Selected Works of Pierre Gassendi, New York, Johnson Reprint, 1972: 385. Quoted by Casey 1997:141. Emphasis added).

Isaac Newton (1642–1727), on the other hand, does not assign a ‘being of its own’ to place, an existence in itself; rather, he conceives it ‘as the merely constituent part of indifferent portions of the universe’. For him, places are ‘subsumed under space’ and, at the same time, constitute ‘the location offered to a body’, it is internal, within the body: ‘thus body is not in place so much as place is in body’, it is ‘compressed into the body for which it presumably offers the location’ (Casey 1997: 144). Newton even goes so far as to conceive places as ‘absolute’ as long as they participate in the definition of the abstractness of Space, as parts and ‘the proper contents of the void that is absolute space’ (1997: 148).13

‘Place’ for Descartes is nothing; unlike the void, it is not a mere chimera, something simply imaginary. . . . Place is a hybrid entity: as volumetric, it is a ‘thing’; as situational, it is un-thinglike and purely relational’ (Casey 1997: 161). The Cartesian space is conceptually inseparable from matter, it is ‘imaginable’ because it is not empty, rather it possesses magnitude and shape. Descartes (1596–1650) moves away from Gassendi and Newton ‘and from Bruno and More who sought to make space absolute, at the expense of matter (whether by recourse to an intelligible void or to an all-

13 Here Casey makes direct reference to A. Koslow (1976) who claims that “to Newton, absolute space is a something in space, namely parts of space”. This is not intended to reject the absoluteness of space, rather, we take it as just another way to conceive it as an absolute space made up from different ‘absolute’ parts (Koslow, A., “Ontological and Ideological Issues of the Classical Theory of Space and Time”, in Motion and Time, Space.
pervasive God)' (1997: 152–153). Extension represents the key ‘essence’ that unites space and matter because ‘not only does matter occupy space, but space is matter’ (1997: 153). Extension is thus regarded as the key feature of a physical ‘material’ body. Is it then hazardous to claim that a material body occupies a place? Descartes believes that, in some way, it is: place is merely a ‘unity of extension’ which is in no sense changed or ‘created’ by the fact that a material body ‘has been taken out of it’. It is only identified with the position that ‘a subject occupies’ for the very fact that [the subject] is extended. ‘Place has no distinctive status vis-à-vis space’ (1997: 156. His addition).

The virtual ‘circle’ is closed: from the above mentioned Kantian positivistic stance, in which the distinction between general and local knowledge set forth both the primacy of ‘space’ over ‘place’ and the exclusion of the meaningfulness of human active engagement in experience, I am left with no possibility other than to return to the original position.

1.2 In bodies through spaces

So far, I have worked up a sketch into the big picture represented by the long philosophical trajectory within which the notions of space and place have been explored and developed.

Throughout this short trajectory we have become aware of the strength and resistance of the notion of ‘space’ as primary, universal, neutral, objective, meaningless, over the absolute, peculiar weakness of ‘place’. I have also outlined how the human ‘bodily’ experience found it difficult to make its own way and ‘place’ through the ‘absolute[ness of] space’ conceived ‘as an indispensable ingredient in early modern physics [as well as

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in philosophy] even though it is foreign to the lived body from which space..., however abstract, takes its rise’ (Casey 1997: 220).14

I have briefly outlined the constitutive, physical, and conceptual separation of space, ‘activity’, ‘event’ within the former theoretical development. The objective measurability of space, in fact, leaves agency and meaning out of its infinite boundaries. We are, then, waiting to see when and how ‘the’ monolithic infinite abstract space became an existential space, when a neutral, ‘unitary’ and uniform backdrop was transformed into a multiplicity of humanly (and historically) constituted ‘countries’ (Tilley 1994: 9).

The answer lies in what we actually and concretely are: living bodies. The theoretical connection has been operated through the agency of our body. As people, ‘we experience [bodily agency] and understand [assign meaning to] the world’ (1994: 11). In this sense space starts to lose its uniqueness, becoming completely involved in action, where this involvement moves it from a previous condition of detached external coherence into one where it is entangled by human idiosyncrasies. The discovery of the role of body in the recovering of ‘place’ now fosters what I call a sense of spacelessness.15

14 The notion of space as unitary and neutral, ‘external to and indifferent to human affairs’ traditionally belonging to the history of philosophical thinking, has been re-considered as a useful perspective also within the contemporary development of disciplines such as geography and archaeology, which have applied it in a certain, although limited, moment of their theoretical and methodological evolution. As Tilley points out: ‘The attraction of this perspective was, no doubt its purity and simplicity and the potential it offered for comparative studies of the organisation of artefacts, sites, populations, and flows of information and exchange across regions and landscapes. All could be objectively plotted on maps, distances measured and expressed according to the same rigorous and quantitative scale. Quantification, mathematization, and computer modelling seemingly offered unlimited potential for unravelling the spatial fix of human affairs. Burning issues . . . in geography and archaeology became . . . [among others] . . . the development of alternative methodologies for measuring and describing the abstract geometry of space’ (1994: 9).

On the same line, Casey has emphasised how the secure monolithic ‘allurement’ of space has worked within social scientific disciplines as well. The instance is offered within some ‘good’ recent anthropological works, where the priority of a neutral space is regarded as the tabula rasa onto which ‘the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed, with place as the presumed result’ (Casey 1996: 14. Emphasis added).

15 This term has been suggested to me by the reading of Relph’s work Place and Placelessness: ‘If places are indeed a fundamental aspect of man’s existence in the world, if they are sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups of people, then it is important that the means of experiencing, creating, and maintaining significant places are not lost. Moreover there are many signs that these very means are disappearing and that “placelessness”—the weakening of distinct and diverse experiences and identities of places—is now a dominant force’ (Relph 1976: 6). From this perspective, then, spacelessness wants to indicate either a condition or process by which the means for maintaining (theoretically) the absoluteness and
‘How can one be in a place except through one’s own body? (Casey 1997: 204). So far, the sensible world of discrete phenomena has been mentally translated and represented.\textsuperscript{16} The entrance of body, with its undeniable physical properties, calls for a corporeal foundation to be given to the ‘sensuous character’ of those mental representations themselves. Place has been denied its concrete existence, being no more than an absolute position in the absolute space, no more than the simple where of the res extensa. Now that res extensa has, in a way, gained its own personality out of a mere Cartesian extended matter, place too calls for a more concrete foundation; it needs to be experienced in qualitative terms as ‘something not merely characterisable but actually experienced . . . colour, texture, and depth, are known to us only in and by the body that enters and occupies a given place’ (1997: 204. Emphasis added).

Strangely enough it is Kant (1724–1804) who recognises that sensible things (and beings) must occupy particular places.\textsuperscript{17} He partially modifies what he calls ‘the well-known popular axiom’ of Archytas ‘to be is to be in place’ which thus becomes, ‘to be—to be sensible—is to be in place’ (Kant, I. ‘Inaugural dissertation’, in Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988: 408. Quoted by Casey 1997: 204).

‘To perceive things as oriented in places and regions (and these as oriented themselves) presumes the foregone fact that our bodies are already situated with regard to right versus left directionality’. According to Kant, as sensible beings, we are

\textsuperscript{16} Casey claims that according to the ‘main agendas of philosophical modernity’ for every sensible appearance, particular phenomenon, substance, quality, etc., to be apprehended it must assume the format of a mental representation; ‘space . . . is itself based on mind’ and ‘. . . the sum total of representations is considered to make up Mind itself’ (1997: 203).

\textsuperscript{17} In his dissertation titled ‘On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World’, Kant distinguishes between ‘bodiless beings’ that ‘possess only a “derivative” or “virtual” presence (such as angels of God) and sensible beings ‘i.e., bodies perceivable by our own bodies’. What is important to note here is that, contrary to bodiless beings that are ‘unimplaced’, sensible beings are ‘inherently implaced entities’ (Kant, I., Theoretical
provided with bodies already 'bifurcated into paired sides and parts' so that we can perceive sensible objects as 'placed and oriented': on the one hand, without our own corporeal presence we would not be able to perceive other objects (for the very fact that we perceive them they 'reflect our own bodily bifurcation') but, on the other, objects are not be able to orient themselves. 'The a priori orientation belongs to the body, not to the mind' (Casey 1997: 209, 205). With the insertion of the body, places are no longer 'simple locations', mere portions of space, and the body itself is no longer an extended matter; as a consequence, the former seventeenth-century conception of place cannot ignore the new entry represented by the 'human experience' of place (1997: 212).

From this moment on, I shall attempt to follow the philosophical trajectory that explores the real nature of the relationship existing between the body and the places it inhabits in the natural environment. From this moment on, I shall leave, though not completely, the blank Space onto which I have written this narrative, and take a more proper look at Place.

1.2.1 The body and its phenomenological 'implacement': Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

This phenomenology, like the more inclusive pure phenomenology of experiences in general, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences that are intuitively sizeable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence . . . This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences (Husserl, E. Logical Investigations, 2 vols. trans. J.N. Findlay, New York: Humanities Press, 1970: 249. Quoted by Moran 2000: 1).

Whilst exploring the above-mentioned relationship between bodies and the places they inhabit, I am lead to acknowledge the determinant contribution offered to it by

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Phenomenology. As a term deriving directly from the word *phenomena*, phenomenology is intended as a ‘new... way of doing philosophy’, an ‘anti-traditional style of philosophising’, the major task of which is to ‘get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*’. To attempt to get at phenomena just as they appear, means to describe them as they ‘manifest’ themselves ‘to consciousness, to the experiencer’ (Moran 2000: 4).

In Husserl’s (1859–1938) thinking, the former relation between body and place is now widened to embrace a ‘lived body’ (*Leib*) within ‘life-world’ (*Lebenswelt*) that is to say, “the surrounding world of life” (Husserl, E. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970: 99. Quoted by Casey 1997: 217). One of Husserl’s major claims is that, while in the process of describing phenomena we should apply what he calls ‘principle of pre-suppositionlessness’ and go straight (back) to phenomena (things) themselves which means that we should ‘be attentive only to what is given in intuition’ (2000: 9). The experience we have of a phenomenon is essentially intuitive. Intuition is considered as the ‘highest stage of knowledge’; intuition legitimises every act of knowledge, or as Husserl himself claims: “every originary presentive intuition is a legitimising source of knowledge” (Husserl, E., *Ideas Pertaining to Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1983: 44. Quoted by Moran 2000: 10). In order to go back to the things themselves, to ‘gain

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18 Borrowed from the physicist J.H. Lambert, this term began to appear in philosophy texts since the eighteenth century. Particularly Kant (Fichte, Herder and Hegel with him) used it in some of his early letters as well as in ‘mature treatises’ (as in the entire section titled ‘Phenomenology, dealing with the area of motion or rest in relation to their appearances to our external senses’ in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, 1786). Originally, Lambert employed this notion ‘in the title of the fourth section in his *Novus Organon* to signify a *science of appearance* (*Schein*) which allows us to proceed from appearances to truth’... (Moran 2000: 6).

19 It should be noticed that Phenomenology essentially intended as a philosophical retrieval into the concreteness of lived human experience, has been ‘received’ by numerous interpreters who, while applying it to diverse characters of human life (arriving to its essential Being with Heidegger), have greatly widened its theoretical horizons. Among such figures we could reckon those of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Gadamer, Arendt, Levinas, Sartre, Derrida.
insight into the nature of the conscious processes themselves, we should operate a ‘methodological reduction’.

*Pre-suppositionlessness* is here intended as one of the fundamental conditions of the phenomenological enquiry into human experience: no ‘logical inferences’ and ‘mediate knowledge’ of any kind is allowed if we claim to use phenomenology to ‘explore experience in pure manner’ (2000: 127). In his *Logical Investigations* (1928), Husserl contends that the manner in which we structure our own conscious experience is ‘distorted’ and, in a sense, disturbed by the actual way in which we ‘engage with experience in ordinary life, where our practical concerns, folk assumptions, and smattering of scientific knowledge all got in the way of a pure consideration of experience as it is given to us’ (2000: 11. Emphasis added). More specifically, what we should really avoid are philosophical or scientific theories and deductive reasoning, in order to focus our attention on what is given to us directly through intuition. In other words, we should begin “in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge” (Husserl, E., *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1967: 2. Quoted by Moran 2000: 126).

It is through the so-called ‘suspension of the natural attitude’, or ‘the phenomenological epoche’ that we can be certain to avoid our own positioning within any theoretical stance, thus getting directly to the ‘essential features of the phenomena under investigation’.

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20 Moran at this point comments: ‘Thus he always stressed that his greatest discovery was the reduction. The reduction led Husserl in two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, it led him in a Neo-Kantian and Cartesian direction towards the transcendental ego as the formal structure of all self-experience; while on the other hand, it led him towards the manner in which consciousness is always wrapped up in its intentional correlate, completely caught up in a world’ (2000: 12).

21 *Epoche*, an ancient Greek term indicating a ‘cessation’, has been used in Sceptic philosophy to indicate a suspension of judgement or ‘abstention from judgement’. Husserl adopted this word to indicate the act of suspension, i.e., ‘bracketing’ (*Einklammerung*) of our ‘cultural, religious and scientific assumptions’ to get to the things themselves in their ‘givenness’. In an important passage Moran explains the real phenomenological Husserlian endeavour obtained through epoche: ‘... the essential feature is always to effect an alteration or ‘change of attitude’ ... to move away from naturalistic assumptions about the world, assumptions both deeply embedded in our everyday behaviour towards objects and also at work in our most sophisticated natural science’ (Moran 2000: 147. Emphasis added). Indeed Husserl’s major concern was to ‘lay bare’ not only the essence of the ‘pure phenomenon’ but also the essence of our conscious acts. Our natural attitude ‘always
throughout the phenomenological knowing process. ‘When we effect the phenomenological bracketing we are left with a residuum of pure consciousness, consciousness as absolute existence whose objects are always correlates of consciousness . . . that is the real significance of Descartes’s methodology of universal doubt. Except that now, instead of the world disappearing or being entirely disregarded, it appears in a wholly new light, not as something absolutely existent, there in itself, but rather as the correlate of consciousness, as something which has a peculiar mode of being of its own, a peculiar mode of ‘self-givenness’ (Moran 2000: 11, 147, 150).

Since the entry of Husserl’s phenomenology, we have somehow seen how human experience is linked to natural world and positioned in it. The notion of ‘life-world’ could be seen as a revealing of Husserl’s intention to provide us, as conscious beings, with a position which is not yet a Place.

There is not just one life-world, but rather many and intersecting worlds starting from the ‘nearest’ ‘home world’ (Himwelt), arriving at other ‘foreign’ or ‘alien worlds’ of other cultures. Despite their differences, the very basic structure of life-world is unique, itself as ‘a universal framework of human endeavour’, a ‘general structure which allows objectivity and thinghood to emerge in the different ways in which they do emerge in different cultures’ (Moran 2000: 181–182). The life-world aspires to become a place for the ‘lived-living body’ as long as it is the human lived body that animates it (Casey 1997: 217). Being at the same time a lived body and a conscious being, the human body is conceived as the point of connection of all spatial relations, it occupies a privileged position, it is, as Husserl puts it, “the bearer of the I” and the

employ a thetic act (German Thesis, from the Greek thesis, a proposal, proposition) an act of positing . . . position taking’. . . . Disconnecting the natural standpoint means making a conscious decision not to rely on any beliefs which involve the spatio-temporal world’. We should, in other words, consciously and freely choose to detach ourself from our commitment with the world present in all ‘our normal intentional experiences’. . . . Through the phenomenological reduction we strip away the actual character of the experience and grasp it as a pure phenomenon’. . . . Husserl characterised the practice of epoché in many different ways: abstention . . . dislocation from . . . exclusion of the positing of the world and our normal unquestioning faith in the reality of what we experience’ (2000: 149–150, 147).
locus of sensations felt by this I' [and, this I], is always experienced as "here" wherever and whenever I move' (Husserl, E., Ding und Raum (Husserliana 16) Ulrich Claesges, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973: 162, 283. Quoted by Casey 1997: 217. Emphasis added). The 'spatiality' of the I can be said to be inherent in its corporeal and conscious presence for the very fact that, every time I encounter something, that something will offer itself as 'arranged around' that same I (myself), positioned as the 'Ichzentrum' of 'all my experiences' or, as Casey remarks, as 'stationary and invariant' as the 'zero point in analytical geometry' (Casey 1997: 218. Emphasis added).

What happens if this stationary point that is my body, starts moving around? By means of my kinaesthetic self-awareness (the sensation I have of my self moving in or around a place) I can, to a great extent, influence the manner in which I 'experience that place itself': 'if kinesthetic self-awareness is itself the basic form that awareness of my body takes (whether this corporeal consciousness be visual or tactile) than it will constitute a privileged entry into place as I actually experience it'. . . . 'Such a place cannot be a mere site; it is a complex qualitative whole that answers to my kinesthetic experience of it' (1997: 219). Through my kinaesthesia my body has access to what Husserl called the 'near-sphere', a complex of near areas into which I can go, areas to which I can have immediate access. In the act of moving of as Husserl put it, 'walking' and through the kinaesthetic awareness (derived from my own walking), I am able to 'enliven' and structure the areas around me as a coherent world of places. 'The result is a place-world that is the correlate of the ambulatory body, a world constituted by the very same body that depends on it for its own ongoing localisation' (Casey 1997: 228).

So far I have outlined how Husserl conceived phenomenology as a method to return to things themselves, to the world which precedes knowledge. Life-world is intended as 'concrete world already present', made up of phenomena that manifest
themselves to us in their givenness. (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 19). The best manner for us to approach the ‘mode of givenness’ of phenomena is when we operate the above mentioned ‘reduction’, which helps us to unveil a world of ‘wonder’ (Fink, E. Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserl in der gegenwärtigen Kritik, Kantstudien, 1933: 331. Quoted by Merleau-Ponty 2002: xv).

Life-world is already there before I can engage myself in a conscious analysis of it. Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), adopted phenomenology to continue the Husserlian exploration of human experience in/of the life-world, arguing for the corporeal dimension as the primary mode of that experience wherein it is body that provides us with a privileged way of access to this world primary essence. The ‘body’ of Merleau-Ponty is a ‘body-in-the-world’ (2002: 164). The very concept of space is better defined in his perspective. The process through which we get to the ‘pre-given world’, as Husserl contended, is not a mental one, nor can we get there if we do not intentionally reject any natural assumption in our experience of it (which is again a mental act); rather we use our own body, or, to borrow freely from Husserl, we walk there. It is true that, precisely by means of bracketing, we discover that there, as a ‘new’ different world, a world which gives itself to us in its own essence, but it is nevertheless a fact that it could not be graspable if we, as human beings, were not embodied in it.

A move or a ‘shift of the centre of gravity of experience’, can be registered: from a mental reflection about the world, a thinkable and traduced world, elaborated in scientific thought, towards an understanding of the ‘total intention’ and the ‘unique mode of existing’ of the thing I experience:

But even if the cogitatio, which I thus discover, is without location in objective time and space, it is not without place in the phenomenological world. The world which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover ‘in me’ as the permanent horizon of all my cogitationes and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself. . .The true Cogito . . .

22 The term Kinesthesia, from the Greek kinesis (to move) + ἀσθέσις (sensation), refers to the sensation provoked by the movement of body’s limbs (Enciclopedia GE 20, 1973, Novara, Istituto Geografico De Agostini: 96).
recognises my thought itself as an inalienable fact, and does away with any kind of idealism in revealing me as ‘being-in-the-world’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 266, xiv).

The communication between ourselves and the phenomena is ‘enunciated within us, is not a thing which can be further clarified by analysis’. Our very mode to reach an understanding of the givenness of a thing is incorporating it into the world of the body, in other words ours is, in the end, ‘a knowledge in the hands’ (2002: xx, 166).\textsuperscript{23}

Merleau-Ponty expresses the character of this primary communication very clearly: ‘the world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it . . . ’ (2002: xviii. Emphasis added).

I am no longer immersed in my ‘cogitations’ about the world, rather I am already there, as an embodied being, as part of its unity, and as part of its nature. As a body I engage in a relationship with the other external beings positing myself as a sensible body and the other beings as beings, not as objects of for my mental reflection: I enter into ‘a sympathetic relation with them’, ‘steal into the[ir] form of existence which is thus suggested to me’, thanks to my bodily familiarity with it (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 248. Emphasis added).

How does a body create its spaces? It is from the very act of moving and embodying, that body inhabits space: ‘In so far as I have a body through which I act in the world, space and time are not, for me, a collection of adjacent points nor are they a limitless number of relations synthesised by my consciousness, and into which it draws my body. I am not in space and time, nor I do conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 162).

\textsuperscript{23} With this regard, Merleau-Ponty provides the reader with an interesting and clear example of ‘the knowledge in the hands’ when he writes: ‘It is possible to know how to type without being able to say where the letters which make the words are to be found on the keyboard. To know how to type is not, then, to know the place of each letter among the keys, nor even to have acquired a conditioned reflex for each one, which is set in motion by the letter as it comes before our eye . . . The subject knows where the letters are on the typewriter as we know where one of our limbs is, through a knowledge bred of familiarity which does not give us a position in objective space . . . It is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the key-bank space into his bodily space’ (2002: 166–167). This example also introduces the author’s idea of bodily space which I shall later develop.
At this point Casey has highlighted two basic features of ‘implacement’ operated by and through the body: ‘expressive movements’ and ‘orientation’. On the one hand, corporeal motility is always already provided with an expressiveness that is exactly what characterises the space in which the body moves. This is clear when looking at the example of the instrumentalist and the organ:

It is said that an experienced organist is capable of playing an organ which he does not know, which has more or fewer manuals and stops differently arranged, as compared with those on the instrument he is used to playing. He needs only an hour’s practice to be ready to perform his programme . . . Are we to maintain that the organist analyses the organ, then he conjures up and retains a representation of the stops, pedals, manual and their relation to each other in space? . . . [in fact] he gets the measure of the instrument with his body, incorporates within himself the relevant directions, settles into the organ as one settles into a house . . . during the performance, the stops, pedals and manuals are given to him as nothing more than possibilities of achieving certain emotional or musical values, and their positions are simply the places through which this value appears in the world . . . his movements during the rehearsal are consecratory gestures: they draw affective vectors, discover emotional sources, and create a space of expressiveness. . . . (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 168. Emphasis added).

Our body is an ‘expressive space’ which itself creates spaces, more precisely, expressive spaces, through the innate expressiveness of its movements. My body is ‘a meaningful core’ giving rise to meaningful spaces that start their existence as things when I engage with them. Our bodily habit is the first means by which we provide ourselves with meanings every time a phenomena offers itself up to me in its unique mode of existence. On the other hand, orientation is a key feature of our mobile and actively moving body (as the instrumentalist with his body has shown to us): it is not a matter of cardinal directions, but rather of ‘a sense of fit and of knowing one’s way around’ (Casey 1997: 231).

The role of my body, with its expressive and orienting habits, is the means for what Casey, paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty, has called ‘inhabitation’: by means of my lived body as the subject of space I actively inhabit it (1997: 231).

In Merleau-Ponty’s account, however, place has not a straightforward definition. The moving body itself can be said to create space, but it is not to be seen as an
objective positioning of my body in some specific space; rather it is the very experience of movement, in that ‘knowing my way around’ that through which myself, as being, can become a ‘situated being’ (1997: 233). It is the aforementioned familiarity of my body with the pre-given environing world, its customary actions and ways of ‘being/moving in the world’ that provide itself, and us, with a place to inhabit, a place that is first lived by our bodies. We could not be in place and im-placed other than in, and through, our bodies.

We can say that our body produces meaningful places, through its expressiveness and orientation possibilities, through its kinetic dynamism. The kinaesthesia, that is the personal and subjective feelings we have of our own body moving around, are the basic features through which we can understand how the world is declaring itself to us. At the same time, they represent those concrete ‘objective’ proofs of the modality in which ‘the place-world’ reveals itself to us (Casey 1997: 234–236).

So far, as my written kinaesthesia might confirm to us, we have been moving around spaces and/or places with our bodies. Throughout this short journey it has been shown how the body has been transformed, from an extended matter into a body with right and left sides, from a Körper into a lived body (Leib), from a body as an instrument passively capable of ‘sense’ experiences into a lived body that actively interacts with the world around it.

I have also outlined how the encounter with the world and subsequently with places is first achieved, according to Merleau-Ponty, at the very basic ‘antepredicative’ level of our bodies, where places and the spatial world are not essentially given to us in forms of mental products of our thought, but rather are expressively inhabited, first of all, by our corporeal existence (Merleau-Ponty 2002: xvii). It is through the ‘bracketing’ of our conceptual mental way of experiencing, that we can discover our pre-reflective bodily way of approaching the world of which we are already part.
1.3 *Dasein-ing* in the world: building, dwelling, being

By means of a short temporal digression, we enter the phenomenological trajectory of Heidegger (1889–1976), whose existential approach to the world of space and place leaves ‘the’ body to one side. The being in the world of Heidegger is almost deprived of its corporeal features but it does not prevent this being, man or woman, to actually dwell on the earth, to build concretely on it or, as I shall later clarify, most appropriately, to realise the fact that he or she ‘is’ as dweller.

The notions of space and place are, to a great extent, scattered throughout Heidegger’s writings. This fact determines and increases the complexity inherent in these notions. Already in *Being and Time* (1927) we encounter an analysis of the spatiality of the ‘Being-in’ (*Insein*) of *Dasein*. The introduction of this term clearly indicates Heidegger’s deep concern regarding the nature and specific mode of Being of humans. *Dasein*, the German word for ‘existence’, literally means *Da-Sein*, that is, ‘there-Being’. The ‘there’ in this instance means that a human being, as *Dasein*, is...

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25 With this regard, it should be noticed that the complexity found in tracing Heidegger’s ideas of space and place is also due to the fact that Heidegger considered these two notions important not for their own sake, rather ‘because of [their] usefulness’ (Casey 1997: 244).

26 Aware of the difficult philosophical vocabulary used by Heidegger and the presence of various English versions and relative translations of specific terms, I shall refer mainly to Casey and Moran’s translations. I shall, nevertheless, make reference to the Italian version of Vattimo’s explanatory work on Heidegger, *Introduzione a Heidegger* (2001). Regarding the Italian and English versions of *Being and Time* (*Essere e Tempo*, 1976) I have noticed several differences between the two, especially concerning the use of italics and quotation marks.

27 It should be noted that Heidegger begins questioning the Being of man and he does so starting from the daily ways of Being of man that include different ways of Being, real or possible. It is true, in fact, that the Being of man is usually positioned in front of different existential possibilities but that not all of them can be realised. This starting point is useful for Heidegger because it does not preclude to human beings any possible ways for him to Be. This open possibility reveals the real and essential ‘nature’ of a human being, that is, that of ‘existence’. Talking about existence is somewhat risky because it does not mean, in this case, that man exists in the sense that he is real, that he is present. Rather, the specificity of human existence (as compared with that of things, for example) consists in its openness to possibilities. Vattimo claims, in fact, that the word existence derives etymologically from *ex-stitère*, which means to stay out, in this case, stay out of what is real or present, taking possibility as the more appropriate way of existence for man. However, man does not exist alone, he is among other men and things, hence, his is a ‘there’—Being or *Dasein*: so not only his existence transcends the given reality and mere presence but this means also that there is always a concrete and shared reality to be overcome (Vattimo 2001: 19–22).
always a Being-in-the-world where ‘world’ is to indicate ‘a context, an environment, a set of references and assignments (Moran 2000: 233).

For Heidegger we, as human beings, are ‘being[s]-in-the-world’. This is our own inescapable and essential nature. Moreover, the being of Heidegger is a Being-placed. The aforementioned Being-in refers therefore, principally to the human condition of contact with things, and to human immersion in the environment. Human beings are in the world in the sense that they are ‘familiar’ to it, they are ‘alongside’ the world as Heidegger himself explains: “In” is derived from “innan”—to reside... habitare, to dwell; ‘an’ signifies: I am accustomed, I am familiar with, I look after something, ... The expression ‘bin’ is connected with ‘bei’, and so ‘ich bin’ [I am] means in its turn I reside or dwell alongside the world as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way. ‘Being’ [Sein], as the infinitive of ‘ich bin’ (that is to say, when it is understood as an existentiale), signifies to reside alongside, ... to be familiar with... Being-in is thus the formal existential expression for the Being of Dasein which has Being-in-the-world as its essential state” (Heidegger, M. Being and Time, trans. J. Maquarrie and E. Robinson, New York, Harper and Row. 1962: 80. Quoted by Casey 1997: 245–246. His addition).

This passage anticipates the future development of his thought in ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’ (1993 [1951]) in which Heidegger addresses the concept of dwelling and building as ‘... the way in which humans are on the earth...’ (Heidegger, M. ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’, in Martin Heidegger. Basic Writings, Farrell Krell, D. ed. London, Routledge, 1993: 349). It also indirectly enlightens a sketch of Heideggerian place, the place of Dasein, which is inherently bounded in its very existential dimension of Being-in-the-world. Place is a place to come, it exists virtually in the Being/Dwelling of human being.

Yet, human being is not alone.
As we have seen, a human being as *Dasein* is, on the one hand, an *Insein* but, on the other, inescapably *Mitsein*, that is, *with others*; the world of *Dasein* is not only an ‘in-the-world’ but is characterised as a ‘with-world’ (Moran 2000: 242). Not only a world with other beings but a world of things. The things we encounter in our daily life are things but before being ‘realities’ provided of their own objective existence, they are tools. What Heidegger calls *Zuhandensein*, or ‘readiness-to-hand’ intends to clarify the primary way in which these things present themselves to us, that is to say, in their being available to us as tools.

Claiming that they are tools does not imply that we can concretely use them, but rather that they, more generally, become a part of our life, as they take on a certain significance with reference to our existence and goals (2000: 233). This world, a pragmatic *place* invested and made up of what Casey has called ‘instrumental values’, makes evident the ‘world of work as constituted by basic instrumental actions, signs and references’ (Casey 1997: 246).

In Being and Time the spatiality of ready-to-hand things is addressed. This is basically characterised by a variable ‘closeness’ to *Dasein*: yet, this variable distance is not metrically measurable but is referred to *Dasein*. Heidegger maintains that ready-to-hand things are not positioned in some point of the ‘world-space’, they are close to us, occupying a particular place, which for us is a ‘there’ or a ‘here’ and these ‘there’ and ‘here’ represent the ready-to-hand’s own ‘(B)eing-in-their-place’.

Every ready-to-hand thing has its own ‘place’:

Equipment has its place (Platz), or else it ‘lies around’; this must be distinguished in principle from just occurring at random in some spatial position. When equipment for something or other has its place, this place is defined as the place of this equipment—as

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28 As already explained (see note 26) the existence of man is structured as to be open or projected to certain existential possibilities: in this respect human being, as *Dasein*, is in the world as project. Therefore, *Dasein* encounters things first of all inserting them into his existential project, taking them as tools: ‘In this sense, also the moon is a tool, that while illuminating a landscape, suggests within ourselves a melancholy mood; . . . in general, an indifferent contemplation of nature too, inserts it [nature] within a context of references, such as for example, memories, feelings or, at least, analogies with man and his works’ (Vattimo 2001: 23–24). In this sense things are provided with meanings for us. And our existence is within a meaningful world.
one place out of a whole totality of places . . . directionally lined up and belonging to the context of equipment that is environmentally ready-to-hand. Such a place and such a multiplicity of places should not be interpreted as the ‘where’ of some random Being-present-at-hand of Things (Heidegger 1962: 136. Quoted by Casey 1997: 248).

The aforementioned spatiality of ready-to-hand things has been connoted by a direct relation to \textit{Dasein}: indeed, these things are close to us and their proper place is defined through this mutual relationship. They ‘belong somewhere’ but their belonging to a place is an ‘implacement’ effected by the ‘individual \textit{Dasein}’s directionality’ and ‘de-severance’: ‘For place is regarded as the result of \textit{Dasein}’s directional de-severing, that is, its oriented bringing-close’ (Casey 1997: 251, 250).

The major contribution Heidegger has made in matters of space and place, regards the new dimension now acquired by these two notions. It is, in fact, due to him that places and spaces are not a matter of taking possession of or domination of space, but rather a matter of taking care of, a concerned way of ‘making room for’, that gives places the possibility to be. In this new dimension ‘place (der Ort) is as a gathering of things, a mutual belonging of things and dwelling’ (Cacciari 2002: 40).

Before reaching the concept of dwelling, I would remain a moment longer on Heidegger’s theoretical stance, which will reveal itself to be useful in the understanding of what I have called ‘new’ dimensions of space and place.

Throughout the aforementioned instances in which I have been talking about things, we have discovered that the primary way things give themselves to us, is as tools, they are inserted into our existential project. Therefore, for a \textit{Dasein} to

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29 In the third chapter of the first section of \textit{Being and Time}, Heidegger addresses the spatiality of \textit{Dasein}, claiming that the way of Being of this being determines the way in which he is spatial. The spatial way of Being of \textit{Dasein} is basically made of two characters: Ent-fernung, (that is to say de-severance, removal of distance) and ‘directionality’ (Heidegger 1976: 137).

30 It is important to explain that a thing is a tool but as such is never alone rather, to be as such, it needs to be inscribed in relation to a totality of tools. From this perspective the world should not be merely represented as just the sum of things, rather the ‘condition’ thanks to which these things can ‘be’. On the other hand, the totality of tools can ‘be’ only in so far as there is someone who uses it, which in this case is \textit{Dasein}. Every instrument is such in the sense that it is always in relation to something else, that is to say, it always refers to something else. Among the world of things there are some whose essential referring to something else ‘is not accidental rather constitutive, that is, the sign’. A sign is different from other tools because its capacity to refer to something else represents its own proper utility, it does not have any other utility apart from this. From this perspective, sign represents the essence of
appropriate a thing, means that he shall insert it into his own project of existence, to take care of it (I de-severe a thing only when I am concerned about it, when I include it in my existential project, only in that case it becomes a tool and I bring it 'close' to me). To 'meet' things and to really 'know' them concretely implies an assumption of responsibility by the Dasein.

I thus want to show up ‘... Dasein as having the fundamental structure of Being-in-the-world, being with things and with others in such a way that its whole existence is structured by care (Sorge)’ (Moran 2000: 238). I take care of these things because I understand them as what they really are, and insert them significantly into the project of my existence.

Our own existence as Dasein is already one of understanding: an understanding of myself as a human being, an understanding of the world. Moran clearly states that ‘our very existentiality is one of understanding’, we are already in the world, in an intimate connection with a world made up of things but also references, relationships, meanings (see note n. 30) (Moran 2000: 239).

We already understand the world as a totality of meanings because we always have, before any particular real experience of any of such meanings, a certain inherited ‘baggage’ of ideas, or prejudices, that guide us in or discovery of things. Since Dasein, as I have already outlined, is in the form of a project, in the sense that it is open to certain existential possibilities, the same happens to the pre-understanding of which Dasein is provided, which is itself a project, it is not definitive, but can be modified.

The pre-understanding that we, as Dasein, already have of the world and of its meanings, structures the way in which we actually meet the world (Vattimo 2001: 29–
30). We appear to life or rather, we are thrown into life already with the possibility to relate to it and understand it. Our preliminary and primary comprehension of the world is inauthentic, in the sense that ours is not our own comprehension but rather a simple acceptance of others’ points of view, a mere uncritical ‘participation in a social and historical world and its prejudices’ (2001: 38). From the various possibilities at our disposal, we choose to project our existence by simply following or adapting it to the scheme of vague average ‘everydayness’ of public mentality (Moran 2000: 239). The inauthentic way to be is the primary one of human beings, it is the primary condition in which we find ourselves soon after having been ‘thrown’ into the world. We can escape from this average interpretative condition of simply having a direct contact with the world and things, by bringing them into our project of existence as tools not as mere objects. My Being authentic is achieved when I decide to project myself in the more appropriate way, in a modality that is only mine.31

Before the writing of the essay ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’ (1951) Heidegger re-elaborates the notions of world as well as that of thing, and especially in relation to the notion of a work of art. The world of Being and Time was the world of the totality of things and the condition thanks to which things are. He goes further and deepens the analysis of the concept of world arriving at a definition of it as ‘fourfold’ (Geviert): ‘... the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals’ (Heidegger, M. ‘The Thing’, in Poetry, Language and Thought, trans. A. Hofstadter, New York, Harper and Row, 1975: 179. Quoted by Casey 1997: 452).32

31 As Vattimo explains, ‘Heidegger intends authenticity (Eigenllichkeit) in its literal etymological meaning, being connected with the adjective “proper” (eigen) (Vattimo 2001: 40). In this instance I decide to project myself in the more proper way, and what is proper for me is something only mine, my way is not suitable for others. Moran explores this concept further: ‘Heidegger explicates his concept of authenticity in terms of ‘ownness’ and ‘ownership’. My existence is something which is mine; or, put more generally, Dasein has the structure of ‘mineness’ (Moran 2000: 239). So Dasein should be read as my-own-way-of-Being-in-the-world.

32 The Thing, together with Building, Dwelling, Thinking and Poetically man dwells, is part of a group of written works of three different lectures Heidegger composed in the early '50s 'that unravel new... strands of the question of Being (Farrell Krell 1993: 344).
The same thing happens with the concept of thing (*Ding*), which is no longer a tool, a useful thing of equipment. Here the intrinsic limitations in the thing thought of as a tool, are acknowledged, since its existence is limited to its usefulness. In fact, the work of art, as a thing, is not reduced to the satisfaction of some aim, rather it goes far beyond a mere instrumental dimension. Moreover, while the tool can be simply referred to the world to which it belongs, the work of art brings forth its own world: ‘Works of art are privileged things, things which work on us, setting truth to work, disclosing the truth of things, disclosing the world in which things manifest themselves and the earth which draws them back into itself’ (Moran 2000: 215). Truth is set forth when things and world meet each other.

Two things should be noticed here: firstly the fact that the work of art, as a thing, opens, reveals, discloses a world, and secondly that the thing is now intended (no longer as a tool, rather) as having a basic gathering power. With this regard, Norberg-Schulz states that Heidegger goes back to the ancient meaning of the word ‘thing’ which indicated ‘gathering, assembly’ (Norberg-Schulz 1980: 17).

As Moran has explained, the work of art sets the truth to work; this operation is a creative process, because if the work of art gathers its world within it, it does so in a new way, it is an interpretive process and a subsequent concretisation of certain aspects of that world. That is the reason why a work of art is never entirely discoverable in its full significance. Therefore, beside the truth there is a dark side to it, a sort of reserve of meaning.

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33 A direct reference of this can be found in Heidegger’s ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’ where he writes ‘Gathering (*Versammlung*), by an ancient word of our language, is called thing’ (Heidegger, M. ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’, in Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, Farrell Krell, D. ed., London, Routledge 1993: 355).

34 Moran reminds us that the creative, original way in which art has to bring forth truth can be referred to an ‘act of creative founding, what the Greeks called poesis’ (2000: 216). Norberg-Schulz specifies that ‘Heidegger indicated that the Greek word *techne* meant a meaningful unveiling (Entbergen) of truth and it belonged to poesis, that is, to making’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 15).

35 The unveiling of truth and its concretisation are an essential characteristic of art, but Heidegger regarded poetry as the most important of them. Each form of art, for the very fact of revealing truth, is itself poetry. This can be explained if we think that art manifests the truth of its world in a new, creative way, in a ‘poetic way’: the German word for poetry is *Dichtung* which derives from the verb *dichten*, meaning to create, invent, to
The real essence of thing is no longer that of being a tool rather to gather the so-called fourfold including, as we have seen, sky, earth, mortals and divinities. These should be intended as ‘directions or cardinal points’, they are ‘dimensions of the world’, ‘constitutive directions within which the world extends itself’ (Vattimo 2001: 127).

Thing, gathering, concretisation, earth, sky, mortals, divinities, language, all of these are pieces having a fundamental part in giving rise to Heidegger’s place. Heidegger’s place is one in which the fourfold is preserved. Going beyond these directions and dimensions of the world that he regards as essential, we can say that a place is a thing, intended as a location.

We have already seen the importance of thing as having a gathering power. Heidegger uses the example of the bridge intending it as a thing (a building) that gathers, unites and manifests the landscape around it as a world: there are not two banks of a river rather they become banks only when the bridge crosses the river. The banks now do not just run alongside the river as two pieces of sheer terrain. In the same way the bridge brings the banks and their landscapes to the river. The bridge brings river, banks and ground near to each other. So the sheer terrain now becomes a landscape around the river and this ‘landscape acquires its value’ and it does so through, and thanks to, the bridge as thing. Moreover, as a thing, the bridge not only gathers but unveils, brings to light, clarifies what before was hidden, in this case the significance of the landscape.

Paraphrasing Heidegger’s words, Norberg-Schulz explains it clearly: ‘The bridge gathers Being in a certain “site” that we can call “place”. This place did not exist devise. Therefore, we can derive that poetry represents the creative essence of all the other arts. From poetry as the essence of art we move to poetry as the art of language: and it is exactly through language that truth comes out, it is through it that the world comes to existence. The pre-understanding with which we are already provided becomes somehow concretised in language, in grammar rules and syntax. Language far from being that which is just confined to mere means of communication, is thus creative, it allows the world to open up. Through language our own existence receives its structure: if language opens the world in which we are already being, it is true that it has already put ourselves into it in a certain way. So language is the house of
as an entity before the bridge (although there were a lot of spots along the bank in which it could rise), rather, it becomes a place with and as bridge’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 18. Emphasis added). So the bridge is a thing and a place.

Moreover, Heidegger claims that space is not what is everywhere outside, an abstract container, but rather it is that for which room has been made: the place that bridge is and that bridge has unveiled, is a space, but is always characterised as something concretely available, which takes its essence from the place: space is in a sense granted by the place-thing. Place founds spaces in so far as they are something that contain space in themselves: ‘. . . spaces receive their essential being from locales and not from “space”’ (Heidegger 1993: 356).

What is the relationship between human beings and places? Heidegger starts questioning the real meaning of dwelling and its relation to building. What he discovers is that to build is already to dwell: he goes back to language ‘that tells us about the essence of a thing’ where the root of the verb bauen, to build, leads to the ‘Old High German’ word buan, that means to dwell (Heidegger 1993: 348). Pushing the etymological analysis further, Heidegger discovers that the German word bauen reveals human beings inherently as dwellers, so much that our Being-in-the-world, could be freely re-interpreted as dweller-in-the-world. So he writes:

Where the word bauen still speaks in its original sense, it also says how far the essence of dwelling reaches. That is, bauen [to build], buan [to dwell], bhu, beo are our word bin in the versions: ich bin, I am . . . . What then does ich bin mean? The old word bauen, to which bin belongs, answers: ich bin, du bist mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is buan, dwelling (1993: 349).

At this point we should be asking if we, inherently as dwellers, are good or bad dwellers, how do we actually put ourselves into place as dwellers? We should also be

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Being, and it provides things with their being. Concretely, things receive their ‘spatio-temporal’ presence, thus becoming available and accessible in the words that name them (Vattimo 2001: 119–126).
asking if ours is the role of the Baumeister or rather that of the Arkitekt, if ours is a
‘taking possession of (Besitzergreifung), a “dominion” of place’? (Cacciari 2002: 37).

Heidegger answers these questions simply reminding us that the word bauen
‘also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for,
specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. . . . The Old Saxon wuon, the Gothic
wunian, like the old word bauen means to remain, to stay in place. . . . Wunian means
to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, Friede,
means the free, das Frye; and fry means preserved from harm and danger, preserved
from something, safeguarded’ (Heidegger 1993: 349–350).

How, otherwise, could the fourfold be gathered if we do not provide it with a
warm and safe place? To put it in more concrete terms, human beings dwell and build
when they are capable of having an authentic relation with the world, capable of freeing
things, let them be in their own essence, an essence that names can express. When we
name a place we not only give rise to it through language but we also unveil and let its
essence come out: ‘if it is language that gives things their essence, so the real way to go
back to things themselves will be to go to word’ (Vattimo 2001: 126. Emphasis added).

Human beings dwell and build when they ‘understand’ the real essence of the
world: only subsequently can they talk (i.e. use language) about it, they name what they
have truly apprehended, from a direct, authentic relationship. How can I ‘talk’ with real
knowledge about something that I do not know directly?

‘Apache place-names are lengthy and made up of descriptions of the locations to
which they refer. . . . In a fundamental way names create landscapes’ (Tilley 1994: 19).
If it is true that language ‘remains the master of man’, it should also be true that naming
itself, apart from being the process through which we free places, letting them become
what they essentially are, is one that allows us to recognise ourselves in those named
thing-places, because it is precisely in them that our mutual relationship is inscribed
(Heidegger 1993: 348). When Heidegger says that language 'remains the master of man' he means, on the one hand, that it is essentially something that we have inherited and that it is at our disposal but, on the other, that it takes hold of us with and within its structure, setting a pre-determined, limited pattern of (our) possible experiences of the world.

We have seen earlier how Heidegger's *Dasein* was conceived almost devoid of any corporeal feature, an ethereal being. Yet, I have argued that despite its apparently inconsistent figure, *Dasein* could dwell, build, all activities that have, in the end, a concrete outcome. If with Merleau-Ponty the body was the 'vehicle' of culture within a given natural surroundings, with Heidegger, *Dasein* operates, if not manifestly with his body, at least with language. Language makes the world we encounter, concrete. This concreteness is not simply a question of transforming something that *was not* in something that *is*, rather more importantly, to give to given natural surroundings, a cultural, historical connotation. Amongst the consequences of *Dasein*'s condition of fallness, there is precisely that of having inherited a language, one already culturally and historically connoted. If it is not through body that we take place, we make it arise through language, the 'house of Being' (Vattimo 2001: 123).

In this sense I can answer the questions raised previously, by claiming that ours is (potentially) the role of *Baumeister* rather than that of *Arkitekt*: 'a space arises when clearing the forest and tilling the soil *das Freie, das Offene*, the free, the Open are attained, to the dwelling and settlement of men . . . . To make space is "Freigabe von

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36 I have inserted the word 'potentially' in brackets because unfortunately we sometimes neglect our intimate essence of dwellers: this brings forth a disruption of our relationship with the world and with earth, which leads to a concrete way of building and dwelling characterised by the detachment from place, what Cacciari calls the process of 'Ent-ortung', that is 'to empty space from places' (Cacciari 2002: 36). Cacciari also distinguishes between *Baumeister* as an artisan who 'forms the work' (whereas forms is referred to by the Greek word *techne* as to produce and to let a thing be, to make/let something appear), and *Arkitekt* for whom space is something merely vacuous to be measured and delimited, a space in which he can set forth his own 'new' forms (2002: 40).
Orten”, to give places, to open and free places where men recognise themselves . . . as destined to be dwellers’ (Cacciari 2002: 37).

It would then seem appropriate to quote what Norberg-Schulz borrowing from Hölderlin calls ‘a dwelling in a poetic way’, and use it to support our answer. Poetry is ‘the’ art for Heidegger, but is also the ‘art of living’: dwelling and building should be intended as creative acts, which like poetry, do not detach themselves from earth and dominate it. Creative would indicate the process through which we arrive at a non-daily relationship with the world, leaving the inauthentic way of Being behind, to engage ourselves in a mutual relationship with it: our task should be that of translating, in and through our building and dwelling activities, what we have ‘seen’, our existential hold, the meanings we have experienced in a certain environmental context: ‘Poetry is that which first brings man to earth, let him belong to it, so inducing him to dwell’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 23).

1.4 Towards the rejection of the ‘holding together’: entortung and eu-topia

So far, we have acknowledged the basic relationship between language, thing and place, and the way in which Heidegger has characterised language as unveiling and giving concrete presence to things, where things are themselves places with gathering powers. Place, as a thing, gathers: ‘within place things gather themselves in their own mutual belonging. What is proper of place is this gathering’ (Cacciari 2001: 39–40).

Casey analyses this notion of gathering of place arguing, however, that this power does not produce a mere pile of something. Rather, gathering should be intended as a mode of containment, the way in which this power of gathering is accomplished: ‘to gather placewise is to have a peculiar hold on what is presented (as well as represented) in a given place. Not just the contents but the very mode of containment is held by a place’ (Casey 1996: 25). Casey highlights five basic modes of gathering: first, that a place is a
‘holding together’ of things in a particular ‘configuration’ which gives us a sense of a certain arrangement even of disparate elements. In this respect, it could be said that this holding together is a holding of different things which are moved out from their original place to another. This ‘move’ or displacement of things and their subsequent new configuration is accomplished by what Norberg-Schulz calls an act of translation, a creative and interpretative act. This displacement is operated through symbolisation, intended itself as a creative transposition of some experienced meanings into something else. Translation is itself interpretive. As previously outlined, Heidegger talks about the gathering power of artwork and thing as a holding together of various meanings under a concrete figure.

Secondly, place’s holding is a retaining in or a keeping out of its boundaries. An essential characteristic of place is to concentrate what is known within its boundaries (in this case the bridge makes appear the spots of lands as banks of the river). What is outside these boundaries, is what is defined in direct relation to the specified place (in this case the landscape around the river which acquires its value thanks to, and via, the bridge). The third point highlights how place holds the surrounding features, ‘reflects the layout of the local landscape’. This dimension relates directly to what I have outlined regarding the ‘holding together’: it is a matter of welcoming the suggestions given by the natural environment, not to go against it; it is to unite those natural features and properties. Architecture, as the art of place, has precisely this role: it gathers the natural qualities bringing them close to the human being. That of human beings as ‘experiencing bodies’ kept in place, is what Casey claims to be the fourth holding dimension of place.

There is, however, another, but no less relevant and constantly present, dimension of the gathering power exercised by places: it is devoid of bodies but full of memories and thoughts, myths and events. Places holding memories, desires, and
sorrows, are those meaningful stages of the unrolling of our lives. It is then appropriate to read them as something more than fixed things, recognising their intrinsic evolution and modification parallel to that of human existence. Since places are unveiled by and through our relationship with the world, the nature of their events should consequently be acknowledged: every time we engage with and use them, moving in or out, towards or alongside them, a new relationship (in itself interpretative) is created, and one that goes on between them and ourselves, an event that produces and discloses a different meaning every time, while others are hidden.

In his essay on Loos’s architecture, Adolf Loos and his Angel, Cacciari takes the house as the paradigm of what is most inner and closest to human life, the place where man gathers himself. The existential dimension of place, in particular seen as that which produces and gathers memories, reveries, sense of belonging and self-identity is best exemplified by the house: ‘... the clarity of the word that preserves, the interior where, interminably, gestures, memories, things roam and where every body can have one hour, maybe less... something between two moments... an existence’ (Cacciari 2002: 49). ‘... Levinas defines the privileged place that house occupies within the system of finalities in which human life is situated as simply essential. The house constitutes an “original intimacy” ’ (Levinas, E. Totalità e Infinito. Saggio sull’esteriorità, Milano, 1980: 155–177. Quoted by Cacciari 2002: 53).

Bachelard also regards the self as shaped and influenced by the places it inhabits, where these places ‘shape and influence human memories, feelings, thoughts. In this way, the spaces of inner and outer—of mind and world—are transformed one into the other as inner space is externalised and outer space brought within’ (Malpas 1999: 5). In The Poetics of space (1999) he declares his intention to go, as phenomenology suggests, to the profound, inner, native ‘function’ of dwelling which the house concretely represents, the ‘house as our first universe’ (Bachelard 1999: 32).
The dimension from which he starts is that of infancy, or childhood, as the stage of our life that still feels the house, our native place, as having the dimension of a bosom, by which we are tenderly enveloped, protected from the outside, the stormy, violent universe of men.

What Bachelard remarks is essentially that every time we think about ourselves, every time our memory reminds us of a place in our life, a life is thus essentially place-bound. Not only do we, as bodies, have a place, but we also have a place in our memory and imagination: ‘Sometimes one believes that one knows himself, when what he really knows is a suite of fixed points in the spaces of the stability of being’ (1999: 36). There is a point of connection between the statement Cacciari makes of Modern architecture’s tendency toward the Entortung (see note n. 36 of this Chapter) and Bachelard’s preoccupation for retrieving place in memory, siting it in imagination so that its inner dimension cannot disappear. The dimension of place as the house of beings and their Being is threatened by the Entortung, that is the process of elimination or better still of annulment, the annihilation of places and the recovery of the pure geometric thought-of space of the ‘Architekt’. Loos’s architecture bears witness to the ongoing dissonance between what is the pure, flat, equal dimension of ‘technical-scientific space’ that seduces, and what is proper and particular of place. This dissonance is incredibly realistic. 37

The architectonic movement towards the Modern also signals a movement towards an ‘impatient’ new place, a place that runs, that elevates itself from the ground, from any concrete reference to the existential dimension of human life. It is probably

37 With this regard, Cacciari underlines how Loos with his architecture expresses a constant search for a balance between the pressing dimension of Entortung and his own pressing need to ‘give places’: if the exteriors of Steiner house (1910), of the waggon-house in Northartgasse, of Strasser house (1919), can induce one to think about that ‘mobilization’ of the edifice which makes it ‘similar’ to contemporary machine, with the haste with which its forms appear and disappear reproducing themselves, the accomplished ‘classical’ presence of Rufer house (1922), emphasised by the eurhythmy of the form and disposition of windows . . . . . . rejects the principle of Entortung . . . . Loos himself underlines, on the one hand, the root of some of his works (Villa Khuner and
the reason why Bachelard chooses to live these places in his imagination, in memories, where that rapid movement of Modern can in no sense modify or alter the original link places have with ourselves.

*Entortung* is produced when the dimension of ‘project’ conquers space, and this conquest implies that this space can be thought of as omni-measurable and divisible, as quantitatively calculable (Cacciari 2001: 40). It is the passage from the giving place of the *Baumeister* to the possession of space by the *Architekt*, a passage that Norberg-Schulz has called ‘the loss of places’. He contends that this loss is a by-product of the greater change humanity has undergone since the Second World War: from that moment on, traditional urban structures have been progressively substituted by new agglomerates that have no sense of spatial closure, where quarters resulted just as free-spread ‘units’ without a defined relationship with the surrounding urban and natural landscape. Also the urban structure of pre-existent towns has been ‘torn, the continuity of town walls has been interrupted and the coherence of urban spaces has been damaged’ while the insertion of monotone and ‘inconsistent curtain walls’ undermined the character of towns, leaving no place for ‘surprises or discoveries’. Moreover, the relationship between earth and sky has been lost, where the majority of modern edifices existed among a ‘nothing’, they were not able to provide any ‘sense of belonging’ or ‘individuality’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 189–190). In this respect, Kevin Lynch in his

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38 The birth of the Modern movement in architecture corresponded to the rise of a new concept of human existence, a new way of living with the purpose of bringing men back to normality, helping them to follow the ‘organic development of existence’. Modern movement corresponded to the intention to give to alienated human subject an authentic and meaningful life. (Le Corbusier, *Verso un'architettura*, Milano, Longanesi, 1973: 6. Quoted by Norberg-Schulz 1979: 192). The original purpose, in fact, synthesised with the slogan *Neue Sachlichkeit*, ‘should not be read as “new rationalism” but rather as “a going back to things”. Identity, intended as a return of men to the original, the essential, and freedom, as an emancipation from the “absolutism” of the Baroque era, were the two means by which the return to things theorised by the new movement could be achieved. However, that of the Modern movement has been, to a great extent, a failure that has led to the ‘loss of place’ on two essential respects: on the one hand, the urban level has been characterised by the loss of spatial structures that could guarantee the identification of the place (such as, for instance, nodes and paths) while the architects of modernity has planned the urban space as a “grown up house”, with free openings, neighbourhoods planned as wide open squares; on the other hand, the adoption of what has been called International Style in the twenties, implied the adoption, by Modern architecture, of a unified principle not
The Image of the City, identifies the notions of node (point of reference), path, district, boundary, as basic concrete spatial structures able to provide us with a strong aid for orientation and identification with the urban image: ‘the world can be organised around a series of nodal points, be subdivided in regions or can be [thought as] linked by memorable trajectories (Lynch 1964: 29).

If new Modern architecture has been characterised as free or escaping from its ties with the ground, with the earth. Lynchian spatial structures themselves cannot then find any concrete place in which to exist, any place to structure. As already outlined, Norberg-Schulz has remarked that an important part of Modern architecture’s failure has been that of not providing people with any ‘node’, ‘boundary’ and ‘path’ that could foster their sense of belonging, their gathering, their sense of being part of a community or society. In this respect, Entortung and ‘loss of place’ share the same goal, lead to the same direction: transforming the ‘anthropological place’ into a ‘non-lieu’, detaching people from the ground where, to a great extent, the most relevant paths become those of highways or those illustrated on tourist brochures, nodes are those indicated on city maps: spatial structures together with their (present) places of reference are now devoid of human connotation or reference and have been transformed into something merely visible or readable rather than lived (Augé 1992). Entortung is and as loss of place.

This is the new, present dimension of the changed relationship between space and place. Foucault, Augé, Cacciari, and other contemporary thinkers have somehow reached the same conclusions: Cacciari speaks of Entortung and eu-topia, Foucault analyses Eterotopias, whilst Augé describes our daily places as non-lieux.

The uprooting process set forth by Entortung can be seen, in some respects, as an ascent, an elevation not only from the ground floor of the earth reaching the

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responding to any regional or local character. The evolution and adoption of this ‘style’ on an urban scale led the ‘play of ingenious forms’ to become ‘a unfruitful monotony’. However, this openness of urban spaces was in a sense ‘anti-urban, for this openness cannot be gathered’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 192–195).
transparencies of ‘Glasarchitektur’: it masks the intention to leave behind any concrete
reference to earth, it is a yearning to be free, independent, and to create an ideal place,
on an ideal upper dimension: it is in this process that eu-topia is achieved. Entortung
leaves its tópos, its place originally linked to the earth and moves to ‘happy tópoi (eu-
topia), happy places. Happy places are those planned by the ‘Ego of the Architekt’, who
imagined them already void of any human intention of appropriation:

Within Ent-ortung there is [inscribed] the whole destiny of the West which proceeds from
the rooting of Nomos into the Justissima tellus throughout the discovery and occupation
of new spaces of Americas (“free” spaces, seen as completely available for conquest,
spaces that can be freely profaned: they [these spaces] are devoid of places) arriving at
the Universality of global market’. This conscious separation from the earth can be
intended ‘as a tragic symbol of the breaking of the bond between space and
place’(Cacciari 2001: 44, 41).

That of Loos within the Modern architectural movement was, then, a sort of act of
resistance intended to show the ‘inexhaustible contradiction between thought-of space
of calculation’ and ‘the possibility of place, the hope for place’ (2001: 47. Emphasis
added).

Foucault himself contends the presence of utopias as ‘spaces deprived of a real
place’ but his utopias are somewhat different from the aforementioned ones (Foucault
2001: 23). His analysis of places and spaces of modernity still leaves room for
optimistic considerations, as compared to the perspective of annihilation outlined by
Cacciari; probably because we have not yet entered the extreme realm of surmodernité,
which we shall encounter with Augé.

What Foucault shows us is, essentially, a dimension of space which is not that of
the place as an existential dimension of being, nor that of the eu-topia as a place no
longer grounded; his are other sorts of places where the temporal dimension takes on a
discontinuous character and time is eternalised within certain places while absolutely
chronicised, in others.
Phenomenology, claims Foucault, dealt with inner spaces, whilst he is concerned with outer spaces, those in which we concretely live: 'among all these spaces, those that mostly interest me have the curious property of being in relation with all the others but in a way this fact allow them to suspend, neutralise and invert the relationships which they themselves delineate, reflect and mirror' (Foucault 2001: 23). Utopias represent one type of these spaces. These are places in which society is portrayed as better than what it really is, or exactly the contrary of society, but in any case there is an unreal dimension (suspended from the concreteness of the ground).

Beside these, eterotopias are rather concrete places, yet at the same time they are distant, away from any other place, they have a place of their own, a very special one with specific internal rules determined within their own society. Each culture has its own eterotopias and each one of them can develop one function to a greater degree than another. Foucault highlights the functioning process of these eterotopias which can be summarised in just a few points: they can have the power of juxtaposing different spaces, different, completely incompatible, places: the eterotopia of the theatre and the cinema are good examples, but the garden is perhaps the most appropriate example of eterotopia of this kind. Seen as a beautiful example of microcosm, the garden has, for thousands of years, condensed a world: 'garden represents . . . a sort of universalising happy eterotopy' (Foucault 2001: 28). It could also be said that botanical gardens condense a world of incompatible species of plants, from incompatible types of climates and environments.

There are eterotopias that eternalise time, as in the case of museums and libraries, where together with books, time is collected and accumulated: '[there is] the project of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a determined place [and] the idea of constituting a place for every time, a place that cannot be corrupted by time itself: all that belongs to our modernity' (2001: 29). Other eterotopias do not accumulate
time but are expressively places of futile and transient time; these eterotopias are chronic: so are fairs, markets, holiday villages, places where every time we leave and return we find the same time as when we had left the year before, it remains the same, there is no historical accumulation in them, rather continuity without peaks. It can be said that, in these places, time is abolished.

Cemeteries are places in which a special eterochronia is realised. There, the traditional time of human life is broken, and a sort of eternity is created.

Some eterotopias show themselves as open, others as closed systems that, should we wish to enter, we must perform some ritual or act of purification; we have access to them only by carrying out some gestures or by having a special access card. Pilgrimage can be said to be one of these special ways to access these kinds of places.

This ‘eterotopology’ finally leads us to discover that these other spaces can be divided into two basic categories: the eterotopy of crisis, typical of primitive societies, where these places are forbidden, sacred or reserved to people of that society who are in a ‘state of crisis’ (such as adolescents, old people and women in their menstrual periods). Colleges, military service and honeymoons can be inscribed within our own contemporary society, although they are slowly disappearing.

The eterotopies of deviation are, instead, still quite common: these are places where people with deviated behaviours are confined. Prisons and psychiatric clinics are the main examples (2001: 25).

Foucault does, however, seem to leave room, within his eterotopias, for spaces of existence that, he contends, are not completely inscribed into the logic of power, not completely determined and ‘formed’ by the knowledge and techniques that form them. There exist some spaces in our life where ‘sacred’ oppositions still resist as sacred, untouchable: we still have the right to a private and a public space, our own familiar as well as social space, that for culture and that for practice, that for work and that for
leisure (2001: 22). It is precisely where Augé locates his non-lieux, exactly in the midst of our private and social life. Our non-lieux are essentially characterised by haste; our cultural non-lieu, is that in which we see a movie just from trailers, we experience a southern region of France only reading about it on a magazine while flying from one place to another on an aeroplane.

The fundamental condition of surmodernité is overabundance, or excess. It is also a condition to which individuals have become used, but seem unaware of its functioning processes. Surmodernité is our present-day condition, it is defined by, and itself defines, the present day. Marc Augé knows that ours are non-lieux, non-places. He also urges that anthropological enquiry should become more systematically and critically involved in this condition of overabundance of the present. I should, however, shed some light on Augé’s thinking about surmodernité and its non-lieux.

To what extent can it be claimed that anthropological enquiry is interested in, open, and receptive to changing conditions of contemporary societies? Moreover, is this anthropology ready to leave its safe ‘anthropological places’ to enter into non-places?

Augé contends that the state of contemporary anthropological research shows an increasing interest and a movement of traditional ethnological ‘look’ away from the ‘exotic other’ to a much closer world, towards an ‘other’ which is ‘here and now’ (Augé 1993: 21). The closer we get to this contemporary world, the better we perceive its hastened transformation processes that regard time, space, and the individual.

Time and history chase us. This is due to an ‘overabundance’ of ‘events’ which we believe we can manage: we now live longer than we did 50 years ago, which implies that collective and historical memory is extended, that we feel able to somehow interact directly with recent history, with events of our and others’ lives that are immediately historicized. We need to give sense to those events that now have become part of our history but this leads to a lack of significance, a non-sense of recent past (1993:31–32).
The 'excess' of space has coincided with the 'shrinking of the planet' evident in the reduction of distances, the conquest of space: in the intimacy of our house, American actors provide us with information about the reality of that world and, through those images, the actors become somehow familiar to us. Yet, this spatial overabundance works, giving us the false perception that everything is so different however so close to us, that we believe we know America just because we are familiar with the faces of the actors: ‘Despite not knowing Texas, Washington . . . the Arabic desert, we recognise them’ (Augé 1993: 34). The exotic other is immediately brought into our own ‘here and now’ through hastened means and processes of information.

The production of non-places is one essential requisite of surmodernité; non-places are conceived as opposed to ‘anthropological places’ where anthropologists have always found a shelter, where they ‘have thought’ to be living. ‘Anthropological place’ is that of ethnological tradition, that of the anthropologist and that of the indigenous people he studies; it is the place where a society locates its culture in a determined space and time.

These are the places where communities recognise themselves and are at the same time tangible symbols of their social and cultural interactions. These systems however are circular and closed, in the sense that the cosmologies of these worlds have difficulty in accepting any external world, and their knowledge is actually ‘recognition’. The anthropologist too, lives in the ‘illusion’ of finding a society so ‘transparent to itself’ that ‘can find its own complete expression in one traditional practice’. However, Augé argues, these places are mere ‘inventions’. Those of indigenous peoples and anthropologists are conceived as closed totalities somehow cut and pasted within a world that, instead, runs alongside their margins. Yet, the ‘ghost’ of the indigenous and the ‘illusion’ of the anthropologist are ‘half-ghosts’ and ‘half-illusions’: indeed, despite their tendency to reject outside realities, anthropological places are provided with the
adequate means to get into and not exclude (not completely) the world and its rhythms. Indigenous populations, however conscious of, and faithful to, the power of traditional oral history, are aware of other histories, of those groups next to theirs. So, too, an anthropologist, while identifying the society he studies with the landscape in which it is inserted, is conscious of the historical changes that occur throughout the history of that society, the shift of its boundaries and the multiplicity of places to which this history can be referred (1993: 44–47). The reality of the anthropological places is contained in the aforementioned half. It is in fact true and not illusory, to think that a social group, the organisation of its space and concrete construction of its places, are collective and individual practices, the result of acts of symbolisation of social interactions and people’s cognition of their own environment: ‘anthropological place is this concrete and symbolic construction of space’ (Augé 1993: 51).

Those features that make up, and allow society to organise their anthropological places are essentially ‘geometric’ in character: Lynch’s identification of basic spatial features returns here to provide anthropological place with itineraries, centres and crossings (1993: 55).

In Augé’s recognition of the existence and social validity of these basic spatial features, we find a confirmation of the above-mentioned Norberg-Schulz’s claim that Modern movement in architecture has somehow failed to provide those basic anchors for the formation of people’s sense of belonging and identity with their places. Those highlighted by Lynch, that Augé himself considers as essential to his anthropological place are, I would say, supporting geometries, essential to social relations and interactions.

Non-‘anthropological’ places are just around the corner. As already outlined, they are either what actively produces, or are the first products of surmodernité, while the other is ‘ordinary man’. That of surmodernité is a world of non-places such as
refugee camps, holidays resorts, chains of hotels, and means of transport in which people live most of their life. Non-places are either the infrastructures for quick transport (such as motorways, railway lines, and airports) or means of transport themselves (cars, trains, and aeroplanes).

In his elaboration of the notion of non-places Augé refers directly to De Certeau's analysis of the relationship between space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*), where space for him is intended as a "practiced place", "a crossing of mobilities": people moving around that actually transform a geometrically given place into a space' (De Certeau, M. *L'invention du quotidien. 1. Arts de Faire*, Gallimard, *Folio-Essais*, Paris, 1990: 173. Quoted by Augé 1993: 75). Place, on the other hand, is regarded as something having a proper internal distribution of elements, each with its own 'proper' distinct location: 'a place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability' (De Certeau 1984: 117).

Space in De Certeau's view is not an abstract notion that can be applied to a 'distance', 'an extension', 'a dimension'. His space is rather a non-place, a negative quality of place, opposite to place's inherent stability if we consider that he assigns to space a connotation of internal mobility. That of space is a reality of intersecting elements, anything like the stability of place which was kept in any circumstance, while here space adapts itself to contingencies, 'dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present . . . and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts' (1984: 117).

Space also indicates 'the absence of place to itself', a sort of 'erosion' provoked by the 'naming of place': in this case, names devoid places of their own 'proper' identity and become inscribed with that of the others, places lose their own history because names impose their own on them. The master of non-places are those 'operations' that 'specify spaces by the action of historical subjects . . . transform the
place . . . into the foreignness of their own space' (De Certeau 1984: 118). Traveller sees, ‘practice[s] places’ but not ‘that particular place’; that is why that of the traveller is the emblematic figure of surmodernité and the space of his travel the archetype of non-lieu: ‘travel constitutes a false relationship between our gaze and landscape’ (Augé 1993: 80).

This naming of the traveller is not what we have seen with Heidegger for whom a place is its name; there is not here any existential communion between people and places. The traveller does not know much about what he sees; he gives rise to spaces or better non-places. Oral narratives of places as well as written stories are those aforementioned operations indicating the traveller’s seeing but also his going, his ‘spatialising actions’. Travels are textualised, are ‘narrated adventures’ themselves making the trajectory, acting as metaphors.39

Yet, what must be recognised is that anthropological places and non-places are not two absolute poles; rather, there is a constant interchange, a continual relationship between them, which in some instances produces an invasion of one into the other and vice versa.

Non-places can be either a lived reality or a textual dimension. Non-places live in texts and landscape is lived through the ‘reading’:

. . . From TV to newspapers, from advertising to all sorts of mercantile epiphanies, our society is characterised by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or to be shown and transmuting communication into a visual journey. It is a sort of epic of the eye and of the impulse to read . . . . Reading (an image or a text) . . . seems to constitute the maximal development of the passivity assumed to characterise the consumer, who is conceived of as a voyeur (whether troglodyte or itinerant) in a ‘show-biz’ of society (De Certeau 1984: xxi).

The dimension and quality of our relationship with these present day places has changed: we have become as anonymous as these places, we have access to them formally becoming anonymous people. The paradox is that it is only through our
identity that we can access non-lieux, where identity is denied: this happens when we use our credit cards, or show our tickets at the airport, or on the underground. For one moment we enter the sphere of the unidentified, leaving, while on that car or aeroplane, our personal history to one side. We enjoy freedom from ourselves (Augé 1993: 89–93).

1.5 Conclusion

Through Space towards non-lieux: this journey along the theoretical evolution of the concepts of space and place could be intended as a closed circle, one leading back to the point of departure. However, with a more careful look, Augé’s notion positions itself quite distant from that of Space, the all-enclosing homogenous and uniform vacuum. The denial of human identities operated by/within non-lieux is somehow justifiable by the pressing overabundance and haste characterising present days. The slow gravity of human existence is reduced as in a sort of denial of responsibility; rather, a preference is expressed for the lightness of impersonality. There is no room or no(n)-lieu for it. Paradoxically, non-lieux are characterised by the constant presence and passage of bodies. Yet, these bodies have lost their agency, they are merely running bodies, not lived ones. It is however important to hope that even if they have become integral parts of our life, even if the process that has been set in motion with the Ent-ortung is now progressively producing non-lieux, happy Dysneyan eu-topias, all this will show itself to be an exception, out of which the existential link between human beings and the world can still give rise to place, intended as a cohesion, a gathering thing and itself the outcome of a gathering, the expression of the dwelling of human being.

The neutrality of Space and the impersonality and general character of many present day public spaces, find a counterpart in the particularity, locality, and
idiosyncrasies inherent in the notion of place. To counterbalance the impermeability of space to any sort of cultural dimension, there is the permeability or 'porosity' of place that highlights, behind it, a process of understanding, comprehension, communion and slow attachment to and with the world.

Sacred places, as we shall see, are particular kinds of places. In the next chapter, in fact, in outlining the notion of Sardinian sacred places, and in exploring their unique character, the foregoing threat of impermeability is subverted by their clear tendency towards 'porosity'.
Chapter 2

Sacredness of places: Nature of their limit, places of convergence

The notion of place I have outlined so far, reaches a sort of completion in a location of a sacred nature. In this Chapter I shall move from one theoretical thread to another, making for what is probably a more interesting, but certainly more complex and multifaceted, discussion. The next few pages, in fact, start from the premise that any attempt to completeness in this regard is, for the purpose of this thesis, extremely difficult. Moreover, the material available is extremely vast and branches off various disciplines. I shall therefore proceed with a short survey of the ways in which the idea of sacredness is expressed and portrayed. This overview will reveal symbolisation as the most appropriate means of expression and revealing of the ‘otherness’ inherent in the reality of the sacred. In the process we shall see how various sacred places have been created and recognised as such.

The treatment of the subject will subsequently enter more deeply into the very notion of sacredness: I shall explain my conceptual premises by giving a description of what I conceive to be a sacred place in Sardinia. I shall deal with specific historical sacred places that I have called cumbessias villages. These are religious complexes generally dedicated to a saint, the main feature of which are the so-called cumbessias, small single-room edifices built around a church in order to house the various pilgrims who visit these places once a year during the novena. The characteristic of Sardinian sacred places is their dialectical interaction between natural data and cultural translations. It shall become evident that, being places, they will result from the encounter with human beings.
My vision maintains that Sardinian sacred places are those parts of a given landscape provided with special qualities of beauty and perfection, special atmospheres, qualities consonant with an already experienced or understood idea of a sacred place. While outlining the process of their creation I shall also depart from the Eliadian notion of hierophany as a foundational act through which a certain portion of space may be declared sacred. Assuming that the divine actions are guided by absolute rightness and not chance, I would rather sustain that the hierophany is God's choice to manifest his powerful will to descend within us, in an aptly chosen place, because it is suitable to receive that potency, hence a place that was already sacred because of its inherent environmental qualities. God's manifestation is then the proof, rather than the creation, of the sacredness of a place. I shall combine these theoretical treatments with some examples drawn from my ethnographic data.
2.1 Experiencing the sacred: a general overview

A first sign of the sacred is revealed through language. Within different Indo-European languages, in fact, a term designating either the presence or action of a supernatural, transcendental order, itself a manifestation of divine force, can generally be found. This is precisely what the Greek term **hiéros** indicates ('what is inspired by gods or reserved to them'). The sacredness portrayed by the Greek **hagios** and the Latin **sanctus** is rather designated through the action of separating the object from any kind of violation. As regards the Latin term **sacer**, 'it introduces a new value—linking the notion of interdiction with that of sacredness—because it denotes either the presence of a supernatural venerable sign, or it indicates the separation of the polluted which evokes fear' (Wunenburger 2001: 4). We are, then, lead toward the revelation of the sacred as a merely psychic, emotive, and existential dimension.

In his *The Idea of the Holy* (1928), in fact, Rudolph Otto conceived sacredness (or better: holiness) as producing an emotional structure characterised by the experience of the *numinous*, that is to say by the feeling that I am dealing with something which is '[a] Wholly other' entity, a *numen* (Latin word for 'god') (Otto, 1928: 18). Intended as a fundamental expression of sacredness, this experience of the numinous is on the one hand one of awe and terror, an experience of *Mysterium tremendum* while, on the other, it implies an 'overwhelming undetachable fascination', pleasure, and goodness, deriving from the *Mysterium fascinans* (Parkin 1991: 222). Sacredness and the idea of a divine presence arise following a process which goes from the emotive ground towards a mental representation of those feelings: cognitive processes translate those lived emotions into a set of images of the Wholly other. What is sacred and divine is something that is beyond ourselves as individuals; yet, it is precisely through my own personal experience that it can be portrayed or manifested. Trance and spirit possession
together with a spiritual detachment through meditation are extreme instances of the emotive-mental relationships we can engage with the ‘Wholly other’.

Sacredness is revealed through sacred individuals: having special extraordinary capacities, physical strength, and predictive ability of future events. These individuals can also be defined for their either psychological or behavioural anomalies, that insert them into the realm of what is outside the normal order of nature. This, in turn, is associated with the presence of a sacred divine force. Shamans, prophets and even saints are privileged mediators between the divine and their people. As such, they are sacred to their communities, for which they mainly act as special interlocutors, called upon to engage in ritual practices and fights against the divine by whom they are inspired.

The link between the sacred and what is extreme and extraordinary is not only confined to an inner emotional, psychological or behavioural dimension but manifests itself as something objective outside, in nature, in those phenomena beyond the given natural order of things. With human beings, on the one hand, this concrete manifestation is represented by their extraordinary strength, innate powers which allow them to be perceived by others as non-human, kin to divinity.

Yet, on the other hand, extraordinary events in nature offer another example of the creation of a sense of sacredness: the exceeding size of some natural features, the powerful force of natural elements compared with our ‘natural’ fragility and insignificance make those exceeding features and forces natural recipients and themselves manifestations of sacredness or, to borrow from Mircea Eliade, *hierophanies*. Events that disrupt cyclical evolution of time (such as eclipses) also induce a sense of sacredness.

The experience of the sacred is essentially symbolic in structure. Symbols represent, in fact, the specific language the sacred uses to communicate its existence and
essence. By means of symbolic imagination, human beings relate themselves to things in the world now seen not only in their objective features but also in their sacred meaning. The sacred, inherently symbolic in its constitution, pervades objects and acts that become concrete, tangible instances of a transcendental, non-worldly dimension. For this reason, things like a plough or a tree, and acts such as a burial, represent something far beyond their phenomenal realities. They partake of the sacred essence, becoming hierophanic for they represent something else, they symbolically partake of a sacred other. So the tree with its roots down into the subterranean world, its body on the earth and its top projected toward the sky represents the pillar or the point of conjunction of the two axes of earth and sky, and so it is for mountains. The plough, furrowing the soil, symbolically re-enacts and participates of the sacred act of creation of the cosmos/world; and the burial is again a symbolic act of sowing the seed, a human seed, which will be born again re-enacting the archetypal hierogamy.

These examples show how the basic symbolic elaboration inherent to the sacred has its own internal structure formed by a symbolic analogy as well as a symbolic participation. A form is sacred when it is similar with the divine, in the sense that it gathers in itself a set of divine manifestations. Each form is analogous to another that is located within a different dimension, spatial and temporal. So sacred places are microcosms, small worlds that send back to a sacred, unique macrocosm: Eliade (2001) claimed that when homo religious settles, he is consecrating, i.e., cosmicising that place, creating a world out of a primordial chaos. Men have a foundational responsibility in that they are the creators of the axis mundi from which a simple portion of space can become a cosmos, i.e, a world. Axis mundi is the point of departure from which human beings can begin orienting themselves in the world.

The Eliadian perspective brings forth a sacred that is somehow eruptive in its manifestations, in what he termed hierophanies or epiphanies, and marks out the sacred
space as the point of departure of human existence. The centre, thus manifested, becomes humans' main existential reference. The act of consecration is, in fact, first and foremost an act of establishing an existential point of reference from which to order the world; from this moment on this portion of space becomes a world, sacred, hence eminently real. To consecrate means firstly to enclose the place, leaving the 'profanum' outside, i.e., the 'place in front of the temple' (Gill 1978: 303, 306. Emphasis added). Human beings return to the centre not just to have a direct relationship with their deities: religious movements towards these centres, i.e., pilgrimages, are considered the only possible trajectories to be taken in order to escape that profane and chaotic world outside and enter into the real cosmic, divine order of the sacred place. These places are sacred because theirs is an imagine paradisi, as the symbolism of sacred gardens manifests.

The principle of symbolic participation becomes clear when we regard symbolic forms and ritual acts as condensed realities, and practices enhancing the 'power' of the sacred indeed, despite their small and unusual dimensions, they gather part of that sacredness within themselves: a sacred city is a micro instance of a greater cosmic order, so too a great number of ritual performances are dramatic re-enactments of a mythical primordial past. Myths are in fact those narrative scenarios in which the primordial creation of the sacred or the human encounter with it are fixed, being themselves potent vehicles of apprehension, transmission and communication of the sacred.

Yet, to participate also implies an existential and a communal sharing: touching that symbolic object or participating in a sacred ritual, human beings 'steal' a vital force, partaking of that sacred essence and force and becoming imbued by it, thus renewing their existence. Sacred trees, rocks, waters, pilgrimages, ritual burials, the act of rubbing oneself against a sacred rock, all these sacred acts and objects guarantee the
acquisition of new forces, a new life usually repeated cyclically. The operative process of the symbol then implies not just a simple resemblance of another cosmic dimension but also, and more importantly, an existential communion of a sacred essence so that the sacred image or object or act is what it represents: that is why touching a sacred Bethel or a cross or taking home some leaves from a sacred tree are actions of the existential transfer of sacred essence into the life of human beings who engage in these acts.

On another dimension, natural phenomena and human beings are seen as having their own sacred essence: they are animated—from the Latin *anima*—by an impersonal force inherent in the whole universe. Everything in nature is pervaded by a Mana, ‘variously labelled in [Western] literature as spirit, soul-stuff, essence, vital force’ (Waterson 1997: 115). This kind of worldview has been called Animism.

Fundamentally, apart from the consistent differences in different parts of the world, this life-force is conceived as a sort of power, a mysterious divine energy that attaches itself in various concentrations to everything material, such as plants, animals, human beings, houses, rocks, waters, and immaterial, such as diseases, ways of cooking, etc. Within the Indonesian archipelago, for instance, this power or life-force is essentially anchored at the ‘navel’: human beings, kingdoms, houses, the entire cosmos, everything has a navel as ‘the’ locus, the centre of this enlivening energy. For this reason it should be protected from harm. It is then clear how between humans, things and the world a delicate relationship exists, one that implies care and preservation not to alter or disturb the vital essence and balance between them. It is also a very intimate one: it is true, in fact, that personal possessions share that same vital force of the owner so that losing one of them, or rather using it during a certain ritual occasion, can diminish or strengthen that of the owner. Balinese architecture provides clear evidence of this relationship of sharing and care between the owner and the thing, in the fact that not only is there an essential correspondence between built structure and the structure of
human body, but there is also a rule in constructing the house, that demands that ‘the limbs of the owner’s body are used to derive the standard measurements employed in determining the dimensions of the parts of the building’ (Waterson 1997: 122). It is yet another application of the fore-mentioned symbolic process of existential participation.

The experiences of the sacred, intended as a divine or enlivening energy, show similar symbolic operative processes, implying a continuous conversation between two (or more) inter-linking dimensions of existence, that of material things and human beings, and that of a supernatural, spiritual essence. This symbolic horizon of the sacred allows homo religious to inscribe those spatial and temporal references needed to give a structure to his existence (and to that of society in general) within a bigger spatial and historical hierophanic frame. An alternation of this existential dialectic dimension between human beings and their cosmos, i.e., world, the disruption of this equilibrium, may lead towards the irreversible loss of a meaningful world associated with the loss of human ‘spiritual well-being [that] requires responsible stewardship of landscapes everywhere’ (Lowenthal 1999).

2.2 Sardinian Sacred places

So far I have briefly outlined the operative patterns of what has been described as the ‘Wholly Other’, the ultimate reality inherent in the idea of the sacred. Throughout the discourse, I have been hovering around the character of sacred places and the ways in which they have been created or recognised as such. Yet, this short ‘pilgrimage’ between sacred springs and holy mountains has lead us to reflect on the very idea of sacredness and sacred place, especially in relation to the ethnographic examples that are the subject of my present concern.

I would first like to clarify my own idea of sacred place. The deliberate adoption of the term ‘sacred places’ instead of the presumably easier and ideally less abstract
term of ‘sacred architectures’ refers to a precise theoretical stance encountered in the previous chapter, which acknowledges that place, and not space, plays a founding role within human existence. With these premises I first assign to ‘place’ a natural/environmental connotation: from my point of view, place encompasses architecture, and architecture, as seen in the previous chapter, is a mode in which natural data can be made symbolically concrete through a process of understanding of the vocation of the surrounding environment, as pointed out by Norberg-Schulz: ‘the existential goal of building (architecture) is, then, to transform a locale into a place, that is, to discover those meanings potentially present within the a priori given environment’ (1979: 22, 18. Emphasis added). Both concepts, that of natural and built environment and their mutual fruitful relationship, are subsumed in my idea of sacred place. However, such a basic relationship cannot be conceived without the human beings and the experiences they live on a daily basis, of and within the natural environment.

How do I, then, define a sacred place? First of all, Sardinian sacred places are those parts of the territory or particular localities re-cognised as such by Sardinian people: more specifically, I want to indicate not only those places acknowledged as sacred because of the martyrdom of saints or because of the miraculous apparition of the

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40 The definition ‘sacred architecture’ refers immediately to the ‘concreteness’ of the sacred edifices. However, as will be clarified over the next few pages, religious buildings will essentially be intended as concrete/tangible symbols, meaningful responses (expressions) of the apprehensions and interactions between beholders and given natural environment.

41 With this term I indicate that sacred places are ‘already cognised’ without implying that they exist before people experience and apprehend them. What is implied in the concept of re-cognition inheres our condition of Dasein. As seen in the previous Chapter, in fact, it is here acknowledged the constitutive nature of the human being as being-in-the-world. This explains the existential proximity that we, as beings, have with the world in which we live. Our original condition of beings ‘thrown’ into the world, means that we as Dasein already share a condition of proximity with the world. To put it differently, before any concrete experience of the world we are already provided with a certain ‘heritage’ of ideas and prejudices about it; this cultural and historical baggage will guide us and determine our own way to experience and apprehend things. Our condition of being[s]-in[/with]-the-world then means to be familiar with a certain totality of meanings. We are already familiar with the things we are apprehending and this particular familiarity is that which reveals the possible meanings that we can unveil (in other words our innate disposition). The term cognition can be then replaced with the term ‘apprehension’: I apprehend something only when I relate directly to it. As seen in the previous Chapter, the comprehension of something should not be intended as a movement of the subject towards an object. What the notion of Dasein strongly discarded is precisely this stance in the process of knowing/experiencing one’s own world. The Dasein is already essentially engaged in a tight relationship with the world before any artificial distinction between subject and object (Vattimo 2001). A more detailed reference to Heidegger’s basic thinking on this issue is covered in Chapter 1.
Virgin Mary; besides them, I include those natural localities the environmental qualities of which, (characterised by a special beauty, harmony, perfection), total configuration and general atmosphere (the whole visualised, intended in this case as the outcome of an existential hold or apprehension by human beings) bring them closer to an ideal dimension of place, consonant with an already ‘experienced’ or understood idea of sacred place. It is here acknowledged the intrinsically relational dimension of this process where human being and nature engage in a mutual interaction.

Consequent to the apprehension or experience of the above mentioned special sacred qualities of a certain area, a particular locality or a section of territory, people establish, declare this special essence through tangible, concrete elements and actions: I associate these phenomena with the building of monuments, sanctuaries, placing of vertical stones, crosses or sacred images. To put it another way, some of the meanings or ‘existential possibilities’ of a given environment are then ‘freed’ by the Being of men in their encounters. The unveiled meaning is, then, concretely and creatively translated, that is, symbolised in a sacred building: ‘The image of place offered by the art of place [architecture] is a concrete fact. . . . The image of the world, made present by the art of place, does not represent an existing situation, rather it interprets it’ (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 221). The sacred building (for instance a vertical stone or a sanctuary) manifests and enhances that meaning through its form and substance and, at the same time, represents a concrete proof of a creative act of interpretation and subsequent translation by a beholder.

This process of translation to which I am referring, is explained very clearly by Norberg-Schulz. He adopts Heidegger’s phenomenology, applying its basic philosophical method and concepts to architecture in the attempt to develop what he has called ‘a phenomenology of architecture, a theory that intends architecture in concrete and existential terms’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 5). Nature and life are two basic features
of what ancient Romans called *genius loci*. Place (here intended as built place) is then ‘the concrete manifestation of the world of life and architecture, as instrumental art, is the art of place’ (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 28).

Norberg-Schulz concretely clarifies the relationship between ‘artificial’ places, created by human beings and the natural environment. Their relationship is highlighted in three stages: visualisation, when man wants to visualise his cognition of nature, wants to express the existential hold he has of nature through the building of what he has seen; better, he builds what it has been shown to him in his relation with the given natural setting. Man welcomes the suggestions that nature gives to and through him; symbolisation, immediately subsequent to visualisation, when man expresses his cognition through symbols, so translating a determined experienced meaning into something else, into another thing, in this case, a building. This building concretely manifests, unveils, frees those natural characters that have been previously experienced: ‘the scope of symbolisation is to free meaning from its immediate contingent situation’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 17). Translation stems from a previous hold or apprehension of those natural features, it is an interpretative act.

With this in mind, I would describe exactly what makes a *cumbessias* village. They are religious complexes generally dedicated to a saint.42 The adoption of the term ‘*cumbessias* villages’ is partly due to my intent to emphasise what I perceive to be their main characteristic and that which distinguishes them from other sacred places: the internal spatial articulation of these complexes in fact generally includes the presence of a church, a plaza in front of it, and the so-termed *cumbessias*. These are small, single-room edifices variously arranged in close proximity to the main building, which is the church, and purposely built to host pilgrims who have arrived at the village for the

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42 This description is intended to provide a very general idea of what the *cumbessias* villages are. In this regard the reader should be aware that a comprehensive outline of either architectural configurations or ritual events during the novena will be the subject of the following Chapters.
religious celebrations. *Cumbessias* villages are very important sites of popular religiosity within Sardinia and gathering places for numerous devotees arriving from the surrounding urban centres. Spread all over the territory of the island, these complexes are usually located outside the urban areas and occupy a relevant position within the landscape either on the top of a hill or a mountain, or at the bottom of a deep valley.

I should ask, at this point, in what sense these places attain their sacredness? What exactly is it in them, that prompts me to recognise them as sacred places? Can I, in the light of the theoretical stance adopted in the previously defined notion of sacred place, detect a pattern through which a determinate locale becomes a sacred place? The history of the *cumbessias* villages has provided me with no certain answers to my question.43 There are no documents attesting to the truth of the origin of the *cumbessias* villages of *Beata Vergine Annunziata, Ss. Cosma e Damiano, Nostra Signora del Rimedio, Santa Maria de Sauccu, Nostra Signora di Gonare, Nostra Signora del Miracolo.*44

The lack of documentary sources is somehow counterbalanced by the presence of the legends of foundation45 providing documentary evidence as to the reason for the choice of the place for the construction of the religious complex. The legends of foundation, tell us that in the instances of the aforementioned sacred places the building of the church in a certain place should be ascribed to the miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary or another saint. They tell us about the finding of a sacred image under a bush, or the divine will that guided a shepherd or a young girl to the place where he or she would have found an image or a sign of the divine. Places, then, seem to acquire

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43 In this chapter my intent is to hint at the history of these places. In Chapter 4 this subject will receive a closer and more attentive development.
44 These are the names of the *cumbessias* villages, sites of my research.
45 With this term I refer to what Guamieri has defined as '... a sufficiently homogeneous corpus of tales concerning epiphanies of the divine determining the holiness of a certain place where a sanctuary will arise. These epiphanies reveal themselves through apparitions or visions by poor and humble people, miraculous findings of statues, paintings, icons... weeping Virgins or simulacra.' (Guamieri, R., *Fonti vecchie e nuove per una storia dei santuari*. *Marianum*, XLII, 1980: 500. Quoted by Diana 1997: 51). For a more comprehensive
their sacred nature from an extraordinary event, from what Eliade termed a ‘hierophany’. Yet, my idea of sacred place starts from the assumption that those aforementioned extraordinary events are but a confirmation of the already inherent sacredness of the place. My position is connected to the unquestionable value of God’s divine will or of another divine figure such as that of the Virgin Mary. Any of God’s actions should be regarded as free from the peril of casuality or doubt. ‘There can be no effective separation between what God is and how God acts’ (Sheldrake 2001: 68). It is consequentially necessary to address this question: if God’s choices are not by mere chance, should we not therefore believe that nor is the choice of the place in which He or His will will be manifested? Thus expressed, the manifestation of the Virgin and God, the finding of a sacred statue, and other miraculous apparitions are somehow confirmation themselves of their sacredness and that sacred nature already given to those purposely chosen places. The hierophanic event is then not instituting the sacredness of a site but rather confirming it for the very fact of the non-casuality of the choice. Eliade maintained that it is in the very moment/event of the manifestation of a God in a certain portion of space within the chaotic, unreal world, that this space becomes sacred, available to human beings as a real world ready to be ‘cosmicised’. The divine sacred force has shown itself in that portion of space, making it sacred.

I simply depart from the Eliadian stance considering the heirophanic event as that instituting the sacredness of a place: in fact, I adopt this perspective to claim the opposite.

Let us make short steps: in the previous pages I claimed that Sardinian sacred places are those ‘parts of the territory or particular localities re-cognised as such by Sardinian people’. Specifically, I intended to refer to those ‘natural localities of which the environmental qualities (characterised by a special beauty, harmony, perfection),

treatment and deeper analysis of the ‘legends of foundations’ yet not relating to Sardinia see Centini (2002);
total configuration and general atmosphere bring them closer to an ideal dimension of place, consonant with an already ‘experienced’ or understood idea of sacred place’. The very motive that spurred me to address the idea of sacred place is precisely the fact that there are such places, perfect, harmonious, consonant with an idealised or pre-understood idea of place. Their perfection, beauty, harmony, atmosphere make them sacred, inherently superior when confronted with others. To quote a full passage by Gadamer (1997) “the experience of the beauty, and particularly the beauty of art, it is the magical evocation of a possible sacred order . . . ”. Within this experience, and particularly within all those experiences that we call works of art, the message of the sacred speaks to us, continuously’ (H.G. Gadamer, L’attualità del bello, Marietti, Genova, 1986: 35. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 158).

The point of the question here is that the sacredness of these places is somehow proven by their unique special qualities and is independent from any manifestation of a divine sacredness. The very notion of genius loci or the spirit of place somehow resounds in this idea. Ancient peoples experienced their places as something with defined characters, qualities, a sort of ensemble of special natural features that created an atmosphere of that part of landscape or place. Let us now return to Eliade and to his formulation for the sacredness of a place, formulation from which I have departed.46 In Eliade’s terms a place becomes sacred because a divine force manifests itself precisely there. In what sense then does my perspective prove to be the opposite of Eliade’s? In some way I can make use of Eliade’s formulation in order to prove my own: if I acknowledge the absolute truth and goodness of the laws and actions of God, I should be coherent in affirming, as indeed I did previously, the absolute rightness of God’s choices, His absolute avoidance of ‘chance’ actions. This said, I should not think that

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Garobbio (1969); Gulli Grigioni (1975); Gulli (1972); Profeta (1970).
God, for the manifestation of His divine and sacred potency or mercy, may want to do so in an ordinary place, rather He has frequently chosen places already provided with those aforementioned special qualities that make them already resembling an ideal sacred place. Eliade's formulation then somehow unconsciously helps me confirm my own idea: a divinity manifests itself in a place and that place becomes sacred (which from my perspective can be reformulated) God manifests Himself in a place which was already inherently sacred. The hierophanic nature of the event is then witnessing the inherent sacredness of the place chosen for its manifestation.

The characteristic of my sacred places is that of presenting an idea of sacredness which is not inherently 'what is set apart from' the rest. If I assume that a sacred place is something completely 'other' in the sense of being separated from the realm of the daily, forbidden to devotees except for the period of the feast, the sanctified time of the returning religious festival, we should then see how our sacred places oppose to this act of separation a rather intrinsic appeal to reconcilement. It is reformulating my notion of sacredness, or at least how it is purported by these places that we more appropriately enter their worlds.

The very idea of non-separateness of the sacredness of these places is implicit in the notion of place: these are sacred places, theirs is a dialectical formulation, a conversation between their primordial physical essence and the built concreteness subsequently added by human beings to attain their completion first as places then, as sacred places. If we have a look at the Greek notion of topos we might be illuminated by its meaning: the essence of topos is that of maintaining gathered all that surrounds it became it already belongs to it, it is encompassed by/in it: 'the place is . . . then mostly a multiple reality, because of the reciprocal belonging of places referred one to the other'.

I wish to emphasise that my departure from Eliade's theoretical stance with regard to the creation of a sacred place in no sense neglects the immense value of his formulations on this subject. It is rather a declaration of the contrary.
(Cardone 2001: 28). It is henceforth not separated from, set apart from, in its essence it is inherently a non-excluding thing, rather a gathering one. It is a place of convergence.

Heidegger reminds us that the meaning of the German word for place, Ort, firstly means the point of a spear: it is the ‘place’ or ‘point’ of convergence and union of those many lines that create that spear. It is there, in the Ort, where everything converges, is the moment of rest of the moment of convergence, where the sound becomes silence.

The very notion of limit as essential and constitutive of my notion of sacred should be sought precisely here, in the point of the spear. The instance of a dot within a written discourse might be helpful to explain this notion a little bit further. A dot, as a full stop, is the symbol of the interruption, it puts an end to a sentence. It is the symbol of the non-being, of what is not (radura) while, at the same time, being a bridge from one sentence to the other, from one being to the other. We could than ‘read’ the dot, or full stop as an opening or, let us say, an interruption of the flowing of the discourse. Heidegger uses the example of the wood and the clearing within it. The clearing is a dot, it stops the thickness of the wood while representing a sort of bridge to the wood on the other side of it. The dot that is the clearing also works by letting the thickness of the discourse and the wood be manifest. The wood appears more manifest in its thickness thanks to that clearing. The dot/full stop and clearing can then be read as limits of the sentence, of the wood. The wood’s being extends until the clearing, that of the sentence, until the dot. But we may also say that the dot/full stop is precisely that from which the wood starts, from which the sentence continues. They are limits but are not restricting, rather they are signing or defining in a clearer way the ‘form’ of the beings it unveils and gathers. The dot as the silence in music is fruitful because it gathers the other sounds, it is the prelude to a new emergence of other sounds. Moreover, this happens when we consider the place in its physical given nature, but I have already outlined how the notion of place is completed in a dialectical fashion with the entrance of human
Human beings, as noted in Chapter 1, are being[s]-in/with-the-world, they are operators of this process of revelation and concealment, of dots and sentences. They creatively/poetically make up place as a built-up place, because their being, as Heidegger has explained, is inherently that of dwellers. Through what Norberg-Schulz has termed the ‘art of place’ or architecture hence through their creative making they gather the very essence of place, the very essence of place as a dot, a limit (not excluding, but rather gathering) and express it concretely. Through symbols the places they contribute to creatively shape, participate in the ‘humility . . . from humus, ground, soil’ a word that suggests ‘a kind of moral and spiritual disposition of lowliness, littleness. Not self-abnegation . . . rather an honest acknowledgement’ of what they are, of what they might become; ‘being close to the earth, of the earth, aware of [their] kinship with other living beings’ (Burton-Christie 2003: 499). The limit of these places is, therefore, shaping an openness to the world.

The very notion of place as a meaningful process of creative unveiling leads us to maintain that humans’ input to this creation is far from being a mere repetitive act as purposed by Eliade. He sustained, in fact, that human engagement in the creation of a sacred place is confined to a repetition [of] and participation in the actions of the gods. Human endeavour is that of settling where the divinities have shown themselves and their potency. This settling act is in Eliadian terms an endless re-enactment/return of the primordial creation of the cosmos by the gods. I have been showing, however, how the building of a place and sacred place (as seen also in the previous chapter) is inherently an interpretative and creative act.

The sacredness of our places does not exclude what is outside, it does not stand there separate from what is outside, rather it brings to light what is the context within which and most importantly from which these places have been ‘de-limited’. If it is yet
true that the sacredness of these places is inherent in them and not in the context, it is however also true that precisely that context participates of that sacredness in the sense that they echo that sacredness. Our places cannot be conceived separated from those who live and experience them in any other place apart from that. They not only conceive of their sacred places as those in which they are and speak from but also in a dialectical relationship with their surroundings.

The catholicity of a community is the demanding call to manifest God's own act of making space for all particular realities in their interdependency . . . transcending the boundaries of time and place as well as natural or cultural divisions between people. . . . The Catholic sense that God cannot be imprisoned in any contracted place implies that the divine must be sought throughout the oikumene, the whole inhabited world . . . the practice of catholicity drives us ever onwards to embrace the 'elsewhere', the 'other' . . . to transgress boundaries . . . Catholic place, in our contingent experience, can never be simply an arrival point but always implies a further departure (Sheldrake 2001: 70).

From within the cumbessias village of Annunziata what is striking are the high mountains all around it, the vegetation inside and outside of it, the paths that lead inside and outside of it. The sacred place of Annunziata is then comprehensive of its environing context.

It could never be lived in another place, never conceived as departing from its (thus entailing a sense of mutual belonging) surroundings, i.e., outside reality. In this sense, my conception of a sacred place as a 'centre' departs from an idea of centre as ultimate reality, a reality of sacredness opposed or in relation to a non-reality there, outside, beyond its boundaries. The sacredness inherent in the beauty of a certain location and then chosen by the divine for its manifestation brings to light, not only its own essence but also the essence of the context. It shines on the surroundings, and these echo that sacred beauty participating in it; those surroundings become themselves part of the sacred place. To the sacredness of the place, to that sacred centre which is in this case of the cumbessias village of Annunziata, belong all those natural features included in its close horizon. Mountains and valleys participate in that original sacredness, they are integral parts of the sacred place, they reflect the sacred character of the centre being
revealed by it. That is why people excluded, in answer to my question, that Annunziata as a sacred ‘centre’ could be moved, as it is, to another location, and remain the same. It would have, in their words, “lost its significance, its references”. Our sacred places as ‘centres’ are therefore catalysts through which the essence of the surrounding landscape is revealed. This phenomenon can be better understood if we look at the essence of light and link it directly to my notion of sacredness and beauty. Gadamer (1997) speaks of the ‘transcendence of the beauty’ making clear that it is essential to the beauty, as it is of the light its ‘shining’. Light likewise beauty makes visible the ‘presence’ of what is outside itself.

Beauty distinguishes itself from the good . . . because it is susceptible to being caught. It is part of its essence the fact of being something that appears. In searching for the good, what appears is the beauty [. . . ] the idea of the beauty is really present in what is beautiful, in a total and unique way [. . . ] The ‘presence’ belongs convincingly to the being of the beauty as such. The beauty may also be perceived as the shining of something ultra mundane; yet, it is present in what is earthly, visible. That the beauty is something of another order is visible from the way in which it manifests itself [. . . ] Not only the beauty manifests itself in what visibly exists but it manifests itself in such a way that the thing [in which the beauty manifests itself] exists authentically only for the very fact of the manifestation of the beauty. For this reason it is set apart from the rest as a unity. The beauty is really what is in itself more evident . . .

Moreover,

The brightness of the appearing is not just a simple property of the beauty, but it constitutes its essence [. . . ] the beauty is not simply the symmetry but the appearing itself that has its foundation on beauty itself. Beauty has the nature of the shining. Yet, to shine means to shine on something, like the sun, and hence to appear in what on which the light falls. The beauty’s being has the way of being of light and the light is not just the brightness of what it enlightens; making something visible [enlightening something] the light manifests itself, and it is not visible but when enlightening something else’. The beauty, as brightness, has an intrinsic revealing character (H.G. Gadamer, Verità e metodo, trans. G. Vattimo, Fabbri, Milano, 1972: 548. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 143–144. Emphases added).

So it is the sacredness of place, and place itself. What informs my notion of sacred centre is then the idea of inclusion, rather than of exclusion and separateness. The same acts of interpretative concretisation (i.e., religious architecture people have carried out in their encounter/experience of these places) can be intended as being pervaded by this sacred character: “the destruction of a work (of art) has for us the meaning of a
religious sacrilege" ... Referring to the symbolic value of the work of art by Gadamer, it is inevitable for us to notice its proximity to the sacred' (Moretto 1997: 159).

The idea of the sacred more pertinent to my examples then strays from the notion of a sacredness implicitly conveying a seclusion, a separation, the same that is implicit in the Latin sacer: seizing upon the idea of the sacred in Hölderlin we became more aware of the pervasive character that the sacred attains. His portrait of Nature and its constant presence over time, everywhere, shows its wholeness, totality and plenitude of presence. What is emphasised is its powerful generating essence. As happens with Nature, my idea of sacredness pervades the reality of these places.

[Nature] is called ‘wunderbar’, prodigious, ‘allgegenwartig’, omnipresent . . ., ‘gottlichschon’, divinely beauty. Not just in this epiphany she appears as such; she remains prodigious and potent even when she ‘rests’ . . . while resting she has presentiments. To have presentiments, I could say, is an active faculty of imagination . . . Nature is omnipresent . . . cannot certainly be confused with the whole of the elements . . . she is the ardour of coming to light, of birth, . . . but she is also the sustaining and nourishing principle of what has been generated. She is a principle of continuous creation which is attained also during rest, a new concentration into its own principle . . . Nature [is here intended] as the future participle of Nascor and it does not indicate, then, the totality of its features but what gives birth, what makes growing, . . . (Cacciari 1989: 204. Emphasis added).47

The Nature of these sacred places participates in their sacred character: with its wholly encompassing presence (relationship between holy and whole) it (creates and) sustains what has been created and it is itself inherently a creating principle/act. In Hölderlin, heilig (also standing for holy) is described as that which ‘revives’, ‘awakens’, ‘that keeps from dying, that takes care. Heilig is the force, is what has the strength and manifests it budding’; heilig is ‘also the single place if we “poetically” dwell in it . . . heilig possesses an epiphanic value’ (Cacciari 1989: 206). The joy it gives manifesting itself, the joy people feel living in it keep them from dying, takes care of them. As we shall see in the next chapters, they at the same time take care of it in these places,

47 In quoting this passage we have purposely chosen to translate the neutral pronoun referred to the word ‘nature’ with a ‘she’. This is partly because in Italian the word nature adopts a feminine pronoun, and secondly
through these places. The shaping of my notion of sacredness does not depart from the use it is made of it by those who effectively live (in), experience these places. Sardinian people do not refer to any place with the term ‘sacred’, they do not even use the term ‘holy’. If they have to refer to what they intend to be a sacred place they rather indicate its toponym and name, or they otherwise use the adjective ‘blessed’, custu locu est beneittu (this place is blessed). Within the term ‘blessed’ I can detect two modalities of experiencing the sacred: on the one hand, it is an adjective itself addressing the agency of those who refer to it in these terms during the re-cognition of the place as such. Being also a predicate, it on the other, indicates a sanctifying action of the place itself inherent in its own self-disclosure as a sacred place in the relationship with human beings.

As seen earlier, to encounter these places and their divine beauty means to encounter more than single natural features, rather a self-generating principle and more ‘The meaningfulness of the beauty . . . tells us “that in the particularity of the encounter it is not the particular that we experience rather the totality of the lived world, and the position of man within the world, included its finiteness compared to the transcendence”’ (H.G. Gadamer, L’attualità del bello, Marietti, Genova, 1986: 35. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 158). Sheldrake (2001) remarks that ‘. . . intense experiences of place often provide people with their first inchoate intimations of transcendence of the sacred. Place is both this, here and now, and at the same time more than ‘this’, a pointer to elsewhere’ (Sheldrake 2001: 30). Here the author refers to the delicate balance within Christianity between the theory of Incarnation of God in Christ’s humanity and the particularity of this creation while at the same time conveying through that particularity the participation of the singular to the universal, to the transcendent ‘. . . . the sacred wants to use the beauty and the beauty wants to use the sacred’ (Severino 2002).

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because we have chosen to respect the Italian interpretation by Cacciari who probably wants to refer to
God manifests itself in that beautiful site, making of it a place; God is [in] that beauty. Religious edifices have to be intended as the concretisation through symbols of what that place has shown to human beings in their encounter. The work of art unites in itself the transcendence of the beauty (and therefore its sacredness) with the earthly physicality of the naturally beautiful features. These two sides do not fight. The dot or point of the work of art stands as a pause in which the noise comes to rest. In other words, the transcendence and the earthly are conjoined in and through the work of art, itself an expression of φιλαγγία, or friendship. My notion of sacred place somehow introduces us into a sort of Franciscan way of conceiving the relationship with the creation. Within a Franciscan spirituality man participates in the mystery of creation together with the all living things and creatures:

. . . We may think of God as the only truly catholic place. . . . For Duns Scotus . . . all things in their very particularity participate directly in the life of the Creator. This makes of each thing a unique and irreplaceable expression of God’s beauty as a whole. Each and every thing, person, and environment is called to ‘be itself’ or, better, to do itself with utter intensity and concentration and, thus, in terms of Scotus’ approach to the doctrine of Incarnation, to ‘do Christ’. The doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation . . . imply a divine indwelling in all material reality and the revelation of God through the whole created order . . . Incarnation anchors human experience of the sacred firmly in the world of particulars. Ultimate truth must paradoxically be sought through contingent times and places. These have the capacity to speak sacramentally, beyond themselves, of God’s presence and promise . . . Every particular place is a point of access to the place of God. . . . ‘Where is God or what is God’s place?’ the Incarnation responds that God is no where in the sense of unbounded. . . . at the same time, God may be said to act in the ‘within’ of all things. We may speak of God in all things in the same way as we conceive an active principle to be present to what receives its action. God’s presence-as-action directly and intimately touches the within of each thing. [. . .] As the presence that acts in the within of all things, it is appropriate to think of God as ‘making space’. We mean this in two ways. First, God . . . ground[s] everything in its own particular reality . . . God is not bounded but encompasses everything that is . . . second, God’s active presence in the within of all things transgresses the boundaries of particularity . . . this catholic [i.e., universal] space of God . . . not only makes space for the particular but also makes space at the heart of each particular reality for what is other and more than itself. God is not in a protected place . . . God is rather, a shocking presence’. ‘There can be no effective separation between what God is and how God acts (Sheldrake 2001: 66–67, 68).

2.3 Conclusion

So far, I have been dealing with the notion of sacredness and how that of the sacred has
been culturally portrayed and treated as a completely diverse reality. I have also provided a brief outline of my idea of sacred place in the context of Sardinia delineating the figure of *cumbessias* villages as those historical sacred places and major religious centres spread all over the territory of this island at the centre of Mediterranean sea. I have elaborated my own notion of sacred places and I have maintained that the process through which they are created or recognised as sacred, is not linked to the manifestation of a divine force but rather stems from an inherent sum of qualities inherent in the place itself. The manifestation of the divine force is here conceived as a witness of or proof of the sacredness of the site. I have also claimed that the very notion of sacredness, when applied to places, departs from, rather than confirms, what has been intended to essentially characterise the idea of sacredness, that is, separateness or seclusion. The reality purported by Sardinian sacred places has shown to us how their very essence of places, first of all, makes them inclusive realities, catalysts thanks to which the essence of the surrounding landscape is revealed not excluded. 'Although Merleau-Ponty was primarily concerned with the effects of a distant gaze on the human being as an object of analysis, one might also apply his critique to traditional views regarding sacred geography and sacred mountains as objects of analysis. Traditionally, sacred mountains have been perceived as if from a high-altitude universalising perspective (philosophical) with little regard for what happens on the ground, namely their cultural, social, political or economic dimension' (Robson 1993: 121). This quotation reminds us that far from being philosophically constituted, sacred places are seen from the *ground* as ‘culturally constituted phenomena’, creating, and created through, history and narratives. In the next chapter and in those that follow, in fact, I shall be exploring the ‘elective affinity’ between people and places, which is also an affinity of a culturally and socially constitutive nature.
Chapter 3

Symbolic boundaries: building Sardinian communities

Community is that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediate than the abstraction I call society. It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home. In it they learn the meaning of kinship through being able to perceive its boundaries—that is, juxtaposing it to non-kinship; they learn 'friendship'; they acquire the sentiments of close social association and the capacity to express or otherwise manage these in their social relationship. Community, therefore, is where one learns and continues to practice how to 'be social'... [is] where one acquires culture (Cohen A. P., The Symbolic Construction of Community, London/New York, Routledge, 1985:15).

This chapter explores Sardinian collective identities: they are essentially constructed by self-conscious individuals bound to their communities through their adherence to basic social structures or 'sub-units' such as family, neighbourhood, etc. Dimensions and identities of these sub-units are themselves reworked in the continual dynamic interactions they engage with the putative notion of uniform communal wholes. Collective identities are also inherently bound and reinforced in the dynamic interactions groups of people engage with others, belonging to other communities. It will be argued, in fact, how individual and collective identities stem from either intra-community social dynamics or from inter-community relations. With the foregoing argument I do not wish to imply, however, that the notion of Sardinian community should be intended as a 'mechanism' forcibly integrating single units, imposing a uniformity of contents that its members should attach to it, and neglecting difference; it should rather be regarded 'as an aggregating device' (Cohen 1985: 20).

Yet, it is appropriate for me to briefly turn my attention to what I regard as a theoretical formulation suitable for my idea of community intended as a symbolic construction. The theoretical picture I shall sketch over the following pages, however, shall be clarified by the insertion of more concrete examples taken from Sardinian
communities. In this regard, it must be pointed out that, for the purpose of this thesis, I shall not engage in a deeper analysis of those complex mechanisms underpinning the processes of creation and management of collective and individual identities within Sardinian communities. Rather, I shall limit my concerns to provide a general picture with a few examples that will help clarify the essential dialectic between collective and individual identities. To this regard, the reader should be aware that the intent to generalise stems from the recognition that some of the realities of the communities that are subjects of my present concern can be easily recognised among other communities spread throughout the central territory and beyond that, throughout the whole island.

I will first give a general overview of those villages and communities in whose territories the *cumbessias* villages, the objects of my concern, are positioned.

This Chapter also explores how past and present collective imperatives of solidarity and egalitarianism, themselves stemming from a subsistence-and-barter livelihood and from over four hundred years of feudal land management, have influenced the formation of past and present Sardinian collective and individual identities. I will clarify how present contradictions underpinning the subtle dynamics inherent to the processes of management of collective and individual identities within the six communities, respond to the aforementioned imperatives: socially unauthorised individual identities are superseded by collectively allocated ones. Finally, I shall also explore how the processes of constructing individual and collective identities and the symbolic boundaries of a community are boosted during inter-community encounter/exchanges.

3.1 Constructing individual and collective identities
To borrow from Cohen's discussion of the idea of community metaphorically portrayed as a 'jigsaw puzzle' where each coloured piece adds something different to the whole construction, sharing its final form rather than its content, I would contend that Sardinian communities are symbolically constructed; this formulation underlines their inherent relational dimensions and the process through which their members adhere or commit themselves to a common set of symbols to which they attach meanings they perceive to be shared by other members within the same group; yet, these meanings are perceived to be significantly different with respect to those attached from elsewhere.

I suggest here that the very idea of 'commonality' does not immediately refer to a 'uniformity' of 'behaviours or ideas. It is a commonality of forms (ways of behaving) whose content (meanings) may vary considerably among its members' (Cohen 1985: 20. Emphasis added). Symbols do note, in fact, stand as closed, previously defined, horizons; rather, they prompt the members of a community to engage in an endless attribution of re-worked meanings: people learn how to access ways of interacting and behaving connoted as social thanks to this 'equipment' of shared symbols. The very process of interpretation or attribution of meaning is itself articulated on the ground of an acquired foreknowledge members already have at their disposal which determines the possible set of interpretative responses or senses they can make of certain behaviours: it is framed into language, traditions, religious beliefs, etc.; otherwise put, the fore-knowledge or cultural frame provides the members of a society or of communities within the same society the means through which to make sense of things. Yet, culture, itself made up of symbolic systems and a network of related meanings, rather than being a definitive set of keys giving access to the world, is inherently dynamic and constantly responds to historical processes of interaction going on either across the boundaries of an Ego society or within it, among its communities. The cultural frame of a given society (and, at its most particular level, of a community) is
thus not immutable; rather, it is subject to inevitable reformulation and continuous adjustments when confronted either with internal social interactions and formulation of different meanings by its members, or in communicative exchanges (and eventual processes of acculturation) taking place across its boundaries.

Therefore, when confronted with the inherent symbolic processes through which individuals of an Ego community deal with structural forms that sustain the community of which they are members, the discourse goes back to the dialectic existing between collective and individual identities. Collective and individual identities constitute the procedural prelude to the formation, maintenance, and revitalisation of community boundaries. It is not pointless to re-assert that community is symbolic, as are the social categories and behaviours through which it is experienced. They also partake of a symbolic dimension. Individuals make sense of their belonging to a particular community when they, as already noticed, personally share the same set of symbols that other members share. They adhere to them, modelling themselves. Yet, as we have seen, what is peculiar to symbols is their being either not completely imbued with fixed meanings or their being consequently open to the continual attribution of new ones. To put it in Cohen's words, 'symbols express other things in ways that allow their common form to be retained and shared among members of a group, whilst not imposing upon these people the constraints of uniform meaning' (1985:18). The awareness of belonging to a community, its being symbolic in form, means for these people to actually recognise and share the same form, not necessarily the same meaning. Hence, I would assert 'we are part of this community'; but if asked to provide the meaning I make of this symbol, in my terms, it would probably differ from those that others, adherents to the same symbol or members of the same community, would attach to it. It is thus evident that the uniqueness of a symbol such as that of community, substantiates and subsumes multifarious meanings or contents. Community is then represented as a
common heading through which its members are allowed to express and experience their common sense of belonging; its symbolic dimension, however, safeguards members from losing their individuality while engaging with other members in a common recognition of its shared form.

Individual identity is seen to stem from this personal interaction and attachment of meaning to the symbol of community. Yet, as already noted, individuals are inherently part of a 'communal' ground for the very fact that they are imbued with the same cultural determinants, the most important of which being language. Certainly this is a point of contact of the individual to his group. Yet, cultural determinants are themselves symbolically informed and, which is not redundant, are continually re-modelled throughout time, social and cultural, internal and external interactions. Paradoxically, it is precisely these exchanges, and particularly those with members of other communities, that provide 'ours' of its sense of self, now a sense of commonality. Hence, our cultural determinants (we have seen that they are not immutable) will be changed during the encounter with the other, whilst being symbolically strengthened in their affirmation of difference. In my encounter with your culture, your community, I strangely perceive mine as more meaningful, I feel urged to stress my own cultural proximity to the other members of my community, those members towards whom I felt difference, more than similarity, at least in relation to the attribution of meaning.

Let us briefly turn our attention to the notion of similarity in this context. Collective and individual identities, whose process of formation I am trying to describe, are actually reconciled through the symbolic dimension of community. The difference in meanings attached to it is counterbalanced by the members’ display of a similarity or common adhesion to it as a symbolic dimension. Similarity is thus the formula that provides the members of a community with a collective identity. Similarity of form is displayed thanks to the symbol of community: the latter allows them to adopt similar
ways of behaving (yet not uniform behaviours), to speak making reference to common symbolic referents, to communicate through similar channels while conveying different meanings, to participate to the same rituals. Within similarity of form, a freedom of contents may be enjoyed.

3.1.1 Managing collective and individual identities within Sardinian communities

Within Sardinian communities the dialectic between collective and individual identity is somehow inherently difficult and, in some respects, contradictory. It is pertinent to repeat that, generally speaking, Sardinian self-conscious individuals are tightly and publicly bound to their communities through a series of social sub-units, that is, those basic social structures such as the family, neighbourhood, friendship ties and comparatico, (i.e., ‘fictive kinship’) within which the individual self becomes social (Cohen 1985: 114). These social sub-units are self-aware individuals’ ‘reference groups’, they are formed by ‘the people in whose eyes [individuals] discern the reflection of their own worth’ (Dore 1978: 206). Sardinian communities can be described as closed social clusters whose basic references for collective identity are represented by the aforementioned sub-units within which individuals’ authorial agency and self-discretion find a socially authorised way of expression. The individuals’ recognition of these sub-units and the community as a whole as symbolic media, sets in motion the process through which notions of solidarity, egalitarianism, and commonality can be conveyed. The ethics of egalitarianism or equality and the need of ‘intra-community’ (Cohen 1978) solidarity have represented, as we shall see, a basic imperative that underpinned the social and economical development of Sardinian communities throughout the last eight centuries. Indeed, it will be argued that while individuality directly expressed through idiosyncratic or eccentric dress codes, unusual
behaviours, homosexuality, personal claiming for oneself of beauty, skilfulness, or intelligence, is generally disapproved and tacitly excluded from community life, community itself has proper means for a collective allocation of public individual identity to its members. To put it another way, past and present imperatives of solidarity, commonality, and equality within these communities do not allow individuals to stand out or diverge from these paradigms while, at the same time, communities themselves collectively operate to provide their members some sort of authorised public identities.

Some general remarks about the historical development of principles of commonality within Sardinian communities will help to support the foregoing assertions.

It must be stated that Sardinian communities have been unitary and independent entities (ville) whose tendency, reinforced by natural isolation, was that of self-sufficiency from neighbouring villages, since the early Middle Ages. Clearly separated from other centres, villages were clustered settlements surrounded by their own fields, characteristics that ‘helped to preserve a certain social cohesion’ (Dore 1978: 197). They were born and developed as social, cultural, juridical, and productive autonomous units (Le Lannou 1992; Angioni 1988). The history of Sardinian communities is signed by the affirmation of collective rules promoting the principle of egalitarianism, either at the level of the foregoing sub-units49 or at the level of community as a whole. These egalitarian trends stemmed from a livelihood system that, from the thirteenth century A.D. through to the beginning of the nineteenth century, was characterised by a ‘subsistence-and-barter’ economy (Dore 1978: 296) dominated by a conjunction of nomadic pastoralism and small-scale agriculture. Moreover, communal egalitarian rural

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48 For a more in depth discussion of the Sardinian family see Chapter 5, section 5.2.
49 For instance, within familial inheritance system both genders, men and women, were equally beneficiary in the succession of the family’s properties.
practices were consequent to the difficult co-habitation of widespread grazing activities and agriculture within the same areas, activities requiring the development of diverse ‘ecological’ and management ‘strategies’; cultivated fields, in fact, were continually at risk for the eventual incursion of the herd. A Medieval feudal management of the land prescribed the communal ownership of the territories surrounding each village, of which ancient medieval documents called ‘popular land’ (Le Lannou 1992: 118).\footnote{The documents the author refers to are the condaghi, Medieval monastic registers including the records of transactions between the monastery and external institutions or individuals. Moreover, the author remarks that in these documents there is no term indicating the notion of ‘property’.} The system of ‘collective agriculture’ involved a diversified management of the land following various systems: vidazzone and paberile, for example, prescribed a forced biennial rotation of the crops and the division of the arable land into two or more sections in order to leave the uncultivated field for the pasturing of beasts of burden.\footnote{It should be remarked that these areas of land included wheat or barley fields together with vineyards, orchards, and olive groves.} The comunella, another kind of collective regulation for the usage of common land, prescribed that the uncultivated area could be also used by shepherds for their sheep soon after the harvest. Eventually private landowners whose territories were contained within the fields of the vidazzone system had to conform to the rotation. Until the thirteenth century these spots of land were let in concession to private tenants annually, on the basis of a public draw. Tenancy rights could sometimes be inherited. Since the seventeenth century the changed system that spread lifelong concessions gave rise to different kinds of private property. Already by the thirteenth century, the feudal management of communal land instituted a valid collective system of control and defence of the land of communal ownership.

Initially referring to the whole of the territory owned and cultivated by the inhabitants of a rural village, scolca, subsequently came to indicate a medieval juridical tradition, an institution of surveillance of these territories. This institution entailed a
profound communion of the population united by a collective oath for the mutual protection of the cultivated fields from eventual damages caused by sheep's trespassing into fields, or by people; Scolca talks about a collective responsibility (Le Lannou 1992). Villages could use other lands where communal practices were undertaken: there were communal threshing-floors (aie) usually in the immediate village's surrounding area; communal pasture lands practised by the molentargius, i.e., a shepherd paid by all those families who needed their donkeys (molentes) to be taken there to pasture; the pardu, a communal tract of land specifically reserved to the pasturing of beasts of burden; ademprivi, which were a sort of rights of usage the population of each village had in relation to that part of communal territory left uncultivated, the so-termed saltus. This vast area, part of which was public land, was usually left to sheep, pig, and goat pasture. Saltus indicated a village's uncultivated wooded and bushy land; it played an important role in the economy of these hamlets: from it people could gather important resources necessary for the integration of a subsistence livelihood, such as firewood, berries, acorns, or wood to be used for work (Angioni 1988).

Most of the foregoing communal practices and feudal regulations went on substantially unchanged until the nineteenth century and the introduction of the Edict of Chiudende (1820), the land reform initiated by the Savoy dynasty. The Edict was intended to eliminate the 'remnants of feudalism': it introduced the privatisation of the land through an 'enforced redistribution of land rights' (Dore 1978: 57) and the concession of rights of fencing of what before were 'open' (Sole 1994: 12) communal lands together with the devolution of feudal possessions to municipal and Crown public land. The Edict represented a serious threat to the communities' sense of commonality, produced a generalised discontent, and spawned violent disputes between the local representatives of the Crown and rural population, the latter deprived of the possibility of cultivating small areas of land whose tenancy costs were now privately regulated by
the landholders. Nevertheless, the Edict found an immediate response, especially within
the central inland territory whose landscape has been fragmented into a series of dry
stone walls (tancas). Of the foregoing collective practices related to the land some, such
as the rotation of crops (vidazzone/paberile), have survived mainly in the wide
agricultural communities of the southern plains of the island. The old traditional
medieval system of control and protection of the cultivated fields (scolca) has not been
cancelled but rather superseded by the modern barracellato, a collective organisation
divided into different private companies whose members (barracelli) are chosen by the
community in order to protect the fields from damage, avoid cattle-stealing, prevent
arsons, and monitor abusive pasture use. Despite the social and economical
transformations which run throughout the second half of the nineteenth and first half of
the twentieth century (such as the incorporation of private property into a collective
economic system, the presence of a centralised state power, introduction of a money
economy soon after the Second World War, definitive migration during 1960s, the
massive diffusion of mass media, the growth of tertiary activities), the lure exercised
into small farmers or poor shepherds by industrial growth started in the 1960s and
1970s, and other economic and social factors, many collaborative and communal
practices are still present and valued within Sardinian communities. They are prized not
only within working activities but also among the fore mentioned sub-units, families,
neighbourhoods, and friendship ties.

It is not my intention, however, to use commonality to deceive internal divisions,
inequalities of conditions, hierarchies or power, and mechanisms moved by private and
individualistic stimuli. Richness was generally associated with ownership of land and
means of production such as beasts of burden, cattle and dependent workers. Most of
the Sardinian families were small tenants, farmers or shepherds who cultivated or
pastured within landholders’ fields. Familial efforts were directed towards the
achievement of productive autonomy and self-sufficiency; families aimed at becoming a kind of household, units of production/reproduction/consumption. In reality, self-sufficiency was hardly ever achieved; rather, they hovered near a subsistence livelihood which entailed the need for continual exchanges and mutual help between households. Equality was also the ethics underlying the relationships between neighbours. Within each village neighbourhood’s members were people on whom to count in times of crisis or emergencies such as funerals or weddings. At funerals women had to prepare food for the family of the deceased for two or more days, dress, comb and prepare the dead, while at weddings, women helped to cook and serve food. Men were better at roasting suckling pig and lamb. Members of different neighbourhoods entertained in more formal relations. Neighbourhood relations, however, entailed a good dose of social control and respect of social intercourse conventions. Mutual help and exchanges, for example, were regulated on strict rules of reciprocity. Neighbourhoods were partly kin-based: this implied that there ‘[was] hardly ever any formal limit to the range of kin ties which can be allowed to create mutually obligated relationships’ (Dore 1978: 202). This is particularly true for the exchange of gifts ‘which required an unerring sense of the appropriate price and nature of gift, or the type of visit, called for any occasion, given (and this is the important thing that requires a subtle calculating mind) the closeness of the relationship as determined by kinship, physical proximity, common membership of the same [neighbourhood] . . . personal friendship between household members, and past history of gift transaction between the two households’ (1978: 199).

Today, as 50 years ago, this kind of mutual help among neighbours is still highly valued, although weddings, for example, are no longer held at home, but in modern and renowned local restaurants. Mutual exchanges between friends, _compari_, and relatives, still include the gathering of the workforce for grape and olive harvesting, the kind of help immediately reciprocated with the offering of a common feast for the helping
labourers. As in the past, gift exchanges of fresh fruit, vegetables, biscuits, homebaked bread (pane lentu), and other food items are still prized. Nowadays, old neighbours maintain their friendship, though they have moved to different and newer areas of the village.

Moreover, neighbours' relations are mainly, though not exclusively, gender specific. It should be clarified that in the Sardinia of the 1940s and part of the 1950s, families were like small 'enterprises . . . not just groups of people bound[ed] by blood and sentiment' (Dore 1978: 165). Within them there was a clear role division: the head of the family was a shepherd or a farmer whose labour kept him outside of the house, sometimes for months on end. Their wives were 'members of the labour force' with definite tasks such as child rearing, crofting, transformation of herding or farming produce, exchanging of final produce, picking firewood, and carrying water supplies. Women contributed substantially to the economy and sociality of the household. They presided over the exchanges of produce among neighbourly families, though herding and farming were frequently intertwined activities, combined sources of families' subsistence especially among central inland communities.

Nowadays, Sardinian rural communities display a greater homogeneity of social and economic conditions among their members: there has been a generalised improvement in living standards and today, no one suffers from hunger, as the poorest families did just fifty years ago. Despite the failure of legislative attempts to create a structural restoration and reorganisation of the pastoral sector since 1971, traditional

52 Within rural communities, that of crofting still is a very common part-time activity with just a marginal economical return. Staple vegetables, fruit trees, and olive trees are the main cultivations. Elderly and middle-aged men and women are used to tend a family croft in the country just outside the village (a s' ortu) where they go daily in the afternoons.

53 Such as raw wool, meat, dairy produce and cheese, wheat or barley flour, bread.

54 I refer to the Regional Law no. 25, 1971, which basically planned organic interventions in order to grant the social and economic development of the inland areas with a prevalent pastoral economy. These plans operated in conjunction with the intent to reformulate the social and cultural presuppositions at the basis of the criminality essentially linked to the pastoral world. Among the different interventions were the increment of pastoral enterprises, acquisition of vast areas of public pasture land, reduction of tenancy costs, qualitative and
herding (while farming in the central area, apart from tending vineyards, has died out completely) remains an essential occupation among villagers, while many men and women work outside of their villages: people from Mamoiada, Orosei, Orani, for example, are actively employed in the nearby town of Nuoro. Changed social conditions such as improved living standards, urbanisation and friendship ties no longer confined people to neighbourhoods or villages of residence, and the access to retail stores previously absent in the villages, has not but partially superseded the aforementioned imperatives of solidarity and commonality.

As seen earlier, past and present associational networks among the components of familial nuclei and neighbours, realised through gift-exchange and mutual aid, stand as various dimensions of community life in which the individual is located and locates him/herself socially into a collective identity. Associational networks can be also found in working life or in leisure. Shepherds, in fact, especially sheep owners, are frequently united in cooperatives for pasture rights, grazing management or the transportation of produce. Otherwise they gather together during sheep-shearing, when the family of the shepherd who requested the help of others, organise a great feast to which relatives and friends are all invited. The growth of such cooperative forms, developed since the 1960s, has partly contributed to the loss of the Sardinian family's productive role; yet, it is still quite common for many inland familial groups (in which elder sons work with their fathers), to actively support pastoral work.

The foregoing argument has suggested that among past and present Sardinian communities, individuals' self-discretion and autonomous agency are nevertheless inextricably bound to, and explicated within, a collective management of identity norms. Shared past and present imperatives of solidarity and commonality do not allow

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quantitative improvement of pastures, introduction of new technology of transformation of produce, in a word a general rationalisation of the pastoral sector (Sini 1994: 176-179).

individuals to emerge and declare their differences. Everybody has to be homogenised. The same social control exercised on individuals’ actions at different levels of community (control of the family, of the neighbours, of other groups), locates or better relates those individuals to a precise social context such as the family, the neighbourhood of residence or origin, their kinship ties, etc., to which a certain social recognition and significance is given.

Yet, community itself allocates a public identity to its members, a mechanism which somehow reduces the infringement by individuals of the fore mentioned collective imperatives: the allocation of nicknames is one of these collective strategies to preserve the community. A common Sardinian saying, ‘chentu concas, chentu berrittas’ (i.e., a hundred heads, a hundred ways of thinking) bears witness to what I might call the ‘contradiction’ that exists within Sardinian communities, where individuals hardly share others’ ways of thinking and behaving, while adopting common rules and responding to solidarity imperatives. Within Sardinian communities micro-social interactions and individuals’ recognition passes through social referents: nowadays, as in the past, within young men’s and adults’ discourses, individuals are recognised and referred to in relation to their kinship ties, their neighbourhood of origin, eventual friendship or fictive kinship ties. Members of a community are identified through their assigned nicknames (zistros), frequently inherited and subsequently formalised throughout time on a matrilineal line becoming family nicknames. In this respect, it should be clarified, that within Sardinian families, children were given the father’s surname, although it was frequently the adoption of their mother’s. Women, who did not lose their surnames upon marriage, were the referents in relation to whom a person could be immediately individuated by the rest of the community. Nicknames, in fact, were also allocated to women: hence, for a man the individual’s referents was his
mother’s nickname. Nicknames were in this case adopted almost in substitution of individuals’ surnames. Yet, they are also significant instances of a collective allocation of identities, a common recognition and evaluation of a person’s individuality. Zistros, are, in fact, allocated on the basis of an observed person’s idiosyncrasies, physical defects, particular ways of talking, walking, or behaving; they can also be derived as a summary of a discourse an individual makes within a group, or simply from a wrong or particularly ‘elevated’ word, he used in his rather informal talk. Zistros, then, suggest not only a high degree of social control by the community of the individual and evaluation of his or her actions within intra-community intercourse; as family names, they also offer a confirmation of an individual’s social allocation of a public identity. Yet, they are nonetheless means through which the community itself discerns particular individualities among its members while preserving itself and its internal coherence.

3.2 At the boundaries: collective identity and inter-community relations

Collective identity is given its first imprinting through the symbolic character of the community. Yet, its subsequent development should be searched for within the inevitable relational character the very notion of community possesses. To claim that community is inherently relational in character is neither novel nor redundant: we have just seen how it is through members’ relationship and subsequent adherence to its symbol that similarity and difference, two of its basic dimensions, could encounter. Not to mention the fact that symbols are themselves inherently relational in their never-ending search for new meanings. Yet, community nurtures collective identity mainly

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56 Let us describe an example: Antonio Fadda is the son of Giovanni Fadda and Anna Marchi. Anna’s mother zistru was maimai. Hence, Anna, herself inherits this zistru from her mother. Antonio will be assigned the same zistru his grandmother and mother had. When a group of people talk about Antonio, in order to identify him, they will say ‘Antonio e maimai’, literally, that Antonio Fadda from the lineage of maimai, that is, of Marchi, of those particular lineage of Marchi and not others. This practice of personal identification on a matrilineal line of descent is probably a historical heritage derived from the principle which sees the mother as the unique figure offering certainty, as compared to the uncertainty of the father.
through those relationships occurring at its boundaries. To respond to the questions asking why and how it happens, the immediate answer would probably be seen as simplistic. In fact, it is not. Members of a community, as just seen, partake in their attachment to the same symbolic forms, but they arguably disagree or, let us say, are more personal, in attributing their own meanings to those symbols. Whilst I cannot fail to recognise their adherence to a common cultural background that informs, in one way or another, their willingness to adopt certain schemas and not others, or to ‘read’ the world from a certain perspective, I am however inclined to think that they are also cognisant of the differences existing among themselves. Yet, in the encounter with another community those differences are at once concealed or disguised and certainly perceived as more tenuous when confronted with the different world the Other displays. Individual idiosyncrasies are put aside and minimised, and what was perceived as different within the Ego community is now apparently disguised in form of similarity. Individuals certainly become more aware of theirs as a community: actions and statements are now coherent to the new dimension portrayed. Members of the Ego group now draw the line of their individual identity along the same symbolic boundary traced by them all in the encounter with the Other:

It is the presentation to the outside world of the common interests of the members of the community. As such, it bears the characteristic hallmark of communication between different levels of society; namely, simplification. When a group of people engages with some other, it has to simplify its message down to a form of generality with which each of the members can identify their personal interests. Otherwise the message becomes impossibly convoluted and so heavily qualified as to be unintelligible to the outsider (Cohen 1985: 35. Emphases added).

Social complexity is thus disguised and substituted rather by an egalitarian model of interaction: values of equality, egalitarianism, and common interests supersede difference, social inequity, and individual idiosyncrasies.

Community gathers at its boundaries. Boundaries themselves may be objectively visible, physically traced out, geographically readable. Ours, however, are less tangible
rather almost insubstantial and, certainly, culturally informed: they are the symbolic limit from which the Other begins. They are again symbols to which a general common meaning is attached, that of collective identity. Strangely enough, the foregoing simplification with which a community faces cross-boundary interactions is the key through which the same community strengthens its boundaries and collective identity. As Cohen remarked, general statements of what it means to be part of a community deprived of its real complexities, help its members to adhere to that statement and to perceive themselves belonging to that collective identity. Statements may also lose their 'defensive' nature to acquire a rather aggressive one. This happens when communities, generally close to each other, denigrate themselves, highlighting each other's inherent social disparities. This process feeds back into them, nurturing the symbolic value of their own boundaries: it is another way they have to stress their communal selves when confronted with other 'extra-local' realities. 'Collective identity [thus portrayed] serves as an ideal-typical point of reference for the construction and allocation of identity and the evaluation of performance' (Cohen, A. P., 'The same—but different': the allocation of identity in Whalsay, Shetland'. The Sociological Review, 26 (3), 1978: 450, 453).

The relational character inherent in the process of formation of a community boundary is twofold: its conceptualisation is triggered either from the outside and from within the community itself or in 'micro-social' interactions. Yet, to restrict the collective and individual identities and their knowing selves to the contingency of the encounter/exchange/comparison with the Other would be at best inadequate, at worst too relativistic. If it is true that boundaries are essentially symbolic, and therefore inherently relational rather than fixed lines in space, it is also true that their dimension is one of self-reflection and reformulation of the self: 'we recognise boundaries as matters of consciousness', consciousness of ourselves as individuals, of our 'inner' selves and the differences inherent in our 'selfhood'.
Individuals' self-awareness, however, does not imply the passive acceptance of externally imposed meanings, in that they do not substantially correspond to the concept individuals have formulated of themselves and their community. Community boundaries are then ‘matters of consciousness’ and, I would add, of self-awareness. The boundary, seen from insiders' perspective, symbolises individuals’ own view/idea/awareness of the community as it is portrayed through their individual commitments, personal experiences, and idiosyncrasies.

Individuals arrive at the encounter with the other as already self-conscious selves. The consciousness of our distinct selfhood, of ourselves at once individuals and community’s members is not merely ‘refract[ed] by the presence of the other’, as Cohen has aptly remarked. The ‘contingency model’, entailing the self to be modulated on the ‘requirements of contingent social interaction and boundary transaction’, in fact, fails to recognise and to legitimise individuals’ ‘authorial agency’ in the process of construction of self-identity and self-awareness (Cohen A. P., Self consciousness. An alternative anthropology of identity, London and New York, Routledge, 1994: 128, 129). Rather, it talks about them in terms of individuals deprived of any agency of their own, merely acted upon either by their own community’s cultural institutions (operatively inside the community) or just being a product of the Other’s mirroring activity (operatively at the boundaries/outside the community). Individuals’ symbolic and factual arrival at the boundaries, on the one hand, heightens their self-awareness as members of a community, on the other portrays individuals’ selves as already formed: the boundary provides their ‘inner’ or ‘real’ selves or their ‘non-contingent identity’, the circumstance of their display (1994: 128). Selfhood and membership are converging selves. Boundaries, in fact, being culturally informed and symbolically invested are subject to restless reformulation: they unavoidably hinge on individuals’ authorial discretion and collective agency.
These are two separate agencies yet intertwined selves: the experience of the boundary takes us back to the issue of the individual's self-discretion. I have regarded community not as a subjugating mechanism conspiring against individuals' identities, but rather as an aggregating device where individuals are at the same time social and cultural agents and subject[s] to and of society and culture. Being repositories of cultural and social values, I should not dismiss their selves as mere objects to be acted upon socially and culturally. For the community to be regarded as an aggregating device it should strenuously defend the notion of integrity of its members recognising them as individuals and members, acted upon and having authorial agency, created and creatively creating, made and makers, socially determined selves and autonomous self-driven and self-aware individuals:

When the Mbuti refers to the 'real self', he can have in mind both the individual and the member of the wider collectivity. In this view, then, the mere fact of sociality does not compromise the idea of self. Rather, the balanced self, the essential Mbuti self, is fundamental to the ideals both of individuality and of society; ... [Among the Mbuti] the self predominates over the social ... Yet, the Mbuti are clearly neither asocial nor antisocial. They just have an enlightened theory that society does not depend for its integrity on intruding itself upon the selves of its members. To the contrary, the integrity of society depends on preserving that of its members (Cohen 1994: 31–32, 33).

Sociality and selfhood are then beyond any contrast: their formula resembles that already portrayed of similarity and difference. Difference expresses a different conceptualisation, an authorial content that self-aware individuals assign to shared cultural forms and social structures. Needless to say that a shared structure itself neither entails nor imposes uniformity of behaviours/perceptions/meanings to its beholders. Hence, external structures can intrude on an Ego community imposing themselves, yet they cannot import their related meanings. Ego community's cultural boundary, inherently resilient, would be reconstituted through individuals' use of newly imported symbolic forms. These are absorbed, elaborated, translated into the native 'idiom' consistent with individual and collective identity. This would be achieved 'specifically
by re-rendering structures and forms of behaviour which have originated elsewhere in such a way that they are made congruent with the proclivities of indigenous cognition. Here, then, structures transcend the community boundary, but their meanings do not' (Cohen 1985: 86). Newly imported or imposed-on forms are appropriated as symbolic devices and media through which to convey new statements.

3.2.1 Sardinian communities: encountering identities

In the remaining part of this section, I shall try to provide a few examples of the creation and regulation of collective identity among Sardinian communities, especially in encounters with other communities. I do not intend to reduce collective identity to the contingency of the encounter with the Other. Yet, it is nonetheless true that it is precisely the encounter that provides individuals a significant occasion to display what they have individually elaborated and what they perceive to be their sense of community.

As I saw earlier, in section 3.1.1 of this Chapter, Sardinian inland communities developed as independent units which aimed at achieving social and economic self-sufficiency. The neighbouring communities of Mamoiada and Sarule, or those of Bitti and Lula, or Nuoro and Oliena, are culturally and socially autonomous communities. The residents of these villages show an apparent homogeneity of dress codes, hairstyles, economic imperatives, they apparently relate in the same way to religious practices, celebrate the same festivities, Yet, these ‘convergences’ mask, on the one hand, an apparent similarity while, on the other, display communities’ self-awareness of their specificity, the threat on their own cultural boundaries, and the need of their reaffirmation. Authors, such as Gallini (1971; 1977) have been misguided by these convergences, interpreting them as signs of the ‘eclipse’ of communities, their complete absorption into simple remnants of their brilliant past; it has been argued that ‘the
spread of the mass media', the imposition of values descending from an external
cultural hegemony over unselfconscious subaltern local people, and 'the inexorable
tendency to urbanisation have eradicated meaningful distinctions within societies except
those marked by economic status and, in particular, by relations to the capital market. In
other words, community had given way to class' (Cohen 1985: 76. Emphasis added).
They failed to recognise individuals' authorial agency and self-consciousness in relation
to any kind of cultural imposition; they did not recognise the symbolic essence of
community boundaries. The threats that cultural imposition and the encounter with the
Other at the community boundaries impose, certainly demand an improvement of self-
awareness and the need to reinforce communities' boundaries.

Language is the first cultural symbol through which Sardinian communities
express their specificity. Each community, in fact, has its own dialect. Community
dialects can vary tremendously from one to another, in terms of grammar,
pronunciation, inflexion, accent, structure, and vocabulary. Each community is
perfectly aware of the difference between its own and another community's dialect, and
values the specificity of its own speech: members from Mamoiada are able, in fact, to
recognise people from the near villages of Ollolai or Sarule simply by listening to their
dialogue. Moreover, the difficult co-habitation of the Italian and local Sardinian
language displays how language can be the first appropriate means communities have at
their disposal for the reassertion of their own symbolic boundaries. The last four
decades, which have seen the cultural boundaries of Sardinian communities subjected to
an increased cultural and social pressure from external (mainland) forces, have
witnessed the increased self-awareness of the communities' identities. Language has
also been the symbolic means through which Sardinian communities have undergone a
process of revitalisation of their cultural boundaries: many texts have been translated
into the Sardinian language and imported into school programmes. In the encounter with a cultural reality external to Sardinia, different communities converge creating a sort of self-image, through what I have before identified as ‘simplification’ of the message, that is, a disguising of the differences existing among them in order to assert a ‘Sardinian identity’ in front of an ‘Italian’ one. When the encounter takes place within the island and within the same historical region, as is the case of Barbagia, or Mârghine or Baronia, communities are certainly more committed to their own villages and those next to them as their ideal area of reference.

Consequent to the foregoing discussion in which I asserted the growth of Sardinian villages as independent, self-sufficient units, I should acknowledge that inland communities have matured the self-awareness of a major difference existing between them and the neighbouring ones as is the case of the communities of Mamoiada and Orgosolo. Among Sardinian communities there is often a sense of collective identity that is counterbalanced by a sense of difference or hostility in relation to their neighbouring ones. Difference can be best exemplified through the allocation of stereotypes held by one community towards the other. The process of assigning stereotypes basically refers to the aforementioned ‘simplification’; the community of Mamoiada refers to the people of Orgosolo as grozzarjos, literally ‘those wearing the grozza’ that is, a dark, raw woollen mantle wore by shepherds. The term is used to indicate what is perceived as roughness of the people of Orgosolo. These, in turn, talk about those of Mamoiada using the stereotype of ‘cittadinos’, i.e., citizens, meant to disdain the supposed appearance of class the villagers of Mamoiada want to display,

57 The following example gives just a hint of the great differences of dialect existing among contiguous communities: the word ‘I’, in Nuoro is ‘Deo’, in Oliena (12 km away) ‘Ego’, in Dorgali; 20 km from Oliena, ‘Seo’.
58 Yet, it should be acknowledged that the ‘binomial’ isolation—self-sufficiency and external produce exchanges were not opposing terms within the same construction. Even perfectly self-sufficient communities, in fact, entertained barters of their produce with other neighbouring communities'.
which rather derives from the village's direct relation to the main town of Nuoro.\textsuperscript{59} Needless to say that allocation of stereotypes changes in relation to the community's reference, values, and criteria for judgment.

Generally, neighbouring communities are portrayed as lacking moral values or a sense of justice; they are accused of cowardice, ignorance, ostentation and anger, etc. 'The moral to be drawn from this . . . discussion is that in looking for the distinctiveness of communities—that is, in seeking their boundaries—we should not be deceived by their apparent similarities into supposing that they are actually alike, nor even that they are becoming less different' (Cohen 1985: 76). The recent episodes of theft by Orgolese young boys during the festival days of Mamoiaida's main festivity, S. Cosimo, in September 2001, not only reflects past hostilities between the two communities but has also reinforced their boundaries and produced a communal reassertion of their collective identities. When asked about the episodes, a young girl of Mamoiaida commented 'we do not behave in such a way', 'Mamoiaida is very worried about these events', and 'they cannot come to our festival and do what they want', 'this time we also reacted to their actions' (since a group of people from Mamoiaida have beaten the group of young boys who were supposed to be the thieves). Moreover, these events happened during an apparent moment of pacification between the communities informally sanctioned by the numerous marriages between women from Orgosolo and men from Mamoiaida; yet, the appearance was deceiving the truth of discontent of Mamoiaida young women some of whom regard their female neighbours as disreputable women.

As we can see, a community's encounter with extra-local realities causes its members to stress their communal selves. When faced with the neighbouring

\textsuperscript{59} People from Nuoro use to refer to the neighbouring villages of Bitti as 'tzullos', Orune as 'ghirtalos', Orgosolo as 'busajos' (literally 'eaters of entrails'), Oliena as 'muttuuros' (those whose ears have been cut), etc. Those of Nuoro are known as 'mandrones' (i.e., lazy people). For some of them I am unable to provide a suitable translation. What is it important, however, is that these stereotypes are created on the basis of oppositional relations among neighbouring communities and on ideal behaviours to which other communities should respond.
community of *Orgosolo*, the community of *Mamoiada* disguises its social complexities under a commonly accepted mask of cohesion and solidarity in order to help its members to adhere to a common general statement ‘we do not behave in this way’ to which they collectively might feel to belong.

3.3 Conclusion

The picture I have sketched so far has provided a general portrait of the processes through which inland Sardinian communities have constructed their identities. Born as tightly clustered settlements and developed throughout eight centuries of history as autonomous social, juridical, and economical units, Sardinian communities nevertheless grew following common land management practices generally based on imperatives of egalitarianism and solidarity. The application of these imperatives modelled the social and cultural formation of these communities and particularly the whole intra-community relations. In this regard, it has been argued that within these communities an individual’s identity and recognition passes through what I have identified as basic social referents or ‘sub-units’ such as the family, neighbourhood, and familiar and extra-familiar kinship ties. Proceeding from Cohen’s notion of community and its boundaries as a symbolic hence a resilient construction, we have seen how contemporary social and economical changes have taken place within Sardinian communities since the early 1950s, whilst many traditional communal practices have still been maintained. Despite the inevitable development of a more private dimension, past imperatives of commonality, equity and solidarity are still presented and highly valued within inland communities. I have also explored how such imperatives of solidarity and commonality may hide either a weak social cohesion among the members of these communities or a difficult and contradictory construction of single individual identities outside of a collective management of identity norms. Self-aware, individual identity is located and
passes through the aforementioned social referents. We have also seen how it is in the contingency of the encounter with other communities that inner social complexity is disguised and supplanted by the display of a more cohesive collective identity.

The following chapters explore how social dynamics leading to cohesions and divergences inherent in these communities work once within the *cumbessias* villages where other and new borders are constructed. We shall also note how the architecture of the religious buildings respects those imperatives of commonality and egalitarianism I have outlined so far. In particular, the next chapter shall start an analysis of the basic formal and organisational features of the spaces within these sacred places.
Chapter 4

The language of religious architecture: conversation

The theoretical thread I have been following acknowledges built places (including sacred buildings) as tangible responses, meaningful outcomes deriving from the existential proximity we, as beings-in-the-world, share with the environing natural context. Ours is a mutual 'experiential interaction', a continuative encounter, itself a process of hermeneutical nature (Jones 2000: 10).60

Before coming to grips with the subsequent hermeneutical experience or with what Jones has described as the 'fluctuating interaction between people and sacred buildings', i.e., the ritual and daily encounters and exchanges between devotees and the sacred place, I shall concentrate my attention on what has been the result, in terms of concrete symbols, of the aforementioned encounter, i.e., the sacred building (Jones 2000: 29). As a symbol, the sacred building is a meaningful concretisation of a certain 'image of place' as it reveals itself to us, then translated through what Norberg-Schulz termed 'instrumental art', that is architecture (1996: 221, 228). The process of 'making', carried out through the act of building, brings to light those elements such as form, material substance, colour and texture that define the 'character'61 of a built place, the same character that allures devotees, that somehow compels them to engage in a 'conversation' with it.

This chapter explores the configuration of its form, its internal spatial articulation, together with the internal organisation of paths that need an attentive description as if they were the elements of the language through which the 'conversation' may take place. It shall also outline the historical perspective within

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60 See Chapter 1, particularly section 1.3.
61 On the concept of 'Character' see the Introduction of this thesis.
which the *cumbessias* villages have developed. Contemporary scholars generally support the thesis maintaining a Medieval derivation of these sacred places. Together with a historical survey of the evolution of the *cumbessias* villages, the following pages shall provide the reader with more detailed forms (including text, pictures, and sketch plans) for each of the six villages: the forms shall provide more specific information as regards the recent urban and architectural evolution of these places. The chapter will continue describing these villages and their perceptible outlines from the outside. A step inside these places will reveal similar functional and spatial relations on the basis of the three basic architectural elements each village presents: the church, the courtyard, and the *cumbessias* for the pilgrims. It shall be argued that the church represents the nodal point and basic architectural reference point for the internal spatial articulation of the whole village. The final section of the Chapter shall focus on the spatial dichotomies between openness/closeness, darkness/brightness, and inside/outside, investigating how the visitor can have access to an 'indirect' bodily cognisance of the place that passes through the directionality the place itself articulates through its spatial 'prepositions' such as in, out, between, and with.

### 4.1 *Cumbessias* villages: definition and historical perspective

With the term *cumbessias* villages I intend to refer to those sacred places made up of small, modest edifices, i.e., the *cumbessias*, laid out in various ways, close to a church consecrated to a saint to whom the entire village is dedicated.\[^{62}\]

Generally positioned in the countryside and well outside any urban context, these places are deserted for most of the year: their lives are in fact connected to nine days of religious celebration of a saint, the novena, and the arrival *en masse* of the

\[^{62}\] The reader should be aware that this chapter and, basically, a consistent part of this work should be approached by making a constant reference to the forms regarding the *cumbessias* villages presented as an Appendix to this
pilgrims from the surrounding villages (see Appendix 3.a, 3.d). Enlivened once a year, these religious built-up places are described as the unique examples of Sardinian 'temporary abodes' (Kirova, et al. 1984: 275; Mossa 1953: 36; Mossa 1979 [1953–54]: 33; Mossa 1987a; Mori 1952: 392; Angioni 1988: 126). Generally one-storey cellular edifices, whose dimensions vary from about 9 to 20 square metres, the cumbessias are simple dwellings, mostly articulated in a quadrangular form, the oldest ones having a lean-to tiled roof and a thick stone-masonry structure with three blind walls and one opening, i.e., the door. Their simple and humble structure, the materials used, together with the articulation of their internal and external surfaces is, somehow, a more or less elaborated ‘reproduction’ of some traits of the ‘rural houses’ present in Barbagia and Baronia: these are cultural, historical and geographical areas of central western Sardinia where part of these sacred places are located (Pracchi, Terrosu Asole 1971). Among them, the one-room structure, the use of the whitewash plaster for the exterior front walls, the ludu, i.e., pounded clay for the interior pavement, the fireplace, the internal (with the structural use of reeds) and the external articulation of the roofs (lean-to or gabled roof), suggest the re-enactment of a known formal and structural typology (see Appendix 3.c).

The urban setting, considered to be one of the most interesting traits of these sacred villages, is provided by the different arrangements of the cumbessias around the church which produce various ‘planimetric’ typologies (Tab. 1): circular, rectangular, trapezoidal, or clustered (Mossa 1953: 35) (see Appendix 3.d). Where a linear organisation of the built units forms a defined enclosure, the structure can be accessed

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63 (Mossa 1979 [1953–54]: 32–33). Depending on the geological composition of the natural sites in which it is positioned, each village has been built using a different kind of local stone, most frequently volcanic such as granite and basalt. Works of restoration may have differentented the original structure of some cumbessias with the introduction of new materials, such as perforated bricks.
through one or two gateways from the two opposite directions (see Appendix 3.f, 3.e). It must be pointed out that *cumbessias*’ internal configuration has remained generally unaltered over the last fifty years.

Despite various works of restoration, refurbishment, and ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, the original configuration of the *cumbessias* is still partly visible. *Cumbessias* and *cumbessias* villages have, in fact, been subjected to several modifications, which have produced structural and functional alterations. Particularly relevant external works carried out in the *cumbessias* have included plastering and whitewashing the external granite or basalt stonewalls, and constructing porches on the façades, thus altering their prospects. Relevant internal works have caused in some instances severe alterations to their original plans. In *Gonare* and *Miracolo*, narrow, single-room *cumbessias* have been enlarged through the demolition of an adjoining *cumbessia*’s partition wall. In many instances as in the case of the villages of *SS. Cosma e Damiano* and *Nostra Signora del Rimedio* some of the *cumbessias* have been entirely converted from houses of the pilgrims into public lavatories⁶⁵ (see Appendix 4).


⁶⁵ In looking at the documents regarding the last century urbanistic and architectural evolution of the *cumbessias* villages in the next pages of this Chapter, the reader should be aware that the information presented on the forms are based on oral sources. In particular, the works of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, in fact, despite not causing major alterations within these places, have nonetheless produced consistent impact on the original articulation and configuration of the sites. These works frequently lack any kind of documentation and official control generally because they are always promoted by the *priorato* and the priest (for the meaning of *priorato* see Chapter 5, section 5.1). It should also be pointed out that in the villages of *Beata Vergine Annunziata*, for instance, private landowners have carried out ordinary and special upkeep within their *cumbessias* by themselves.
Tab. 1 A sketch mental map of the village of S. Cosimo (as it was in the 1950s) drawn by a 68 year old woman from Sarule. 1. The eastern entrance. 2. The line of cumbessias. 3. The old lozzas now substituted by a row of cumbessias. 4. The church. 5. The western entrance. 6. The line of an old wall signing a difference in the base plane of the church’s plaza.

4.1.1 Etymology and historical origin of cumbessias villages

These sacred places, particularly the cumbessias, have been a primary focus of architectural and etymological concerns. The historical origin of these edifices, also called muristenes, has been, and remains, a matter of debate: the etymology of the term muristene from ‘monasterium’ supposedly refers to the small cells of Medieval monasteries. Muristene is the name used in the north central part of the island while cumbessia is mainly used in the area corresponding to the territory of Nuoro. To this regard, Mossa (1979 [1953–1954]: 33) points out that cumbessia is also used in Goceano and the area corresponding to the old Giudicato of Arborea, north central and northwest parts, respectively. Other terms are: posadas (Baunei) (Gallini 1971: 40); lozzas (Orosei) both in the east central part of the island. Referring to the Upper Nansa
Valley (Northern Spain), Christian (1972: 60), brings the example of the so-called ‘hospederia or casa de noventas’ where ‘the devotee who had pledged a pilgrimage of nine days . . . stayed for her [the Virgin] visit’. 67

The term ‘cumbessia [that] seems to be an abstract [term] to be connected to conversus . . . and to the institution of “conversi” (i.e., lay men who donated all their properties to the monasteries to gain the right to be buried into the cloister)’ (Gallini, C. Il consumo del sacro, feste lunghe di Sardegna, Bari, Laterza, 1971: 39. Quoted by Kirova 1984: 275). 68

Camaldolese, Cistercian, Vallumbrosans, Victorines, and Cassinese arrived in Sardinia at the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. 69 They all belonged to the Benedictine monastic order (c. 530). The giudici gave them broad pieces of land and various properties of the giudicati 70. Their work of proselytism was concretised, particularly for the Cistercians, through the building of different churches which, in respect of their ‘legislative documents’, spread throughout the countryside far away from any kind of lived centre. Among the regulations contained within the corpus of Cistercian legislative documents, particularly ‘Statute I of the “Collection of 1134” ’ it is decreed that monasteries were to be built far from cities, ‘fortified towns or other centres, rather in places far from the habitation of men, in desert wilderness’ (Bolton


67 Although the author does not support the two instances any further (probably due to the fact that, as he explains, they no longer exist), it represents a valid source for future work of comparison between the two contexts, the Spanish and the Sardinian.

68 'As more time was set aside for manual labour the institution of lay brothers (conversi) established by the mid-eleventh century at Vallombrosa, became widespread, freeing the choir monks from the daily round of tasks. These labouring half-monks were kept illiterate and quite separate from full monks' (Bolton 1996: 347).

69 On the presence and influence of these monastic orders in Sardinia see: on Camaldolese order, Zanetti (1974); on the Vallumbrosans, Zanetti (1968); on the Cistercians, Spiga (1990); on the Victorines, Artizzu (1963); See also Spada (1994). On the monastic architecture in Sardinia see, Delogu (1953); Coroneo (1993); Mossa (1953); Sari (1997).

70 (Dawtry 1996: 708). Developed in Sardinia soon after the end of Byzantine rule, during ninth century A.D., that of the Giudicati was essentially an autonomous, democratic, political system peculiar to Sardinia. From the administrative and political point of view the island was divided into four autonomous Giudicati: Torres or Logudora, Gallura, Arborea, and Karalis. Each Giudicato was ruled by a Giudice, i.e., a judge and internally articulated into different minor organisms or curatorie each having its own curatore. The curatorie were organised in various villages each with its own territorial possessions (Carta Raspi 1935).
1996: 349). Following the regulations for the monastic life instituted by Benedict of Nursia (A.D. 480–547), the monastic organisation of the Benedictine order assigned great emphasis on the preaching and instruction of the faithful. Among the reformed orders such as Cistercians, Camaldolese, Vallumbrosans, etc., that ‘stressed a return to a purer form’ of St. Benedict’s Rule, the Cassinese was the first congregation to arrive in Sardinia since A.D. 1063–1065 invited by Barisone I, Giudice of Torres.71

‘As the Order grew it maintained its quest for isolated, uncultivated sites, where the labour of the conversi was essential. This allowed for the great period of Cistercian expansion . . . and produced the characteristic Cistercian institution, the independent monastic farm or grange’ (Bolton 1996: 347). Villages and other kinds of dwellings spread in conjunction with these churches and monasteries (Kirova 1984: 275–276). In this regard, Boscolo (1979 [1953–1954]: 85–86) points out that the institution of conversi, when supported by more detailed historical analyses, confirms the fore mentioned etymological hypothesis of cumbessias as indicating the dwellings of conversi.

Nowadays, various instances of Romanesque architecture72 represent the most significant (if not the sole) examples of Sardinian medieval sacred places; they may have supposedly been taken as ‘references’ for the building of what Mossa (1953) termed ‘minor religious architectures’, i.e., small rural churches built by local builders which, sharing the same structure, plan, style and poor building material, denote the adherence to Romanesque building customs on the mainland.73 The particular planimetric arrangements and architecture of the cumbessias villages suggest, he contends, the decisive influence of High Middle Age monastic orders, with a

72 Among the most relevant: Santa Maria di Bonarcatu, (1242–68) Bonarcaedu; Santa Maria di Bubaldis (post 1065) Sillo; Santa Maria di Thergo (ante 1117) Terg; Santa Trinita di Saccargia (ante 1116) Codrongianus; San Pietro extra muros (1062–73) Bosa, San Nicola di Othana (ante 1160) Ottana; San Antioco di Bisarcio (ante 1090) Ozieri (Coroneo 1993).
subsequent development under Spanish colonisation. However, he points out that the origin of these sacred places should be searched even before, amongst the first monks who arrived in Sardinia from ‘Roman Africa’ (Mossa 1950: 44–45).

The sixteenth and seventeenth century synodal documents indirectly bear witness to a massive building of rural churches as an effect of the Counter-Reformation practice that continued until the second half of eighteenth century. Acknowledging the ‘absorption’ and adoption of monastic medieval architectural and planimetric rules, Gallini (1971) contends that *cumbessias* villages have only recently defined their present-day structures. Until the end of the nineteenth century, in fact, there were just a few *cumbessias* and rather different *logge (lozzas)*, i.e., shelters for the pedlars. Used for the display of goods during the festival, the *logge* present stone-masonry structures completely open on their front walls to allow the selling activities. They were, and still are, integral, permanent parts of the *cumbessias* villages. Some nineteenth-century travellers’ accounts and descriptions such as those by Smyth (1998)[1828], Valery (1996)[1837], Jourdan (1973)[1861], Delessert (1997) [1855], Domenech (1997)[1867], Edwardes (2000) [1889] have partly revealed the dynamic of the recent evolution of these built-up places where pilgrims slept in ‘leafy branches’ huts’, ‘encamp outdoors, sleep within caves or under carts’ or settled in ‘a rural church on top of a hill with a few small houses around it’ (Valery 1996 [1837]: 210–211; Edwardes 2000 [1889]: 113; Smyth 1998 [1828]: 184).

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73 On the architecture of rural churches see Mossa (1950); (1953); (1979)[1953–54]; Kirova, et al (1984); Asole (1985); Bonfante, Carta (1992); Mori (1952).

74 Here the author refers to the Spanish *romerias*: ‘in Spain there are similar buildings around the sanctuaries, sites of pilgrimages’. The author points out that these should be intended as posterior to the Sardinian *cumbessias* either for the former’s planimetrics or for their names (Mossa 1950: 45).

75 “Considering the high number of these churches built without the necessary equipment” the synod of *Arborea* (1708) forbids the building of oratories and churches’ (R. Viollant y Simorra, *El Pirineo Español*, Madrid, 1949: 555. Quoted by Gallini 1971: 40).
4.2 Meeting the place through its figure

Santa Maria de Sauccu, Nostra Signora del Rimedio, La Madonna del Miracolo, La Beata Vergine Annunziata, Nostra Signora di Gonare, SS. Cosma e Damiano are just a few of the numerous sacred spatial complexes I have already referred to as cumbessias villages. All included within the central territory (Fig. 3) and particularly within the same provincia, i.e., the province of Nuoro, the six aforementioned sacred complexes, where I have done my fieldwork, present very similar dimensional and functional relations in reference to the same typology of edifices: the church, sa corte, i.e., courtyard, an external open space, and various modest edifices, the cumbessias (Fig. 4). Usually larger than the cumbessias, the latter being independent, one-room, single-storey edifices, the church is definitely the prominent edifice within a sacred village. The relationship existing between these three architectural elements defines the spatial organisation of the complexes, their particular architectural structure (as discussed below).

'The term “figure” indicates concrete things . . . things act as identification marks either in proximity or in a wider context. Some work as places’ emblematic motifs, others as dominant marks’ (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 53). Generally situated outside the urban context, the cumbessias villages present a well-defined shape, easily recognisable especially when considered in relation to the environing natural landscape.

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76 Mostly, crockeries (sa galanteria), copper pots and pans and materials (robbas de prammu). Some villages, such as SS. Cosma e Damiano were known for being sort of cattle-markets.

77 Mossa counts 53 cumbessias villages throughout the whole Sardinian territory, with a particular concentration in the central and northern areas (1979 [1959-1954]: 21). Among them: St Costantino (Sedilo), St. Paolo (Monti), St. Mauro (Sorgono), St. Sabina (Silanus), St. Pietro (Bauaret), St. Bartalomeo (Silanus), St. Francesco (Lula), St. Salvatore (Cabras), Madonna de Balubirde (Dorgali), La Madonna di Monserrato (Olina), St. Michele (Ghilarza), St. Stefano (Birori), Beata Vergine d'Irìa (Gavoi), Beata Vergine della Consolata (Orune).

78 Moreover, the definition ‘spatial complex’, refers to the cumbessia village intended as a group of edifices bound up by internal dimensional and functional relations, as well as by the configuration of paths; these elements and the state of their relations give rise to a unitary complex.

79 Italy is administratively and politically organised into 21 regioni, i.e., departments, and province, i.e., counties. Each region is itself divided into different province each being a ‘political and administrative district governed by a council or a president’, Palazzi, F., Il Piccolo Palazzi. Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, (Milano: Fabbri, 1982) 656. Despite their inclusion within the provincia of Nuoro, the sacred places we have visited are all within territories belonging to different villages: St. Maria de Sauccu belongs to Bortigali,
against which they clearly stand out (see Appendix 3.a, 3.f). They are usually difficult to reach by the pilgrim, as in the instances of Annunziata\(^{80}\), about 30 km from the village of Bitti\(^{81}\), and Sauccu, about 18 km from Bortigali. Situated far from their respective towns, some villages have been slowly encroached upon by the recent urban development that followed the 1950s’ economic revival after the end of the Second World War, as in the case of the Rimedio and Miracolo. Nevertheless, their figures are still well recognisable to the eye of the visitor:

I have to pass between cork-tree and oak woods, marvellous woods, the green is intense, and this road already seems to me a destination . . . I am on a plateau with long straight corridors and small relief. On my left, the mountain declines following the direction of the valley down eastward. The Annunziata should be quite near . . . there it is! . . . it is a tiny village of whitewashed small houses with a church in the middle, white as well. The roofs are red, there are many trees; they seem to be oleasters because of their roundish form.\(^{82}\)

Position and figure are just two of the different features these sacred places have in common. The worlds they concretely embody are explicitly revealed and somehow held by their immediate perceptible figures;\(^{83}\) immediate because their external articulation is frequently closed, almost with the clear intention to isolate their own world, to differentiate it or, in a way, reveal it again every time a passer-by would see it (Fig. 5).

This tendency would seem to be confirmed once I acknowledge the position of these cumbessias villages: S: Cosimo, for instance, and its blind white external walls do not seem immediately to welcome the pilgrim, accepting him only through one of its two gateways (see Appendix 3.f). At the same time, its identity is declared without any doubt not only by its outline and whiteness of the enclosure but also by its position up

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\(^{80}\) For the sake of brevity I shall refer to the cumbessias villages simply using a part of their names, such as Sauccu, Gonare, Miracolo, Rimedio, Annunziata, St. Cosimo, so that they can be immediately recognisable.

\(^{81}\) On the Annunziata and Miracolo both within the territory of Bitti see Ruiu, G. Studio socio-antropologico sulla religiosità nei santuari bittesi di N.S. del Miracolo e della SS. Annunziata, Università degli Studi di Roma, ‘La Sapienza’, Roma, Facoltà di Sociologia, 2000-2001.

\(^{82}\) Annunziata. Excerpt from fieldnotes.

\(^{83}\) ‘Every thing gathers a world and what it gathers is its meaning. For this reason he [Heidegger] could say that “things bring the world near to man”’ (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 110). The world to which we refer is, on the one
on the hill, above the street level as seen in Gonare, where the church and the village are on two different levels.

The examples of Sauccu and Annunziata reveal another way to create an outline and, more definitely, an enclosure when the single units of the edifices, i.e., the cumbessias, are so markedly near to each other as to form a group (see Appendix 3.a, 3.e). In Sauccu the trees represent the ‘units’ that contribute to the definition of the outline of the sacred place. Seen from this perspective, the cumbessias work on two different but simultaneous levels: a structural one, when as for the Rimedio, Miracolo and St Cosimo, their external back walls structurally work as the walls of the enclosure of the villages; a religious one, when their front walls welcome and host the pilgrims/devotees (see Appendix 3.c, 3.b).

4.3 Reading the outline, living the internal paths: the cumbessias villages’ spatial internal hierarchies

4.3.1 The church

The aforementioned particular spatial organisation of these villages is confirmed once I enter them: the church, the varying size open space usually to be found in front of it, and the cumbessias acting as the border of these built environments. The different arrangement of the cumbessias around the church produces various ‘planimetric’ organisations: circular, rectangular, trapezoidal (Mossa 1953: 35).

Considered as the more important edifice because of its being the see of the saint, and historically the first building of the village, the church and its outline generally condense and lure the pilgrim in, through of its recognisable figure, size, and the centrality of its position. Being the more relevant edifices, the churches with their figures suggest immediate mental references of their own cumbessias villages; among hand, intended as the gathering of a totality of environmental qualities expressed and revealed in concrete
beholders and pilgrims the idea of these sacred places is somehow visually and ideally condensed by the figure of the church.

The relational dimension existing between the prime sacred edifice and the *cumbessias* is the same almost everywhere: it is primarily a visual relationship with the church standing just at the end of the entrance path, there, larger in size, and different in colour or texture from the other buildings.

The examples offered by *St. Cosimo, Miracolo, Rimedio* and, with another relevance, *Gonare*, support this link (see Appendix 3.f, 3.b, 3.c). Where the immediacy proper of the visual relation is not respected because of the non-linear spatial organisation, the configuration of the paths re-establishes the 'hierarchy': in my examples, in fact, particularly in *Sauccu*, where the church is not immediately visible, main and secondary alleys of the villages all lead to it.

Walking through these sacred places towards their inner parts, which are represented by the churches, my attention is caught by the fact that everything, not only the paths, converges toward them. Once before the façades of these edifices it can be said to exist an internal spatial coherence in the hierarchy of spaces: the fronts of the *cumbessias* together with their openings are turned towards the church, so that, when stepping outside of them, the beholders are allowed to have a direct visual link with it. The coherence is somehow strengthened by the gradient of the terrain that directs toward the church. In this respect, *St. Cosimo, Rimedio* and *Miracolo* are representative examples, with their more or less circular organisation of the built units.

Sometimes, in entering these places I experienced myself as being in a void, an encircled void. The openness that characterises some parts of the *cumbessias* villages, as in the instance of *Gonare* and in some respect of *St. Cosimo*, in fact, allows for the place itself to mediate the closed grouping of the *cumbessias* in unique rows (Fig. 6). ‘The
openings of most of the *cumbessias* of this village face the church’s plaza or, rather, arranged so as to form a ring around it, the *cumbessias* themselves shape this sort of plaza’.\(^{84}\) It also stimulates various kinds of visual perspectives, movements within them, as I hope to make clear in the following pages. Compared to the enclosed semblance of these hamlets, these open spaces somehow represent their more relevant openings and, working as the openings of a dwelling, they let the light and air enter the complex: ‘Within this closed space of the village, the sun brings a lot of warmth, retained by the concrete of the pavement’.\(^{85}\)

The brightness of the exteriors is in sharp contrast to the darkness of the *cumbessias*’ interiors. In entering these cellular buildings, what strikes is the extreme simplicity of their forms. The surfaces of the plastered, whitewashed interior walls receive light from the door, which is always left open, and sometimes from a tiny window. Separated from the outside by one step\(^{86}\), these rooms are now worlds almost set apart from the exterior plaza: until the second half of the last century, in fact, their floors were not tiled, rather they were coated with pounded clay, likewise the interior walls: ‘The pavement [of the *cumbessia*] was made of that fine red mud, . . . they made a beautiful pavement. . . . At that time we also used to plaster [the interior walls] with mud’.\(^{87}\) The earthly floor of the exterior plaza granted a textural continuity of the two spaces.

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\(^{84}\) *St. Cosimo*. Excerpt from fieldnotes.

\(^{85}\) *St. Cosimo*. Excerpt from fieldnotes.

\(^{86}\) Some informants have told me that until the 1940s the interior base planes of the *cumbessias* (on the southern side) of *St. Cosimo* were under the plaza level: these were accessed descending three or four steps.

\(^{87}\) *St. Cosimo*. Excerpt from interview.
4.3.2 Entering a cumbessia: between darkness and light, intimate space and outside world

Among the architectural determinants at the basis of the internal proportions of a cumbessia (which, as we have seen, shares basic traits of the ‘rural house’\(^{88}\)), the role of the bodily postures of the inhabitants, must be considered. It is true, in fact, that the standing position was rarely used by women during their daily indoor household chores such as cooking lunch and dinner, preparing traditional home-baked bread, and sleeping. These postures were in turn determined by the design of the rather essential internal endowment of these dwellings: a fireplace which replaced the fornelli a muro, i.e., masonry cooking stove that entailed seating on a very low chair and a sgabello, low stool; the preparation of home-baked bread and pasta also required women to sit on the floor, working with a large wooden board placed directly onto their laps.\(^{89}\) Moreover, a squatting position (with the knees bent so that the kneecaps reach the chest, both feet being flat on the ground) derived from these activities is still visible among elderly women sitting on the doorway of their houses in urban contexts as well as in cumbessias villages.\(^{90}\) If I look to the interiors of these edifices, especially the oldest ones, as in the case of Annunziata, Rimedio, Sauccu and Gonare, internal proportions are no higher than a person in a standing position (see Appendix 3.a, 3.c).

The inner spatial articulation of the cumbessias has now changed considerably. They have maintained the same cellular dimensions, yet many have undergone a process of restoration to respond to people’s desire for modern conveniences. For instance, these cellular spaces were not provided with an interior bathroom, so toilet functions were thus carried out in bushy areas outside of the villages until the recent

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\(^{88}\) See note 5 in this Chapter.

\(^{89}\) In fact, the traditional pane carasau, i.e., bread was prepared at home and then brought to the cumbessias villages for the novena. Being a fundamental activity almost exclusive of the daily life of a village, hence rare for a novena, this example seems relevant to us, however, to remark on the typical postures women took for their daily activities.
introduction of public toilets within their enclosures. Nonetheless, many *cumbessias* have been enlarged to include a private indoor bathroom and in some cases a separate bedroom.⁹¹

An exception to the cellular dimension of the *cumbessias* is found in those usually private edifices ‘*sa cumbissia mazzòre*’, i.e., the main *cumbessia* reserved for the priests in charge of celebrating the novena. These are usually two-storey, private edifices and, when compared to the humble public *cumbessias*, they are more articulated structures with three or more rooms and a privy² (Fig. 7–11).

The ‘realm’ of the *cumbessia* does not protect from the continuous flow of perceptible stimuli: noises of crockery, pots and pans, voices of children playing, running, shouting, of mothers calling them for lunch, of men playing cards, the sound of bells, guitars and accordions, the smell of tomato sauce and fried aubergines, the reports of guns announcing the lunch, the outside brightness, the warmer air coming into the room: ‘*Rita’s cumbessia* faces the church’s plaza; from the inside I can clearly hear the words of the priest who is celebrating mass. Two loud speakers distribute the blessing also to those who cannot go to church and pray’; ‘... despite being inside the *cumbessia* the air is so fine, and the silence so absolute, that smells and sounds are perceived with incredible clarity’.⁹³

Once inside my *cumbessia* I am overwhelmed by these stimuli of which just one small part is visual. In fact, open doors and windows do not provide a wide visual field to those inside, rather, the perception of what is outside is linked to these other sort of ‘intangible’ suggestions. Only staying at the door, on the threshold, am I able to see

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⁹⁰ My attention to women’s postures has been suggested by Arata Isozaki’s treatment of the movements of women within Japanese traditional farmhouses (1986: 66–74).

⁹¹ This phenomenon has also to be related to a changed composition of the familiar groups that sojourn in these sacred places: many of them are couples of elderly people accompanied by their nephews and nieces, joined by their families only during the last two or three festal days of novena. However, this theme will be treated in the next chapters.
what is going on outside my cumbessia (Fig. 12–13). Directly deriving from the Latin limen, the limenarju, i.e., the threshold stands there representing the ‘passage’ from the outside world to the intimate one. The interior of the village and the external context are perceptually linked by the same visual relationship. Usually following a linear arrangement, the cumbessias work as the visual field within which the visitor is physically and visually caught up (Fig. 14–15). Stepping out of the dark narrowness of the cumbessias, in fact, the visual field is wider and brighter (Fig. 16). The line of enclosure the cumbessias themselves represent does not allow a view of the outside: ‘Here in St. Cosimo likewise in Rimedio, walls protect from the outside environment. From just one point of the plaza, i.e., the front of the church’s main entrance, just a partial view of what is outside of this place is allowed (Fig. 17–19). I can see the tops of the trees up on a nearby hill’.94

4.4 . . . with, between, alongside, in: pre-position[ing] our body within the place.

The threshold, the openings, the arrangement of cumbessias, the paths, the open plaza, the village gateways, all these spatial features speak in various ways of how these places have been articulated as to reveal their indirect character, which suggests and spurs people on to indirect experiences and vistas of, with, alongside, between, in, around them.95 Such indirection is also revealing of the real way in which we come to live and dwell in these places, that is through the mediation and translation of our bodily presence (Fig. 20–29). However, what is slightly paradoxical is that this indirect way of approaching and experiencing these places comes from the suggestion of the

93 Annunziata and Gonare. Excerpts from fieldnotes.
94 St. Cosimo. Excerpt from fieldnotes.
95 I have borrowed these ‘indirect’, ‘pre-positional’ ways of reading the architectural work from Casey (1993: 122). Norberg-Schulz also distinguishes between ‘dynamic’ and ‘static’ prepositions, i.e., ‘towards, from, in, between’ and ‘at, on, with’ respectively (1996: 197, 192).
aforementioned prepositions which are nonetheless directions; these prepositions stemming from the articulation of the place, (i.e., what the place itself suggests to us), direct me, our bodily movements and eyes into a certain direction. The indirect knowing/experiencing process passes through the directionality the place itself gives to me.

Within these villages, the *cumbessias* together with church and plaza are not the sole dwelling places: we have come to know how these hamlets actually present some other, 'nonofficial' places: steps (Fig. 30), the shade of trees (Fig. 31–33), stone benches on the *cumbessias* front walls (Fig. 34–35), the *barracas*, i.e., bars\(^6\) (Fig. 36–40), *cumbessias*’ thresholds (Fig. 41), free standing walls (Fig. 42), tree branches, porches, rocks (Fig. 43), corners (Fig. 44), etc., all these unusual dwelling places respond to the aforementioned indirect or unofficial ways to experience the *cumbessias* villages. If we accept the suggestions/directions these places indicate to us, we soon discover that the edge between my being *in* and out is always quite blurred when dwelling in them.

**4.4.1 Dwelling in the betweenness: porches and curtains**

Previously we looked at how the *cumbessias* with their dark narrow interiors represent a sort of detached world: it is true, in fact, that once inside the *cumbessia* one is no longer visible from the outside. Doors are left open the whole day, while curtains assume the role of their temporary substitute (Fig. 45–47, 49–50). One can have a view of the outside but remain unseen (Fig. 48). The outside world comes in. Voices, smells, noises, elderly and younger people, indirectly, come into my room. Moreover, for the very fact that there is a curtain, the possibility for an outsider to enter is not denied, but

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\(^6\)Temporary structures usually built by the men of the committee in charge of the novena, the bar, also called *zilleri* is an outside structure made up of wood or scaffolding tubes together with wooden planks and then covered with plastic cloths. In *Gonare* the bar was made up by simply arranging an empty room.
rather discouraged, at least temporarily. The curtain clearly represents this dimension of
the between: it is at the threshold, but it is not a closed door, yet it is still a visual and
physical barrier. It is a limit but still an invitation to that unknown world of the inside
(Fig. 51). Sometimes the inevitable interaction of inside and outside is denounced and
announced so that the bodily movement is always pending in the[ir] between (Fig. 52).

*Gonare* and *Rimedio*, both present porches, respectively as fixed and temporary
structures built close behind the *cumbessias* front walls: ‘It can be said that the interior
of the *cumbessias* leans forward towards the exterior, in the immediate front of the
building, the area underneath the porch (Fig. 53–54). The porch itself is an architectonic
element that makes the exterior a sort of interior’.

In the instances of these villages, when compared to the open plaza, to dwell under the porches means to stay at rest.

**Porches in my experience** are those places where the movement can stop for a
while. This is true when coming in from the outside. However, when inside/under the
porches there is a continuous exchange: from within the *cumbessia* towards the porch,
from the porch towards the *cumbessia*, from the porch towards the outside plaza,
*alongside* the porch itself. Porches, in fact, act as sorts of familiar courtyards; an aspect,
this, which will be clearer when compared to the daily activities of these villages (Fig.
55). Furthermore, their structures reveal their width being almost the same as the
*cumbessias*, then becoming more than an external support, rather an extension of the
interior, a familiar appendix: ‘... it is almost if they wanted to extend a rather narrow
interior space enlarging its limits’. It is in the porches that the *in* and the *out* merge,
that the direction from the porch toward the *cumbessia’s* interior stays as an *in-in*
movement (Fig. 56).

In both places, *Rimedio* and *Gonare*, to dwell in the porch means to be included
in the inside of the *cumbessias*, in their inner worlds: from the porches, sitting on a
chair, I was privileged to see other people going back and forth in the plaza, I was part of that obscured world (Fig. 57–58). However, while at Gonare there are masonry porches, at Rimedio the porches are simply transitional wooden dwelling places, to be dismantled at the end of the novena\textsuperscript{99} (Fig. 59–60).

Being in the outside of these villages, i.e., the open plazas, still means to be in the ‘between’ of something, not completely outside. The bodily movement is suggested by the village’s spatial articulation itself. In St. Cosimo and Rimedio, where the organisation of the paths is defined by the church that occupies a central position within the village I essentially move \textit{around} the place so that everybody can see me moving.

In these instances the open plaza and its \textit{outsideness} reveals itself to be a \textit{betweenness} between the public institution represented by the church and the private realm of the \textit{cumbessias}. I stroll along the circular path \textit{in the between}. To be in these places means to be between others (Fig. 61–62).

The inside and outside dimensions find structural and organisational reasons to avoid their inevitable conflict. The church’s doorways, for instance, are generally left open the whole day during the novena. In the instances of St. Cosimo and Gonare the church’s side entrances visually link the faithful insiders with the exteriors, suggesting their movements (Fig. 63). In St. Cosimo I cut across the plaza simply going from one church’s side entrance to the other, while in Gonare once within the church, one is given the full visual perception of suspension, being on the Gonare’s mountain top.\textsuperscript{100}

Entering these places, the outside configuration, the internal spatial organisation, their solid, thick, walls, the enclosed internal spaces seem to encourage a permanent residence rather than a transient sojourn. Moreover, once living them and in them, I

\textsuperscript{97} Rimedio. Excerpt from fieldnotes.
\textsuperscript{98} Rimedio. Excerpt from fieldnotes.
\textsuperscript{99} In fact, at Rimedio, a few new and permanent wooden porches have been built in connection with some recent works of restoration within the village.
\textsuperscript{100} In this regard, Norberg-Schultz clearly remarks that ‘openings define directions which in turn work defining paths or axes’ (1996: 196).
become aware of the link between these built places and the human nature of their dwellers: acknowledging and somehow rethinking the Heideggerian unity of building and dwelling, asserted as ‘the manner in which we humans are on the earth . . . ’ [is] as dwellers (to which I would add, being human we dwell/build with our bodies), I suspect that the kind of dwelling ‘my’ places talk about, is physically mediated by a human dimension: ‘Built places are extensions of our bodies.’\textsuperscript{101} They are not just places, as the Aristotelian model of place as a strict container implies, \textit{in which} these bodies move and position themselves. Places built for residing are rather an enlargement of our already existing embodiment into \textit{en entire life-world of dwelling} . . . ’ (Casey 1996: 120). The particular sort of relationship that I mean here should not be intended as the application and translation by these places of an ‘anthropomorphic imagery’ (Waterson 1997: 129). What I have termed as ‘human dimension’ is not strictly univocal: if, on the one hand, it is true, as we have seen, that these places in their proportions somehow mirror their inhabitant’s bodily measurements and postures (think of the tiny doors and windows, the small rooms) on the other hand, they betray a proximity to a human condition, a nearness to the existence of human beings. Visiting these places I have experienced and perceived a sort of intimacy between people and places. The simple fact of being constantly near to/protected by/in contact with these places, nurtures places and people.\textsuperscript{102}

\section*{4.5 Conclusion}

In this Chapter, I first explored the historical evolution of the \textit{cumbessias} villages: the emphasis has been given to the thesis that relates these sacred hamlets to Medieval monastic settlements. This argument is supported both by etymological studies of the

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\textsuperscript{102} This observation will be clarified in the following chapters.
\end{flushleft}
terms *muristene* seen as deriving from the Latin *monasterium* and *cumbessia* supposedly deriving from the High Middle Age institution of *conversi* (lay brothers) and by documentary sources dating back to the first Benedictine settlements on the island (as we have seen for *Sa Buccu*). The architectural history, however, despite acknowledging the absorption of medieval monastic spatial arrangements, has demonstrated the quite recent origin of present-day *cumbessias* villages: apart from the church their disposition and construction developed starting from the late nineteenth century.

The historical analysis leads the way to a contemporary reading of the six villages: the aim has been that of investigating these places, considering them as concrete symbols and outcomes of subsequent encounters people have had with the natural given in which they are located. The analysis of the external configuration, internal spatial articulation, and organisation of internal paths has revealed a spatial pattern common to all six villages, whereas the church stands as the main building generally occupying the central position within the village, surrounded by the *cumbessias*. It has been noticed how the relevance of the church is also emphasised by a dominant visual perspective supported not only by the fore mentioned circular spatial arrangement but also by the constant presence of a courtyard or plaza in front of it and by the configuration of the paths leading to it. It must be pointed out that the chapter has been constructed purposely to give the reader the impression of being him/herself the subject entering these places. The clarity of internal spatial articulation is somehow counterbalanced by what has been portrayed as *betweenness* of architectural features: it has been argued, in fact, that curtains and particularly porches work, structuring and settling an inside space into the outside. The dark narrow interiors of the *cumbessias* are temporarily extended outside becoming a familiar appendix. The inherent *betweenness*
of the porches mediates between the closeness and narrowness of *cumbessias’* interiors and the openness and brightness of the outside world.

‘Kahn said that the “task of design is the adaptation to circumstances”’ (Venturi 2002 [1966]: 59). I contend that these sacred places precisely denounce this sort of adaptation. What differs is that here we are not dealing with architects\(^{103}\) rather with simple builders/Baumeisters/human beings for whom the word ‘adapt’ should be rewritten: in fact, they do not simply adapt to the[ir] natural environment, they welcome it as it is; they, already dwellers, *under*-stand or I should say pre-understand it. Then, to build is a matter of letting be, to bring forth or uncover the being of the natural given they encounter. What these places share in concrete terms, i.e., built forms and spatial organisations, is the outcome of the application of the same structure of a process of apprehension. In other words, people of different places have translated in ‘built-up areas and edifices’ their ‘apprehension/comprehension of the life-world’ (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 127).

In this way, these places maintain their own identities over time and, as we shall see in the final Chapter, with the exception of just a few examples, they do not stop being meaningful and representative of certain people and places. This persistency and stability over the decades has created what Norberg-Schulz termed a ‘building custom’ which, if not betrayed, is a meaningful example for future generations.

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\(^{103}\) The ‘Arkitekt’ is here intended as the figure for whom ‘space is a pure void to be measured and delimited . . . that need to be deprived of places’ while ‘Baumeister is someone whose building reaches the roof, who forms the work. The techne of the artisan is praxis, custom, behaviour’ (Cacciari 2002: 40, 36).
Chapter 5

People and sacred places: chronicle of an eternal return

‘For the Greeks, the limit is not that in which something ends, rather that from which something begins that, thanks to which, something has its completion’ (Heidegger 2000 [1964]: 28–29).

What is most striking in this claim is not just the acknowledgement that built places are inherently dwelling places, where to build a dwelling also means ‘to take up one’s abode’ (Casey 1993: 176), but rather that it connects the transformation of a built place into a place for inhabitation (thus pointing out the emphasis on building is [as] dwelling) to the “Freigabe von Orten”, the giving of, and opening of places (Cacciari 2002: 37. Emphasis added). Otherwise put, a built place becomes what it is, i.e., a dwelling place only in so far as it opens its boundaries welcoming man and what is proper to human nature that is his being-a[s]-dweller. It is in the destiny of human beings to be dwellers, as it is in the destiny of built places to be dwelt. ‘Annunziata is as beautiful when there are people as it is ugly when there is nobody . . . it is not a sense of solitude . . . rather a feeling of emptiness; let us say that you feel ill at ease . . . it is because . . . we are used to going there and seeing joy, people, bustle’ . . .

At the same time alluring and distancing, the cumbessias villages achieve their proper dimension as dwelling places, their ‘completion’, from what is outside them; life begins, in fact, when they open their gateways to let the devotees in: ‘If the lived body is (in Bergson’s phrase) a “place of passage”, then it is itself a creature of the between. As such, the body mediates between my awareness of a place and that
place itself, moving me between one place and another, and taking me into the intimate interstices of any given place' (Bergson H., *Matter and Memory*, trans. Paul N.M. and Palmer W.S., New York, Doubleday, 1959: 145. Quoted by Casey 1993: 128). People actively participate in creating these places not just being contained within the spatial complexes the *cumbessias* villages represent; rather, theirs is the agency of their bodily presence through which they inhabit and experience these places. The spatial maps I have up to now been describing, made of forms and their different configurations, spaces and their internal and external articulations together with spatial relations, shall be completed and somehow transformed through the charting of the uses occurring of/in these spaces.

This chapter will focus on past and present daily experiences within the *cumbessias* villages with which we are concerned. The first sections will take a look at the changes that occurred within the composition of familial groups coming for the novenas; it will be noted that a decreased number of people now live permanently in a *cumbessia*. Current trends have, in fact, substituted a permanent sojourn with a more transient one. Changes will be also investigated in relation to the activities and uses of the spaces within the villages. It will be argued how past spatial ambiguities and communal practices among villagers have been superseded by a greater need for more privacy and individual spaces. These changed imperatives have also been translated spatially: internal spatial articulation of *cumbessias* now responds to two fundamental criteria: sociality and intimacy. Compared to their past spatial continuity, the internal spatial articulations of the *cumbessias* have now been arranged in order to separate the private sleeping area from a public one. The chapter will then continue, by exploring gender specific activities and uses of spaces.

104 *Annunziata*. Excerpt from interview.
5.1 A lived *cumbessias* village: the novena and its civil organisation

A novena’s basic dimensions and consequent organisational framework are generally structured on two separated, yet intertwining, levels: religious and civil; the former entails the organisation of masses and management of the whole devotional dimension proper of novenas, the latter deals with the more festive, practical or mundane aspects. When looking at the novena as a civil celebration two main agencies can be identified: on the one hand, the families, while, on the other, a more or less complex and hierarchical group of people called the ‘priorato’ or ‘comitato’. Both subjects work, each within its own domain, managing economical, practical and spatial questions revealing in some respects a communal agency.

As already noted, families attend novenas bringing the necessary food provisions from home. Part of these goods, and especially the sweets, wine, biscuits and other liqueurs, make up that part of the food supply which is entirely given over to visiting guests. Adult males, in fact, are used to spending money at the village bars, only consuming glasses of the wine supply brought from home, at mealtimes. In this respect, families are essentially independent from all others living there, both economically and spatially. Each familial (or friend) group, in fact, occupies its own *cumbessia*: until the 1950s familial land produce and money constituted the basic type of offer families could afford to rent a *cumbessia*. Nowadays, only money is accepted for this purpose while nothing is corresponded by those landowners who occupy *cumbessias* of their own property. Depending on the whether or not the *cumbessia* has an inside bathroom, the rent now varies from 250 Euros for a ‘double’ novena (as in *Rimedio* and its 18 days novena) to a minimum of 100 Euros. The sum is established yearly by the *priorato* who, as we shall see, is in charge both of assigning *cumbessias* and of collecting the rent. There is an increasing tendency by
people to live a novena permanently occupying a *cumbessia*, despite their expensive rents.\(^{105}\)

The *priorato* is a temporary organisation: formed by laymen and their wives, the core group varies in relation to its inner structure. The group may include a *priore* or *obriere*\(^{106}\) and the secretary together with one or two other people; the *priore* and his family; the *priorato* may also be formed by a more composite group of families, from three to five, where the core group consists of the married couples and specifically of the men, who, in turn and one at a time, represent the whole group. All three possible structures entail the recruitment of various people, relatives and friends to whom more or less specific tasks are assigned. These ‘volunteers’ are not paid money; instead they may participate in the novena for free. Their responsibility is to manage the long organisational labour required by nine days of festival: generally nominated by the local priest or by the outgoing *priore*, as a new *priore* acquires his role at the end of a novena. Throughout the year, until the start of the next novena, he will be in charge of managing the *cumbessias* village. His tasks and responsibilities are related to the organisation of the celebrations for the novena. He is also in charge of the ordinary and extraordinary maintenance.\(^{107}\) Any eventual refurbishment works are generally promoted by the priest or by the local Town Council.\(^{108}\) Generally, works within the villages include internal and external repairs, tidying up the garden and pruning the trees, mending damaged paths, etc.; the group of people specifically related to the *cumbessias* whitewash and repair walls, and attend to structural works such as building inside bathrooms and repairing roofs, doors, windows, frames, etc., and doing any church-related work, such as repairing the roofs, substituting pews.

\(^{105}\) *Sauccu, S. Cosimo and Annunziata* private *cumbessias* are let by their owners to devotees upon their request.

\(^{106}\) Term used in *Sauccu*.

\(^{107}\) It should be pointed out, however, that despite his representative role the *priore* actively works with the members of the *comitato*.

\(^{108}\) For a comprehensive outline of the works the *priorato* carries out during its assignment see notes 1, 2 and 3 of the *Appendix, section 4e*. 
Throughout the year, they spend all weekends within the *cumbessias* village: yet, the *priore* with his group of volunteers (*troppa* or *comitato*) also manage to provide spaces and conveniences specifically needed by the *priorato*\(^\text{109}\): these may include larger gas ovens, tables, cupboards, etc..

During the novena, the duties of the *priorato* are differentiated: writing and distributing bills about the program of civil and religious events including to neighbouring villages, engaging bands for the last nights of festivity guaranteeing the entertainment of devotees, offering sweets and coffee to the numerous guests arriving daily soon after the masses (*Fig. 64–65*), dealing with car parking, collecting rents for *cumbessias* or for the stalls and bars within the village\(^\text{110}\) (*Fig. 66–80*), providing technical assistance to residents, and organising a communal feast for volunteers and devotees, usually on the last day of novena (*Fig. 81*). The *priorato*’s civic tasks are nonetheless intertwined with religious duties: always dependent on the priest’s decisions, in fact, they also transform the village plazas by arranging pews outdoors for special masses (*Fig. 82–83*), preparing special meals for the Bishop, visiting priests and other authorities, tidying and cleaning the church, and arranging flowers at the altar. Two of the pews in front of the altar are specifically reserved for them during the daily masses. Moreover, the *priore* and his committee usually participate in religious processions (*Fig. 84*) together with the priest. In the instance of *Sauccu*, the *obrieri* are literally in charge of everything. While in other villages, families and *priorato* are two independent figures, in this case the *obriere* and his family invite up to 100 people to stay in the village for the whole novena, providing them with the *muristenes* complete with beds, blankets, sheets and pillows. Guests are provided

\(^{109}\) In *Sauccu*, new and old *obrieri* are settled in two different *muristenes* (or *cumbessias*): the participation of the old *priore* to his successor’s novena, is aptly called *torrare s’annu* which can be literally translated as ‘to give back the year’.

\(^{110}\) Within the villages, in fact, temporary bars are usually run by young men. Those who are part of an outside small *priorato* in charge for another festival, aim at raising some money to be spent for it. Others, simply unemployed, are offered the chance to work and earn some money.
with three full meals. Most of them are part of the group of volunteers helping the
_obiari_ during the novena.

Much of the foregoing works is financed through voluntary takings, lottery
and devotees' offers\(^{111}\) (Fig. 85–90). Yet, the economy of _priorato_ has to be
‘reinforced’ mainly through the system of fundraising (questua): past _questue_ could
be extended to a good part of the surrounding territory including more than 10
villages. The role of the _priefere_ was instead held by a _remitanu_, a beggar and warden
of the village (as in _Gonare_) or a _mazzinarju_, a beggar, carrying and leaving _mazines_
that is to say, ‘sacred images’ of the saint for whom he was begging. That of
_mazzinarju_, proper of _S. Cosimo_, is a still quite vivid figure in devotees’ memories.
He used to live permanently within the village with his family, cultivating wheat and
barley in areas of land nearby.\(^{112}\) _Mazzinarju_ has been substituted by a _priefere_
between the 1940 and 1950.

Nowadays, a significant part of this fundraising takes place within the
_priorato_’s own urban context a few months before the novena. A _questua_ is regulated
on the basis of the calendar of festivities so that in the case of _Mamoiada_ the whole
community expects people begging for _S. Cosimo_ soon after those who beg for the
_Virgin of Carmelo_ and those for _S. Sebastiano_. Other fundraising strategies can be
those of distributing hot meals in conjunction with Carnival festival.

The increasing economical transformations of Sardinian traditional productive
system in the 1950s and 1960s, based on self-production and exchanges of produce—
subsequently directed towards a monetary market—entailed the slow introduction of
money offers instead of produce (Gallini 1971). Nowadays, there are still many
devotees who cannot contribute in cash: ‘coffee, sugar, wine; many people say “I will

\(^{111}\) Devotees offer either money or some other piece of much needed furniture such as a refrigerator. These kinds
of offers are incentive for the better outcome of the festal organisation.

\(^{112}\) On these figures see also Gallini 1971: 111–113.
bake 20 kilos of bread for you”, others 10 or 30 kilos . . . everybody tries to do his best’. Shepherds usually contribute offering a sheep and/or a pig to be cooked during the novena.

Tab. 2 S. Cosimo. Flow chart of obrierato showing internal hierarchies and division of tasks.

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113 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
Within the hierarchical structure of a priorato, the figure of priore is the leading one. Whereas men are in charge of upkeep, sometimes being responsible for preparing and roasting lamb or suckling pig (Fig. 91–99), women are left a whole series of other tasks to carry out during the novena: preparing the daily food for the comitato, preparing special sweets and fresh pasta for special occasions, serving guests, cleaning and tidying up the kitchen, and preparing the altar (Fig. 100–108).

As we have seen, the primary role of priorato finds its major expression within the complex system of the novena: the aim is to achieve good results in organisational terms, and in terms of assent and support by devotees. Moreover, past
and present choices to recruit and pay poor and illiterate men, widows and divorced women to be employed in the kitchen or in other tasks, reveal an underlying communal agency: there is a mutual solidarity, on the one hand, among those people who provide precious help to the priorato and the whole community of devotees attending the novena (either through the questua or pointing out and recommending those individuals who need to be helped). The priorato, on the other hand, assists the community of devotees and those individuals for whom community itself has requested its support.

As mentioned earlier, over the last forty years, cumbessias villages have undergone profound changes, either due to major enlargements and refurbishment works, or to continuous processes of restoration, ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, adjustments, substitutions, direct expression of the priorati’s intentions: ‘every group [priorato] has done something of its own, something different . . . [trying] not to ruin the present look. . . . Every group arriving here leaves its own mark, it always carries out some works’.114 These works have altered these places in both functional and structural terms (see Appendix, section 2).

The priorato can decide to introduce some changes in the villages on the basis of practical or aesthetic necessity:

With the expansion works, everything has been spoiled . . . by enlarging the cumbessias they have spoiled this place. Also the cumbessias on the side of Orani have been spoiled . . . they should have enlarged them just inside, like these, but the outside walls should have been left as they were before, of stone . . . to be nicer . . . they should have been like this. Because of these works, this place has lost its beauty (s’istetica): they have built these verandas there in front [of the cumbessias] but before there were none; in the past there were just all small adjoining cumbessias.115

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114 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
115 Gonare. 68 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
5.2 Living within the *cumbessias* villages: past and present perspectives

Until forty or fifty years ago, entire ‘familial groups’ going to the *cumbessias* villages for the novenas represented a sort of settling pattern typical of these places. Reckoning from two up to 12 members each, the most common kinship relationships between the units of each of these composite domestic groups referred to the structure of the so-called ‘nuclear family’. It generally entailed the ‘cohabitation of the sole married couple together with their children’ (Angioni 1990: 13; Pinna 1971: 50). Yet, to this pure ‘nucleiform’, other nuclei could be added. The result was a model including grandparents (the head married couple), their single or married daughters, (generally) unmarried sons, several nieces and nephews: ‘... I used to come here with my aunt; myself, and all my brothers and sisters, because my aunt was unmarried... mum, said “go!” and sent us here’... (S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview). To this regard, Gallini points out that the nuclear family is a recurrent kinship structure present not only within the context of the novena but also within the Sardinian traditional family. It is true, in fact, that at the time when Gallini carried out her research in the mid-1960s in Sardinia, this datum could be confirmed through the analysis of the structures of familial groups outside the novenas. Moreover, as noted by the author, there was a sort of gender-pattern recognisable in the familial groups participating at the novena: women, in fact, represented a sort of constant presence. They were either married or unmarried, the latter being the ‘unmarried aunts’ (*zias*) taking care of some nieces; there were married *daughters* (their husbands being at home) or singles, sharing the *cumbessia* with their parents. At that time, however, an
internal change undermining the strict traditional familial compound had already
started, leading to a more individualistic conception of family ties. 116

In fact, the nuclear family as the model of domestic/familial kinship structure
ture to traditional Sardinia has been partly neglected or simply deceived (Pinna
1971). The traditional family has been envisaged as a strict unit whose proper
dimensions were at once biological, affective and productive. Within this nucleus,
individuals are protected and nurtured, yet, they must guarantee (and will, in return,
be guaranteed) mutual aid, solidarity, and communal future economic achievements.
The almost total self-closeness of this unit is to such an extent that the ‘external
social reality will be judged in terms of familial roles, affective and personal
relationships’ (Pinna 1971: 67, 41).117 ‘Neo-locality’ is one of the ‘rules’ prescribed
by this model of family (Angioni 1990: 13, 16; Oppo 1990: 85): helped by their
parents, sons in view of their imminent marriage have to create their own habitation,
a new nucleus: this passage is then subsequently translated through spatial and
structured social terms, i.e., the house and the new familial group. Yet, reaching such
a definition at least in spatial terms has usually been difficult, if not prohibitive, for
the new couple, either due to a lack of available edifices within the village, or to the
high costs inherent in a construction ex novo (Oppo 1990: 85–86; Angioni 1990: 16).
To this regard Oppo points out that also in the village of Aritzo moving from their
parents’ house to their own was considered an aspiration rather than a real practice.
Moreover, Angioni remarks that ‘despite the fall of mono-nuclear and neo-locality
patterns, these same patterns should, nonetheless, be considered fundamental
characteristics of the Sardinian traditional family, also in the case of a pastoral
society’ (1990: 16). This desire did, however, very frequently realise a spatial and

116 Atzori 1997: 27; Oppo 1990: 98. For a comprehensive treatment of the kinship structures of familial groups
economic interdependence instead: the couple had to live within the same small, poor room of, or usually with, the wife's parents, or eventually convert a space into their own alcove. The couple could only make a definitive move to a new building after many years. Upon their parents' death, they could acquire the ownership of the dwelling.

The early 1970s represented a sort of new starting point for studies specifically relating to the institutions of family and marriage, especially in light of the new sources available (Atzori 1997: 66). From the study of oral and historical sources together with an analysis of census data, the social and economic backdrop of 1930 to the 1950s Barbagia, particularly among pastoral and peasant classes (Oppo 1990: 83), failed to demonstrate the overall applicability of the nuclear model in this area. Here, in fact, 'economic and familial strategies' (Angioni 1990: 16) requested the union of more than one familial group, transforming the nuclear into a complex and enlarged household, clearly indicating its social and economic relevance. Mutual aid and productivity have been envisaged together with the aforementioned mononuclear and neo-local indicators as two other basic dimensions constituting the structure of traditional family in Sardinia (Meloni 1984: 149). Reproduction and interfamilial consumption among inland peasant and pastoral communities frequently matched with the need to reach the autonomy in terms of interfamilial production. Particularly through the achievement of the conditions allowing such autonomous production, i.e., the ownership of land and cattle for breeding and work (Angioni 1990). Yet, this autonomy of production was hardly achieved by traditional families: in fact, it remained an 'ideal of self-sufficiency' (Pinna 1971: 69; Angioni 1990: 14-17), eventually requiring 'continuous agreements' due to an unequal distribution of resources. As remarked by Meloni (1990: 57), by the 1970s within the inland

This factor has been considered as relevant in determining the 'closeness' of the familiar nucleus (Pinna 1971: 69).
community of *Austis*, just a few families reached an independence of production, while many others owned neither land nor cattle. In this village, the same non-homogeneous distribution reckoned shepherds owners of cattle but not of land, and peasants (*massaios*) owners of land but not of cattle for work.

The structure of the family also depends on a process of adaptation to local economies and, in detail, on variations of modalities of access and exploitation of resources, different productions, contracts and relationships of production, and social rules presiding over the distribution of resources. A combination of pastoral and agricultural activities, for example, each needing different and specific modalities of organisation of labour lead families to rework and adjust over time their inner structures to cope with the labour required by both, thus opposing their flexibility to an alleged immobility (Meloni 1984; 1990: 61; Murru Corriga 1984: 75).

The existence of a dimension of extended ‘familial’ neighbourhoods (*vicinati*) characterised by families linked by kinship ties, strengthens the aforementioned result addressing the question of ‘familial exclusiveness’.118

What is addressed in this area is an enlarged domestic unit: spatial and behavioural/social dimensions including the use and sharing of the same spaces, in daily and festival activities, together with the sharing of these ‘activities’ (preparing home-made bread, pasta, sweets, and sharing pans and general kitchen tasks, etc.), talk about a blurred definition of the nuclear model’s boundary. Moreover, the division of land should generally be linked ‘to an elevated number of more or less autonomous peasants and shepherds, to the absence of a clear boundary between

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118 By ‘familiar exclusiveness’ Pinna (1971: 75) intends the tendency people have to overestimate and jealously defend their own possessions while underestimating and embezzling those of others; it also refers to a merely functional dimension at the basis of every type of extra familial relations, just for the satisfaction on immediate needs requiring an external solidarity. Relations within a neighbourhood (*vicinato*) should fall under this category. Preferred are those occasional relationships of solidarity of groups generated by rural festivities, dances, etc., developed at a very young age and maintained unchanged until the occurrence of a conflict among respective families (1971: 93).
these two groups, to nuclear domestic groups . . . giving birth to multifarious forms of contractual relationships and exchanges or services'. This contributes to the creation of a network of extra-familial interactions so actively working up those 'strategies based on reciprocity, friendship and kinship' (Meloni 1990: 59).

Nowadays, the increased instability of kinship relationships at the basis of the familial groups attending a novena, entails the inherent difficulty in delineating a unique 'model' of familial structure for these compounds. Yet, a plausible reference to recurrent blood relationships and sometimes to half nuclear families can be drawn: two or three elderly sisters (widows and unmarried), couples of married elderly people generally accompanied by nephews and nieces. Within these groups there has been a sensible decrease in the number of their components together with a progressive stabilisation of the average age of those who dwell in the cumbessias villages ranging from 4 to 90 years old (Fig. 109–110). Two main factors were found to be at the basis of the minor influx of people to the cumbessias villages: it is uncomfortable and unhygienic. Gallini (1971: 86) pointed out that during the 1960s it was also considered 'not modern' and 'pagan, if it is true that people go there mostly to amuse themselves'. Probably imputable to the strong influence of a changing epoch in search for modernity such as that between the 1960s and '70s, the last two factors credited by the author are not present in devotees' reasoning today.

Compared to the past, 'neighbourhood' groups do not represent a constant presence. Usually at work during the period of the novena, today's middle-aged people, the least represented, do not have much time available to spend within the villages: they come in the afternoons by car and return home again in the evening.

Tab. 4 S. Cosimo. Number of pilgrims living in the village during the novena. Approximately 2 people per cumbessia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
<th>Total of permanent + daily pilgrims (3 per family)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 5 Annunziata. Number of pilgrims living in the village during the novena.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
<th>Total of permanent + daily pilgrims (3 per family)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tab. 6 The reader should be aware that there was only partial, or on occasions no data available regarding the number of people living there for the novena. These numbers, in fact, have been obtained by considering the approximate number of families, with two components each, staying in a village during the years 2001, 2003. The number of men and women has been obtained by considering 2/3 of the sum as women and the remaining 1/3 as men. The numbers are not available for both years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumbessias Villages</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Tot. Pilgrims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Cosimo</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annunziata</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miracolo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonare</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimedio</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With this term I indicate those groups of people coming from the same village’s neighbourhoods. Usually women, they used to plan together their transfer to and stay within the Cumbessias villages.
Some of them decide to spend the last two or three festal days at a friend’s - or at their parents’ cumbessia. Others, usually women, simply take from 10 to 15 days off work and rent a cumbessia for themselves and their children. The same happens for the groups of teenagers for whom school is the major impediment; for them, in fact, life spent at the cumbessias villages is a moment of reunion among themselves and a sort of holiday.

The progressive decrease in the number of familial groups adopting a permanent sojourn during the novena has been somehow counterbalanced by a major, although not recent tendency, especially by couples of elders or groups of friends, to spend a long period of rest in these places during the months preceding the beginning of the religious celebrations (Fig. 111–113). These periods coincided with the end of summer. This is particularly true for the villages of Gonare, Rimedio and S. Cosimo. Sometimes, as in the instance of Annunziata, two month long sojourns have been substituted by an entire year spent living in these villages:

We also came during the winter to stay for months. . . . One year we arrived on the 19th of October and left in June: we were six or seven families . . . we liked this place a lot. I was with my husband . . . There were unmarried women, others with their husbands and some elderly people, too, and we liked to stay here. . . . We went shopping to Lodé on foot, we went also to pick wild fennel, here we were relaxed; then in the evenings we gathered together. . . . (Annunziata. 84 year old woman. Excerpt from interview).

This tendency may, in my opinion, be linked, on the one hand, to the aforementioned changed composition of the familial compounds arriving for the novenas. As seen earlier, these compounds less frequently include middle-aged people—most of whom are full-time employees in tertiary activities—but rather elderly relatives with their nieces and nephews. Elders, on the other hand, no longer tied to work and the need for an income, are reassured by their old-age pensions, which leave them plenty of time to be spent outside of their villages of origin (Meloni 1984). Between the 1960s and '70s, the Italian National Insurance system assigned social pensions in an attempt
to solve the internal crisis of Sardinian economy: it arrived at the same time as a general economic (and social) crisis linked to the opening of markets, the introduction of a monetary economy, and the arrival of goods from elsewhere. The latter overwhelmed the traditional ‘market’, based on the exchange of local produce. The familial subsistence economy was based on the use of land, and already tried by the departure of much of the active labour forces linked to it, during a first migratory stream in the 1950s. It received another and more definitive blow from the migration of the 1960s. This translated into a movement of definitive estrangement from traditional activities. The state intervention could guarantee a basic income. Pastoral and peasant families could not stop working although they were getting on in years.\textsuperscript{120} Families had their children outside Sardinia who were no longer willing to continue a traditional type of labour.

5.3 \textit{Cumbessias} villages as places of gathering and cross-boundary transactions

Among the \textit{cumbessias} villages, (objects of our present concern), those of \textit{Annunziata} and \textit{Sauccu} can be reasonably defined as ‘group specific’. With this term I intend to refer to those sacred compounds more willing to accept those groups of people coming from just one urban context: in the abovementioned example, they are respectively \textit{Bitti} and \textit{Bortigali}. Turning the issue the other way around, I could not be accused of untruthfulness in declaring that people from \textit{Bitti} and \textit{Bortigali} denote a special tendency to use these places as their own possessions. I would also not be judged as visionary by the same people in claiming that, eventually, it is these same places that possess them; however, the last question, left here as a mere suggestion, shall be further explained during the next few chapters. Although relevant, the abovementioned realities should nevertheless be described as meaningful variants of

\textsuperscript{120} (Meloni 1984: 217–220; Gallini, Pinna 1975: 8–12).
those generally acknowledged as multifaceted and cosmopolitan universes merging people coming from different places, which I shall term as ‘not group specific’. This is what the villages of S. Cosimo, Gonare, Miracolo, and Rimedio were and, partly, still are.

5.3.1 The example of S. Cosimo

Until the 1930s and 1940s, the name of S. Cosimo was associated with the most important cattle market of the inland territories. Once a year, in late September, the Sardinian Capidanne, literally the ‘first day of the year’ (caput anni), in conjunction with the end of the old agrarian cycle and the beginning of the new one, the village become a gathering point for shepherds, peasants, various dealers, etc. The market usually took place at the end of novena: copper pots and pans, cloths, beasts of burden, cattle, sheep, land and diary produce were exchanged and sold. Here the shepherds could renew tenancy contracts for pastures and rich landowners could find new servants needed to pasture their sheep. S. Cosimo’s novena and cattle market certainly represented a relevant example of cosmopolitanism because it attracted people from all over the central territory. Throughout the last century, social and economic changes have determined the gradual eclipse of the cattle market. This dimension has been superseded by its increased religious character: the pressing request of cumbessias for the novenas by devotees, determined the 1960s demolition of part of the lozzas for the merchants and the building of new rooms for the pilgrims.

Nowadays, S. Cosimo remains partly bound to its original dimension: various dealers attend the novena to sell traditional knives, paintings and clothes. Since the year 2000, the market has been scheduled for two months prior to the festival. In July, the priorato organises a market of land produce, the so-called Fiera Agroalimentare. It is the time when the cumbessias are temporarily transformed
from humble rooms for the pilgrims, into shops. Merchants arrive from all over the island to sell their local produce (mainly bread, honey, cheese, wine, hams, pasta, sweets, and also Carnival masks, wooden objects, wrought iron objects, and carpets).

5.3.2 Locating the Other: neighbourhoods and spatial interactions

The claim, common among devotees, ‘nobody was sent back home’—meaning that everyone who arrived at one of these villages was given a place for the nine days of the novena—introduces us more concretely into this sort of ‘cosmopolitanism’. Within these sacred compounds, as, in fact, was the case in Rimedio, a few cumbessias—generally the bigger ones—were specifically reserved to groups of devotees coming from nearby as well as more distant villages. The location of groups within these tangled spatial and social units was the same year after year; devotees’ mental maps (see Tab. 1) used in describing the whole past internal spatial arrangement of a village are generally formulated on the basis of some relevant landmarks: the church, the lozzas, and the abovementioned cumbessias. These cumbessias and the people dwelling in them, formed true neighbourhoods:

Some groups of cumbessias were almost like real neighbourhoods (rioni). . . . Entering the village from the [eastern] gateway, immediately on the left side where the wall curves around, the first group [of cumbessias] were Ollolati’s. . . . All those coming from Ollolati dwelt there . . . Those in the middle were Mamoitada’s. On the other side [entering the gateway on the right] there were the cumbessias of Orgosolo and Oliena. Those from Ollolati even used to dance there, in front of their cumbessia, because I remember we used to say “let’s go and see the Ollolati’s dances” or “let’s go and see Fonni’s dances” (85 year old woman).

Those coming from the mountain always dwelt in the big lozza. Right at the end of this row, it used to be the biggest of the lozzas; but, now it has been divided into two parts . . . it was the lozza of those coming from the mountains and was usually reserved to those coming from Lula and Bitti. (67 year old woman).123

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121 Gallini (1971: 99) points out the recent development of what she terms ‘ethnic specialisation’ of these villages. Until the beginning of the Second World War, in fact, they were visited by a variety of people from different places.

122 Although their cosmopolitan character has remained fairly unchanged throughout the last decades, these places have lost the dimension of neighbourhoods.

123 S. Cosimo and Rimedio. Excerpts from interviews. See also Gallini (1971, pages 200–202). I would remind the reader that lozza is another way to define cumbessia used in Orosei. Ollolati, Fonni, Orgosolo, Oliena together with Bitti and Lula are small villages located within the mountainous inland region.
It can be argued, however, that those neighbourhoods were not the only examples of definite social and spatial gatherings these villages could manifest. The plurality of contexts stemming from a plurality of situations and social interactions, produced other forms of 'neighbourhoods'. I have identified two main determinants on the basis of their origin: (a) social exchanges and, borrowing from Gallini, (b) 'ethnic specialisation'. Social interactions and inter-individual communications: what I have identified as the (a) factor, produced various neighbourhoods formed by people generally coming from the same urban context to which the *cumbessias* village belongs (e.g., in Rimedio groups of people from Orosei). However, these groups could also be, to use a coherent definition, not 'ethnically defined', including individuals coming from different urban contexts (e.g., in Rimedio, groups mainly including people from Orosei and a few individuals from Dorgali, Onifai, Galtelli, etc.) (Fig. 114–114a).

The (b) factor, on the contrary, calls into question those neighbourhoods formed by the gathering of 'ethnically' identifiable groups; they reckoned people coming from different urban contexts (e.g., in Rimedio, people coming from the mountain villages of Fonni, Ollolai, Bitti, etc.).

(a) and (b) factors were both active within the majority of the 'not group specific' sacred compounds. Moreover, it should be pointed out that both types of neighbourhood were in no sense exclusive within the realities of the villages; rather, informants remember them as frequently interacting with each other.

Both neighbourhoods were spatially determined: those originating from the (a) factor made up (and were themselves made up by) that part of exterior courtyard that usually corresponded to the immediate front-yards of the *cumbessias*. These sites of daily gatherings formed neighbourhoods whose nature was given by a continuous alternation of bodies between movement and rest. In this case the spatial boundaries
were ‘not objectively apparent’ (Cohen 1985: 12); they were continually mediated by the moving bodies and the needs of social interactions. The ‘ethnic’ dimension of those neighbourhoods deriving from the (b) factor, found a direct relation to clear spatial references. People, in fact, gathered within/outside specific cumbessias and not in others: the bigger ones were purposely assigned to them by the priest or priore. Cumbessias themselves and their position within the compound constituted the objective spatial references of these kinds of neighbourhoods. The latter were also informed by the origin of their components. People from the same compound who referred to them using the formulations ‘the cumbessias of Ollolai’, or ‘those from Ollolai’, entailed an immediate reference to both kinds of information: spatial and community related. These formulations themselves defined a boundary.

The identification of the factors at the basis of the processes of formation of the neighbourhoods within the cumbessias villages, does not prevent us from questioning the reason why these processes were triggered. We should ask why people refer to other people of the same compound in these terms. The reason should be searched for in the very idea they had of their own and others’ communities. As discussed in Chapter 3, individuals become more aware of their own as a community precisely during an encounter with the Other. With this regard, the special contingency of the encounter/interaction/comparison is represented by the novena. It can be argued, in fact, that the life within the village heightened individuals’ self-awareness as members of different communities, providing them the means through which to reformulate and declare their inner selves. Novena acted symbolically, renovating individuals’ commitments to their own communities. The close contact people from Mamoïada experienced with extra-local realities and identities—in this

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124 Apart from being a customary practice, in S. Cosimo there was no other reason for the assignment of the same cumbessias to these groups of people. In Rimedio it was for a practical reason: they deliberately assigned
case represented by the people from Ollolai, Fonni, Orgosolo, displaying their own ways of dancing, their costumes and dialects—nurtured the symbolic value of their own boundaries. It is for this reason that they addressed the other people, saying ‘those from Ollolai’. Cross-boundaries transactions certainly meant the translation, not the absorption, of other’s identities and values.  

5.4 Past daily uses. Commonality of spaces, activities, bodies.

Each cumbessia generally hosted more than one familial group. Up until a few decades ago, in fact, up to three families (12 to 15 people) were grouped together within these single-room spaces. On many occasions the space may even have been shared with some outsiders. Since life together was not easy, it was not unusual, and was in fact, preferable, that in a gathering of groups, members were already known to each other. However, the obvious promiscuity was somehow restrained either by implicit respect, or by the fact that each group tried not to occupy but a small part of space, just that needed to lay down the folding beds for the night.

The inner zones were defined, without being physically separated, with Sauccu and Rimedio representing the only two exceptions. In the former village, in fact, while sharing the same cumbessia, men were physically separated from their women by a curtain, a practice that still takes place today; in the latter, the separation

\[\text{the same cumbessia every year, in order to accommodate the large group of people coming from the mountains.}\]

125 In my opinion, Gallini has been somewhat misled by these encounters, confusing the symptoms with the cause. She has remarked that, proper to a parochial social dynamic, groups’ past divisions of these kinds were supposedly imputable to a patent isolation of inland villages and people’s lack of mobility so reducing exchanges among centres and sometimes producing a high degree of latent antagonism. See Gallini (1971) on pages 191–202. Despite its inclusion into a research aimed at establishing isolation as a determining argument for past generations on demographic, social, cultural and biological-genetic levels, Gatti (1990: 171–191) has linked isolation to the ‘conjugal distance’ inserting it within a perspective allowing to notice how, within a broad time span from 1600 up to 1966 the high degree of isolation of Sardian people either internal or in relation to the peninsula has decreased thanks also to motorization and migration in 1950s Sardinia.  

126 Acknowledging the exceptionality represented by the event of the novena with its ‘forced’ cohabitation we should nonetheless be aware that cohabitation or the sharing of a narrow space was itself not exceptional in the daily lives of traditional familiar units as seen when addressing the issue of the extended family.
regarded the entire group. With the view of the other side of the room obstructed by a folding reed panel (*cagnone*) the two families sharing the *cumbessia* each occupied one side. Despite this nightly spatial ‘segregation’ the ruling inner and outer dimensions entailed an extended communality and collaboration including almost every aspect of the lives of these people. ‘... they used to bring *cagnone* (Fig. 115) to create a divider, and my mother used to tell that when my grandmother came here, there was another lady next to her: between them grew up a habit of seeing who could make the coffee first. Then they opened the *cagnone* and exchanged it in this way’ (*Rimedio*. Excerpt from interview). This episode fits into the context where a familial group is seen as a production unit: almost paradoxically, such a unit finds its autonomy thanks to tight social and economic relationships with the neighbourhood (*vicinato*) and relatives. Weaved by women, this network of relationships generally includes temporary services and exchanges of goods supported by families’ domestic needs: women could gather to bake bread, do the houses’ whitewashing in spring time, work in the kitchen gardens, etc. These mutual services (including lending pots and pans) were paid for with natural products such as home-baked bread and biscuits, or some pork-based products. Meloni remarks that ‘the system of relationships among families not sharing the same abode is fundamental for them to achieve their autonomy’ (1984: 171–73, 175). Moreover, a strong aggregation of the urban clusters favoured a relational communal life also revealing another structuring process beyond that of a ‘communal solidarity’, i.e., the need of a social control to be exercised on entire families and individuals (*Murru Corriga* 1990: 74).129

127 As I hope to make clear, promiscuity was not felt, as a problem in the sharing of the inner spaces, rather a somehow more explicit degree of separation between men and women’s realms was achieved in the exterior.

128 *Cagnone* is the name given to the reed. It is also used to refer to the folding reed panels and it the same material supporting the internal structure of old roofs: ‘it allows light to penetrate through it, lets cooking vapours go out, gives shade’. (*Rimedio*. Excerpt from field notes).

129 On *vicinati* see Da Re 1990: 111–120.
Over the past few decades, the characteristic narrowness of the *cumbessias* had to contain the pressure of many devotees who had arrived at the villages for the novenas (Fig. 116-119). Poor people used to bring all necessary items from home: basic food provisions consisted of home-baked bread and cheese. They possessed only a few pieces of furniture brought to the villages and arranged in the *cumbessias*: storage for food was provided by a small wooden chest (*cassione*) and a rough, long wooden plank (*taula*) (Fig. 120) hanging horizontally on a wall as a shelf, together with the *cumbessias* common built-in cupboard.\(^{130}\) Some could afford to have a table and one or two small chairs, instead of the more usual stones.

Until the recent spreading of some villages, that began in the late 1940s, devotees, men and women alike, slept outdoors under the trees, lying down on saddle-cloths, using the saddle or a stone as pillow; alternatively they slept on pallets made by picking some branches from the surrounding peony bushes. Even in the early 1950s beds were rare: people used to sleep on a thick, folding rough straw mat (*istoja*) directly on the earth floor of the *cumbessia*; when possible, some put the mats on a wooden plank platform raised from the floor by four stones placed under the four corners.

At night *cumbessias* transformed into sleeping alcoves wherein ‘once everybody had found his own small space, the door could be closed only by the last one lying down next to it’\(^{131}\) (Fig. 121).

In the mornings, the folding mats were put to one side, and space regained its multiple functions. Cumbessias were at the same time kitchens, places for hosting guests and for sleeping areas. These three basic inner dimensions did not correspond to any spatial definition whatsoever. Daily activities, such as cooking, in fact, took place immediately outside the *cumbessias*: ‘they used to light fires in the corners of

\(^{130}\) This basic element of furniture, the *taula*, i.e., long wooden plank was particular to S. Cosimo.
the courtyard . . . there could not be a fire in each cumbessia . . . there were a lot of
them, but they were spread out over various points, and each was used by many
people . . . as soon as one had finished using the embers, another put her pans in place
to cook her own food'.132 Started outside, food preparation then continued inside
within fireplaces or using the more common tripide, i.e., wrought iron movable trivet
used to sustain pans while cooking pasta, and frying aubergines or potatoes over
embers. If necessary, it was not unusual for people to share some of their provisions
from one cumbessia to the other, from one group to the other.

Outdoors, other places, apart from the ground, also became important in food
preparation: the stone benches on the cumbessias front walls became temporary
repositories for dead chickens ready to be plucked and stuffed,133 tree branches with
small pans of tomato sausage hanging from them, the thresholds became sitting
platforms where crouched women would beat eggs with sugar for breakfast. Eating,
which was always an ‘eating together’, in groups, could take place either inside or
outside. Outside could also mean beyond the village enclosure. Devotees arrived at
the villages for the sole ‘day’ of the saint, usually to eat in big groups in some shady
spots under trees just outside their precincts.

During the last festal days guests, mostly relatives and friends arriving soon
after the end of the afternoon mass, were received inside the cumbessias; for them,
the offer was of home-made traditional biscuits (pistoccos), barley coffee (caffè de
orju), vov134, white wine, while ‘a beaten egg with [the addition of] coffee and sugar
was soon prepared in case of the arrival of a guest (istranzu)’.135 Despite their

131 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
132 S. Cosimo. 85 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
133 In periods of poverty ‘grains [or barley] was the lifeline of the entire society’ (Isozaki 1986: 58) while
chickens were the only meat available and the sole source of animal protein together with pork meat
whose treatment provided families with basic lard (lardu) used for cooking, ham and sausages (sartiza).
As preparation for S. Cosimo’s novena, people would breed chickens specifically for this occasion.
134 Dense liqueur made with alcohol, eggs and sugar.
135 S. Cosimo. Excerpts from interview.
conditions of indigence, in fact, hospitality was considered an essential moment of socialisation by devotees, a moment that guaranteed an exchange of information between the insiders and those arriving from an outside reality ‘transferring information between the outside world and the domestic one’ (Booth 1999: 138). Such a reality was directly pertaining to their own villages and was also extended to those in the surrounding area. These exchanges were exercised within a ritualised and sometimes fixed set of rules. These revealed the enactment of an implicit desire of social control otherwise impossible in other more ordinary situations: now even poorer women could offer ‘unnecessary’ food. For a moment that offer became a sort of possession of guests’ present and future attentions to them.

This ‘possession’ worked at translating and subsequently absorbing a new reality into one’s own; the outside world entered their lives, new information was thus appropriated, outsiders (istranzos)136 ‘transformed in to member[s] of the family: ‘those [women] who live here in a muristene often invite some friends, people they already know from the village, and say “I’m in the mountain [i.e., cumbessias village], come over, we’ll have a drink together, I’ll put you up here” . . . , to spend a day together . . . they do it frequently’.

Until recent restoration work, neither villages nor cumbessias had indoor bathrooms. Basic hygiene requirements took place outside the villages in the country where people used to go singularly or in groups of two or three. In Sauccu a greater privacy was to some extent guaranteed by small, leafy branch constructions that formed an enclosure, and included two big stones put on the edge of a pit dug to a certain depth. Dismantled at the end of the novena, rudimentary privies of this kind served three or more families at a time. In addition to bathrooms, villages and

136 To this regard, Gallini points out that the Sardinian word ‘istranzu’ also means ‘guest’ (1971: 188). The same term can be literally translated as ‘outsider’ or ‘stranger’ when indicating a person of the same nationality while the term furisteri indicates all strangers of different nationalities (Farina 1987, vol. 1: 190).
*cumbessias* also lacked water supplies (only *Remedio* had a well within its boundaries). However, each village was located near to a river or a spring. Organised in groups, women sometimes went to the river to do the laundry, while men used to go to the spring on a daily basis to provide their own and others’ *cumbessias* with the necessary water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and performing personal hygiene practices.

### 5.4.1 Men and women’s dwelling places: gender interplay

Lingering at bars (*barraccas*), centres of men’s gathering, playing cards sitting on granite benches or stones, most of the men’s socialising activities took place outdoors. Until the 1960s the bars’ temporary structures\(^{138}\) were normally positioned within the boundaries of the villages sometimes occupying the church plaza. Their subsequent dismantling and relocation outside the sacred compounds coincided with a growing discontent among the priests celebrating the novenas. These compounds, in fact, reckoned the presence of various groups of men all coming from neighbouring villages, there to pass evenings and whole nights between drinking at *barraccas* and dancing with women with whom they mainly desired to socialise. Brawls were not infrequent, caused either by old latent antagonisms between groups, those living in the *cumbessias* village and the newcomers, usually belonging to neighbouring villages with whom there could be either economic and familial frictions, or by the latter’s inappropriate behaviour especially towards women of the other groups (Atzori 1997: 53–59). Pinna (1971: 71) relates tension and interfamilial rivalries to various factors: to the model of the nuclear family entailing a total solidarity to a group and an automatic absolute rejection of outsiders, and geographical and social isolation in conjunction to an economy of subsistence. Atzori

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\(^{137}\) *Sauccu*. 56 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
relates these quarrels to a more general phenomenon, the dialectic existing between shepherds and peasants, two categories historically opposed to each other for obvious disputes over land. However, what is relevant to notice is the profound link inherent in a cultural, social, and economic reality where solidarity, reciprocity, and friendship work as binary oppositions with the other terms of conflict, closeness, and disamistade, i.e., enmity. Disamistade, as well as for reciprocity and friendship, being a ‘negative reciprocity’ responded to very strict canons and was developed within specific social and cultural mechanisms (Atzori 1997: 54). Disamistade, born either from economic or behavioural issues (particularly honour and the breaking of the norm of mutual respect), was a sort of encoded superstructure under which worked a profound and rooted hatred involving entire familial groups for generations. Moreover, men’s socialising activities were considered responsible for their estrangement from devotional practices proper to these sacred places.\footnote{See note 116 in Chapter 4.} \footnote{[the priest] has even forbidden them [the men] to play cards, and you know how is important for men’. . . . (Rimedio. Excerpt from interview). His blaming caused a common response by men and women: as we shall see in the next chapter, men’s participation to novenas has diminished throughout the last decades.}

Despite the absence of a physical barrier between men and women’s inner and outer realms there was a sort of tacit agreement between the two. It entailed that women should not enter the aforementioned male specific areas and domains (even if this compromise was frequently broken without particular consequences). Women had their own places where they socialised: generally, in the afternoons, they would group together in front of cumbessias’ door-yards, sitting on stones, low stools, stone benches, doorways, playing cards or talking, while doing handiwork. Yet, their daily spheres of activities represented a valid model of interplay where men actively collaborated with women for either indoor and outdoor basic chores: men provided ferns for making grass mats, built temporary bathrooms, brought water from the
springs, provided the *cumbessias* with logs to light the fires, built porches with *cagnone* and dismantled them at the end of novenas.

This sort of interplay or, as already stated, ‘communality’ was extended to almost every dimension of life in *cumbessia* villages including leisure. Mostly in the evenings, in fact, women and men gathered together in various groups to talk, tell jokes and dance, often until dawn. Everybody danced accompanied by the sound of an accordion or simply by the voices of men singing ‘a tenore’.\footnote{Proper to central Sardinia and specifically to the territory of *Nuoro* and the southern part of the *provincia* of *Sassari*, this type of poli-vocal singing is performed by four men singers, one of whom is the soloist: their singing ‘determines a compact accompanying rhythmic structure which can be intended as an instrumental accompaniment’ (Leydi 1973: 24).} Sardinian traditional dances, in fact, with their intrinsic specificity, were vehicles of expression of the identity of a community: specificity in this case refers to the fact that each village has elaborated proper dancing modalities explicated through proper melodic, rhythmic, and choreographic patterns\footnote{Choreography of Sardinian traditional dances entails, among other aspects, the adoption of a circular layout of dancers composed of a woman/man/woman/man succession. For this reason dances were essential moments of socialisation expressed on two different levels: at a high level, the explicit affirmation of a community as a whole, as a group of people, while on a lower level, there was the implicit reassertion of a} recognisable by neighbouring communities. The *Ollolai* and *Fonni* ways of dancing were thus unique to those communities close (but different) to that of *Mamoiada*, whose community was hosting them at *S. Cosimo’s cumbessias* village.

5.5 Past spatial ambiguities: articulation and organisation of internal spaces

Past villages’ interior and exterior spatial articulations together with the use of internal and external spaces are elements addressing the issue of communality in another indicative way. Private/public dichotomy should, in fact, coincide respectively with the terms inside/outside. Yet, in looking as we have done at past internal spatial articulation and behaviours within *cumbessias* villages, the ‘private’ and ‘inside’ factors are forcibly inclined toward their reverses: all that is private
becomes public; what is intimate and supposedly done inside, away from curious outside glances, takes place outdoors, in public: toilets took place in groups outside in the immediate surroundings of the villages, cooking, as well as eating, was done together outdoors; food preparation in the thresholds and door-yards, creating an ‘interior/exterior continuum’ (James, Kalisperis 1999: 213). Moreover, the extent to which these two terms are expressed in their reversed dimensions is revealed and enhanced through cumbessias’ internal spatial articulation: the homogeneous cumbessias’ internal surface articulation and texture (no change in colour and texture of the ground surface) did not define or differentiate between ‘paths of movement’ or ‘places of rest’; moreover, within the cumbessias, visual and physical access (movements) was in no sense limited by inner structural separating planes, not even ‘implied’ separating planes entailing a ‘change in level or a contrast in [the whole internal] surface material or texture’ (Ching 1996: 100, 184). The little furniture of the cumbessias, indeed, could not work as a separating plane, nor could it define eventual zones used for particular activities. The absence of private internal spaces reveals the extent to which a [spatial] private dimension was neglected within the cumbessias: this in turn shows the extent to which the inside welcomed a public dimension. Public external space entered the inner, supposedly private, one through a material and textural continuity, since both exteriors and interiors had pounded clay surfaces. Moreover, interiors and exteriors generally presented a continuity of their ground planes.

In the process of formation of these spatial ambiguities ‘it is behaviour, not [only] form, that creates a continuum . . . from interior to exterior’ and vice versa (James and Kalisperis 1999: 213). Internal and external uses in fact actively worked

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sense of communality between men and women of the same group; community was created from the individualities and specificity of the individuals and their bodies, now tightly closed to each other.
to substantiate both ambiguities and continuum. Until the early 1940s sleeping remained mainly an outdoors activity. Its subsequent transformation into an indoor activity did not modify its communal/public meaning: no sleeping was done privately or alone, it was rather a matter of sharing one’s own tiny space with others, already known or not. This sort of *inseparableness* went farther, becoming a physical continuity also expressed through the ‘squeezed-in’ sleeping bodies. In other words, with their uses these small private, intimate alcoves became public and communal spaces. Despite their cellular sizes internal spaces did not encourage [a spatial] individuality nor the existence of a private dimension. A single individual was then part of a ‘public’ community each time he/she slept, cooked, ate, went to the toilet, or danced. Moreover, women in a way completed these ensembles of reversions, since what was private and intimate for an individual, occurred outdoors. Engaging in conversations while sitting outside their *cumbessias*, on stones, granite benches, thresholds, one or more individuals or a family’s private affairs became part of their ‘public’ gossiping.

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142 "The food could be prepared here [inside the *cumbessia*] but the eating took place outdoors ... in the times to which we refer, the fire was done outside and the cooking continued inside." ... (S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview).

143 "The cooking was done all together. We cooked together and lived in harmony, even if there were women we didn’t know, even then; otherwise if those women had their own *tripide* one cooked first and then the others could begin." (S. Cosimo. 85 year old woman. Excerpt from interview).

144 Specifically referring to the novena of S. Francesco of Lula, Satta conceives the space of the village as divided into three basic areas, each related to a particular individual and collective function: the church-space, mainly female, including the house of God, the space of *priorato* and clergy, a space allowing a certain control of the behaviours of community; the same space site of conflicts of power between religious and civil dimensions represented by the priest and *priore* respectively; the courtyard-space, as the space of the social, and the *cumbessias*-space, the most intimate one, where the necessary operations of daily life take place (Satta, M.M., *Riso e Pianto nella cultura popolare. Feste e Tradizioni Sarde*, Sassari, L’Asfodelo Editore, 1982: 180–181).
5.6 Changing places, places of change: past spatial continuity and contemporary transformations

The introduction of modern conveniences within villages and internal spaces of *cumbessias* together with private and public\(^{145}\) restoration works carried out within these compounds, have slowly produced changes among devotees' behaviour and experiences of these places, and the aforementioned communality has been, to a certain extent, compromised. In particular, *cumbessias* have undergone major changes both structurally (elevation of roofs, partition of a larger space in to separate units, and the inclusion of another room for lavatory or bedroom), and as regards the layout of their internal spaces.\(^{146}\)

These processes have been engendering a sort of 'private' dimension of inner spaces unknown until a few decades ago. Yet, what is encouraging, is that despite people's changed behaviours, their intention and need to reassert the aforementioned communality has remained the same. Continuing a past common habit, devotees arriving at these villages use to bring their furniture and food supplies with them. Carts have been substituted by cars, farm tractors and vans (Fig. 122–132).

Furniture itself has been renewed: although some traditional pieces have been kept and are still in use today, as in the examples of *Sauccu* and *S. Cosimo* (with the *taula*), many others have now been added: the small amount of furniture in the past *cumbessia* now includes a table with a few chairs (Fig. 133–136), one or two modern single beds, a well-equipped small kitchen (Fig. 137–140), a refrigerator, a pantry, or

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\(^{145}\) Within these compounds many *cumbessias* have been built at devotees' own expense and for this reason they should legitimately be considered as 'private'. As a matter of fact, the constructions are property of the compound itself which allows 'temporary owners' to dwell there with the right to reserve the building for their heirs. They can also undertake restorations at their expenses but if they and their relatives are not going to use it, the *cumbessia* must be left to the church's disposal or to other devotees for the novena. Works of restoration have thus been undertaken directly by their 'owners'. Yet, in addition, there are the public *cumbessias*, property of a *cumbessias* village, themselves part of the church's real estate. Usually, including land and cattle, these properties of the *cumbessias* villages have been lost since the law abolishing ecclesiastical estate (Gallini 1971: 106).
a kitchen cupboard (Fig. 141-143), a wash-basin with a mirror, and a small settee. Whereas past habits entailed the emptying of a home’s poor furniture to furnish a *cumbessia*, all the aforementioned pieces are no longer in use outside the context of a *cumbessia*: no one uses them anymore because they are old, or do not correspond to modern tastes; however, they are kept at home ready for other novenas.

When compared to past experiences, *cumbessias* have now become quite comfortable places. Notwithstanding recent restoration works, many of these internal spaces are not yet provided with indoor bathrooms or sinks; rather, public lavatories and small fountains outside, provide an adequate substitute. Former crowded sleeping alcoves have been transformed into cosy, tiny and more private spaces: indeed, they settle just one family, usually consisting of two people, elderly (or younger) husband and wife, followed by one or two nieces or nephews. It is not unusual to find just one elderly woman, a widow staying by herself (or together with nieces and nephews) or else, a *cumbessia* gathering a group of young men or women (Fig. 144–145). As you enter one of these rooms, it is easy to see that very little remains of what was the old *cumbessias’* dimension of spatial continuity.

A different internal arrangement of various areas is achieved by positioning furniture in such a way as to create a clear-cut division of internal functions: the kitchen or living room area welcomes the outsider who is invited to sit on a chair or directly on a bed if there is no settee. This is usually a ‘public’ area, while the private one is separated and usually hidden behind a long curtain hanging from the ceiling on a wire, stretched between two opposite walls. The ‘public area’ of the kitchen/dining-room is customarily located immediately next to the ingress, occupying the larger portion of that inner space (Fig. 146–157).

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146 All the *cumbessias* villages have been restored in some of their parts. Structural and functional alterations such as these we found particularly in *Gonare* and *Miracolo*; in minor proportions also in *Annunziata* and *Rimedio*. 
Sleeping has become a more private affair: one or two beds are positioned behind the curtain or a more sturdy separé, with a visual and spatial separating plane now clearly defining which space an outsider is allowed or forbidden to see or enter in the first encounter. This private area is usually positioned close to a cumbessia back wall, although some cumbessias' spatial articulations may differ, leaving the outsider the sole view of the social space while prohibiting access to the private area. Pantry and washbasin can also be located within this same space. These are just a few exceptions where these kinds of temporary internal spatial barriers have been substituted, while in Gonare and Miracolo more structural solutions such as internal partition walls have been added.

147 In fact, sleeping remains a public moment when a group of young men or women decide to spend the novena or part of it in a cumbessia. This still happens in Sauccu, S. Cosimo and in some respect in Annunziata. In these cases the mattresses are placed directly on the floor. In Sauccu women have to sleep without men: the same space then gathers various ages, e.g., mothers with their daughters or young sons, teenagers, single or married and middle-aged women all together. In Annunziata, although sleeping together, men and women, married or not, are forbidden to have sexual intercourse whilst housed within the village.
Tab. 7 Sketch plan of a *cumbessia* until the 1960s without furniture and without any type of internal spatial partition. Sketch drawing by Arch. G. Filindeu.


Tab. 9 The drawing shows present-day *cumbessias'* internal spatial articulation. The *cumbessia* is divided into two separated areas: a private one in the back, generally hidden by curtains and visually and physically forbidden to visitors. It is the private and intimate part of the room. As in this case, furniture is frequently used as a separating plane. The front part of the *cumbessia* is the public area, open to visitors coming over during the novena. This area is generally used for food preparation and guests welcoming. Sketch drawing by Arch. G. Filindeu.
5.6.1 Moving outside: a contemporary view of cumbessias village’s external dimension and uses

Despite substantial restoration works, external spaces, at least those immediately facing the cumbessias, have maintained more or less the same spatial articulation and functions over the past few decades. A few pieces of furniture (Fig. 158–160), mainly plastic or wooden tables and chairs, are brought outside from the cumbessias only for the afternoon gatherings, then taken inside again (Fig. 161–164). Cumbessias’ dooryards, in fact, now only accommodate devotees’ moments of leisure. With the curtains shielding the inside, a person strolling along the village paths calls out to a cumbessia’s resident from outside, opens the curtain and glances inside. Although, this kind of communication is allowed only among friends, residents are usually more than willing and happy to exchange a few words with others, especially neighbours. Although primarily of a visual nature, communication among people living within these compounds often takes on an impetuous, sonorous dimension that is even more pervasive than the visual one. It is not infrequent, in fact, especially among women, to have exchanges of this kind: both being at the opposite sides of the village one calls out the other’s name, sometimes just to invite her over for coffee (Fig. 165–167): ‘Andrea, followed by his cousins Agostino and Giovanni, runs across the plaza calling out my name: “Elena, mum asks if you’ll join us for lunch!” While I’m answering the children, I see someone at the other side of the plaza, leaning out of the door and waving her arm: it is Mariangela who smiles and nods me to go’ (Gonare. Excerpt from field notes. Emphases added).

Together with movable chairs (Fig. 168), unmoveable rocky benches, stairs, free-standing walls and fenced flower beds, cumbessias’ external front walls become proper dwelling places: people simply lean against them watching village life go by, or talking to someone (Fig. 169–174).
Representing more ‘structured extensions’ of *cumbessias*’ door-yards, porches still maintain their past functions. In *Rimedio*\(^{148}\), in fact, protruding over their external walls, they represent and actively work to complete the *cumbessias*’ internal spaces: ‘Kahn prefers the gallery because of its being a directional and non-directional space, both *corridor* and *room* at the same time’ (Venturi 2002 [1966]: 43. Emphases added). As real *rooms*, these spaces confirm through their uses their spatial and [*multi*]functional *betweenness*: at once kitchens used for food preparation, dining rooms where devotees eat (*Fig. 175–185*), places for leisure where people use to linger talking, playing cards, rooms for formal and informal invitations of newcomers and relatives. Moreover, porches are equipped with tables covered with coloured plastic tablecloths, plastic chairs and wooden benches, small pantries, plastic basins, a few corkscrews hanging on the walls\(^{149}\), a *calciobalilla*\(^{150}\), etc. Despite their being permanently open places, turned towards the public space of the village, porches settle and show people’s daily lives to the extent that a glance in their direction soon causes embarrassment for the one spying upon their private worlds: ‘At my arrival at the village I feel observed without having the right to observe’ (*Rimedio*. Excerpt from field notes). As *corridors*, they link various *cumbessias* so that inhabitants frequently move from one to the other always remaining underneath them.

But the “conflict” between public and private is mediated . . . by the placement of the portico . . . this intermediary stakes out a domain that suits the lived body in its ambiguous being. As itself is a *metaux*, or intermediary, the body situates us in intermediate places by taking up successive but continuous pre-positions between established spaces. Able to move in at least two directions at any given moment, the body locates us in middles at which the explicit and the inexplicit, the propositional and the pre-positional, meet (Casey 1993: 127).

\(^{148}\) In *Gonare* porches are mainly used for leisure.

\(^{149}\) Kitchen utensils such as these and brooms are sometimes purposely left outside of a *cumbessia*, allowing neighbours to borrow them in the case of need.

\(^{150}\) A toy composed of a green horizontal plane representing a football ground on which two teams of plastic puppets are fastened to various metal poles put crosswise (Palazzi 1982: 110).
Yet, an outsider, at least initially, should instead use normal ‘external’ paths for the same purposes. Moreover, the kind of union they achieve goes far beyond that of a mere spatial dimension: the type of spatial continuity a corridor expresses is, in this case, a continuity of lives, a continual lived dimension revealed by a succession of tables, bodily movements, activities, conversations. This continuity takes on a visual connotation, so that porches aim at being sort of horizontally stretched [living] ‘rooms’ (Fig. 186).

The typical transience that characterises porches within these compounds has become debatable, particularly in Gonare where they have taken on a definite permanent location within the spatial configuration of the village (Fig. 187). Dismantled at the end of novenas, in Rimedio porches still remain faithful to the transience of the life within a cumbessia village: ‘the image I can see now is that of men and women pulling nails out of the walls and loading wooden planks onto vans. It would not be hazardous to say that they are dismantling and taking away those moments passed together, of leisure, of shared meals, whole days spent there underneath. What remains are the doors, now easy to see, being closed’ (Rimedio. Excerpt from field notes).151

5.6.2 Present-day female domains

‘A woman guarantees, administers, she is the symbol of all that is domestic. In Sardinia, more than everywhere else, only where there is a woman is there a home’ (Angioni 1988: 123). That of a cumbessia remains a female domain. A woman is always present in every group occupying a cumbessia, and hers are the main duties, especially as regards domestic chores.152

151 During recent restorations sponsored by private donors new fixed porches have been added to a few cumbessias. Local natural material, cagnone, is now substituted with synthetic, corrugated roofs.
152 On women’s domestic activities in the urban context see Da Re 1990: 32–44.
Clearly denouncing an improved but not high standard of living, the *cumbessias* internal spaces today, together with their arrangement and reshaped inner functions have produced some changes in devotees’ daily behaviour. Cleaning is quicker, if compared to the normal activity at home. Here, in the mornings women usually extend their sweeping (Fig. 188–189) also to the external door-yard floor where they use to sit in the afternoons, lingering for hours (Fig. 190). Yet, their tasks have somehow become lighter since they do not have to do laundry down by the river$^{153}$, or light fires to cook. Rather, laundry is done at nearby public wash-tubs. (Fig. 191–201). Food preparation, in particular, now requires minor efforts. It is now done inside a *cumbessias*$^{154}$, using a gas rings. Although women still prepare fresh daily lunches; they top and tail beans, slice vegetables, beat eggs, but only on special occasions, e.g., for the festal days when all relatives arrive, do they prepare fresh pasta; and meat dishes too are soon ready, without the necessity of plucking chickens, for example. With just one exception, that of Rimedio, eating now takes place inside: women gather in small groups each offering some sweets to their neighbours, they may have lunch or dinner together. Otherwise they may simply join for coffee afterwards (Fig. 208). Dishes are washed outdoors using coloured plastic basins at the village’s newly built fountains; the latter are used as though they were a sort of public sink. At Rimedio this activity takes place publicly under the porches: passing by it is not unusual to notice women with soapy hands, mid-chore. Everything within a *cumbessia* denotes a certain feminine touch for these places: almost every *cumbessia* has an image of the Virgin or Christ hanging on the walls, and a lighted large wax candle below; the centres of tables are often covered with crocheted

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153 Laundry activities are mainly limited to underclothing.

154 At Rimedio food preparation remains an outdoor activity for women: they go back and forth from the *cumbessia* to the front porch where they sit while preparing.
doilies, decorated with a, sometimes plastic, vase with flowers; shelves and kitchen cupboards are also adorned with crocheted doilies.

‘Come on! Start laying clear the table and tidying up: we’ve got to start playing cards’! (S. Cosimo. Excerpt from an ‘interrupted’ interview). Afternoons have remained women’s special and undisturbed moments of leisure: they form larger or smaller groups to play cards and tombola, (bingo). Otherwise they engage in long conversations whilst sitting underneath the shady porches, in front of their own or others’ cumbessias, looking at what is happening within the village (Fig. 202–212) Apart from the evenings, the rest of the day they are busy with masses, domestic chores, invitations to relatives and other visitors coming over. Offerings have become richer than they were in the past: biscuits (pistoccos), almonds and sugar sweets such as guelfi and macaroons (amaretti) together with alcoholic beverages such as red and white wine (Fig. 213–215).

5.6.3 Present-day male domains

Men’s daily activities are undoubtedly spent outdoors. Free from any kind of indoor domestic impediment carried out by their wives, men usually decide to spend their leisure time engaging in long conversations on political, economical and local topics. Just as is true for women, men too occupy certain defined places inside and outside of the cumbessias villages. Being somehow more inclined to stand and walk, thus using spaces more dynamically than women, gateways, paths, bars, and in the centre of plazas, we can see them in small groups standing or moving in one direction or another (Fig. 216–231). Yet, in some places, such as is the case in Sauccu, middle-aged men contribute to domestic chores: as mentioned earlier, on a daily basis they still walk to the spring to provide cumbessias with water (Fig. 232–234); in Rimedio,
they dismantle wooden porches, and almost everywhere they are in charge of moving furniture from home to the villages and vice versa (Fig. 235–236).

Bars remain the most important stimuli for socialisation, of the dwelling places. In the afternoons men usually linger in bars, sometimes for hours, having glasses of wine, inviting friends, conversing with or playing morra together, this being more than a simple game between men, becoming a way of socialising through glances and behaviour (Fig. 237).

In the bars they prefer to stand while drinking; only a few decide to sit. Men seem to have little command of, or interest in, the ‘administration’ of internal spaces and the furniture of a cumbessia: while women, in moving chairs and tables, literally extend their inner ‘domain’ outdoors, men, one would thus suppose, prefer using given external spaces for their own dallying.

When within the cumbessias villages, bars continue to be communal dwelling places and loci of socialisation indifferently for both middle-aged and younger men. As far as the inner realm of a cumbessia is concerned, women are those who receive and welcome newcomers, especially relatives (and particularly other women). Whereas women go to the villages in groups of two or more, generally knowing someone already living there, for some solitary men, bars become welcoming ‘hosts’, reasserting their great socialising power: ‘barracche are useful, they have to be useful

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155 ‘During our conversations, ladies’ glances are always ready to move and note who is moving and in which direction’ (Gionare. Excerpt from field notes).
156 A more relevant male contribution to daily tasks is visible among the groups organising the civil celebration for the novenas. On this see Chapter 5, section 5.1.
157 Throughout past decades, bars have been moved out of some villages’ enclosures either because of their being considered sometimes responsible for men being absent from religious celebrations unsuitable for a sacred place.
158 ‘Traditional game of chance in which two [or more] players stretch out their fingers while yelling a number between two and ten, trying to guess the sum of the fingers they have both stretched out’ (Palazzi 1982: 518). See also the description given by Barbiellini Amidei et al. 1976: 144. Men’s socialising activities often entail a continuous shouting. Whereas for women this shouting is essentially linked to communicative activities, men’s is just given by their being in a crowded place. With this regard, bars are particularly significant examples of places where this shouting is generated, pervading the whole village.
159 To this regard Oppo (1990: 87) points out that ‘it is clearly perceived, not only in the pastoral class, but also among artisans, dealers, … if not an estrangement at least a sort of male embarrassment in moving and participating to domestic interactions’ due to their being frequently out for work: their space was ‘su
... for one [a man] who arrives here [at the village] and finds himself alone without knowing where to go ... for someone who does not have a muristene ... or one [already living here] who finds other people arrived from outside and wants to invite them to have something to drink, otherwise, where could he go?’ (Sauccu. 34 year old woman. Excerpt from interview). Socialisation entails the respect of certain rules and rituals, themselves made up of certain behaviours, or gestures: to enter a barracca means to be part of a group of men, where it is impossible to refuse another’s offer of being invited to have a few glasses of wine or beer (cùmbidu). The offering itself takes place following proper criteria and modalities of expression: men usually talk while going to the bar, slowly; they talk and stop. There then follows a solicitation and renewal of the offer; the discourse finishes while they enter the bar, usually standing around in circles, sometimes then intoning a traditional song. The ‘rule’ prescribes that if a man from one group offers a glass of wine to another, the invitation has to include all the members of this other group (Barbiellini Amidei, et al. 1976: 141). The bar fills the roles both of a dwelling place and a setting for communication.

Men are used to sharing a cumbessia in the village: going to work in the mornings, they come back late in the afternoon and hang around in bars or stroll along the paths all night. Nowadays, night time is generally spent lingering in bars. In the past, nightly activities included young and middle-aged men and women wandering through the villages looking for someone on whom to play a joke or trick (Fig. 238–240). A widely spread activity, playing jokes on people dwelling in the cumbessias has to be related to these villages’ relevant institution of hospitality: groups of young men and women made nightly incursions at various cumbessias, serenading the dwellers and asking to be offered something to drink in return for their

*monte*, i.e., the mountain, while *sa bidda*, i.e., the village was women’s space (Meloni 1984: 193). For
kindness. If the insider did not accept this kind of exchange they may wall up the door, for example. Another strategy to extort an offer was to steal something (perhaps cooking pans containing food), and then demand something, usually a bottle of wine, in return:

They went stealing unripe oranges from the trees close to the cumbessias village . . . asking people to give them something in return . . . if you receive something, something you have to return . . . so they gave a plastic bag full of unripe oranges but people, being in the dark about it, gave them a bottle of wine . . . with all that wine they enjoyed themselves for the whole novena (Annunziata. 27 year old woman. Excerpt from interview).

5.7 Present-day novena socialising activities

Once at the village, adults choose their own places, neighbours, paths, and directions: children become immediately familiar with the place. They stretch out its boundaries so that it extends well beyond fixed internal neighbourhoods or bars. Spending all the time outdoors, they dwell in spatial interstices such as trees, rocks, tables, fountains, railings, and stairs: ‘Alessandro climbed up the carob tree next to my cumbessia. I can see him now, with his legs dangling down. From below, Valentino and Manuel are shaking carobs off the tree. Their strategy has been successful; I ask Valentino to give me a piece of carob to taste, since he has filled his T-shirt with them’ (Rimedio. Excerpt from field notes) (Fig. 241–251).

Interactions between adults and children are not infrequent within the cumbessias villages: in Sauccu and S. Cosimo groups of young and middle-aged people purposely organise games that can be played together with children, in order to involve them in the community (Fig. 252–255).

This process of socialisation is still quite vivid today within Sauccu and Annunziata. In these villages, in fact, people strongly maintain that everybody has to be actively involved in the entertainment: dancers and bands coming from outside are

neither welcome, nor allowed, to perform on a stage within the village. They would otherwise create a gap between them and the villagers, who would thus be transformed into a distanced 'audience':

[In Annunziata] adults, young people and children, everybody dances ... it is the people themselves who dance, they do not invite folk-dancers' groups ... it is not a stage, no way! They dance in the plaza in front of the church ... do you remember the traditional dances they used to do? ... Thousands of people, it was spectacular ... I can't imagine that anyone could come here [to Annunziata] just for fun. Personally, if one day they should call a folk group, even one that was very famous, I'd be the first to say 'no, I'm not going to go and see it', because it would be a sort of insult to the very essence of a cumbessias village. The place is what it is because there is religion, tradition, people: these are the elements that really make the festival, not the band playing ... it's something which is not in the minds of devotees ... now, we young people, myself included, we always want something new, never pleased or satisfied. But the best part of Annunziata is precisely the fact that I can accept that it has not been modernised; I am the first to want to have fun, and enjoy myself, yet I also want to keep the festival traditions. Annunziata is beautiful precisely because we don't have those attractions common to other festivals here.160

Yet, a practice which is quite common to the majority of cumbessias villages' festal activities, is that of having a few evenings, generally the last three, dedicated to groups of traditional dancers, local bands, competitions of dialectal poetry, etc. As we shall see, such an outdistancing process is generally welcomed, opposed only by tiny groups of people: 'stationary audience-and-stage configurations are very prone to engender lassitude and passivity instead of active involvement' (Jones 2000, vol.2: 194).

Whereas some villages being somehow 'socially inflexed' operate this kind of protection of their own communities from external interference, others work either mobilising internal forces or by referencing external ones: it happens for S. Cosimo and Rimedio. Within these villages young people involve particularly the children and the rest of the community in amusing activities that they themselves organise, while in others, in the evenings, various local groups alternate in entertaining the community which has now become an 'audience'. Traditional dances are gradually

160 Annunziata. 27 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
giving way to modern ones, accommodating the younger generations, but leading to the loss of a secure and nurturing past dimension for socialisation among cumbessias villages’ inhabitants (Fig. 256–266a).

Traditional dance (see note 162) has represented a vehicle of expression of collective identity: it was generally performed on various festive public and private occasions, such as weddings, religious festivals, private and communal feasts, at Carnival time, etc. While traditional dance is inherently social both due to the occasion for the performance, generally requiring a group of people, men and women, and due to the chosen location, such as streets, church plazas, courtyards, etc., modern dance is, on the contrary, generally performed within specific places, such as discos, nightclubs and dancing halls. Diffused within Sardinia soon after the Second World War, modern dance does not require a performing specialisation nor the type of specific choreography required by traditional dance. In monitoring a progressive decline of the latter within the context of the novenas during the 1960s, Gallini (1971) remarked how a village’s modern entertainment has relegated traditional dance to a historical horizon at the margins of real life, where it finds its nourishment. Modern has, in a sense, created the category of traditional. What was ‘the’ dance, has become ‘traditional’ dance. The aforementioned relegation of Sardinian dance into the realm of the ‘traditional’ is particularly visible within wide urban contexts: in these places there are schools specifically instituted for the teaching of the traditional dance to small children and young adults.

Nowadays, the two categories do not appear to be in any sense in contrast within cumbessias villagers’ words. They use the term ‘su ballu’, i.e, the dance, to refer to what I have indicated as ‘traditional’ dance, and ‘sos ballos de como’, i.e, present-day dances, to refer to ‘modern’ dance. Within the transient communities of the cumbessias villages, there is a peaceful coexistence of the two types of dance:
children and young adults display high performing levels of Latin American steps, together with a fairly solid knowledge of the complex choreography of traditional Sardinian dances.

Boxes, specially built up for these purposes, provide temporary scaffolding structures usually having higher base planes than those of the villages, their outlines being definitely taller than *cumbessias*’ themselves. Theirs is a relevance which is expressed in spatial terms: indeed not only do their figures hide part of *cumbessias* front walls, but they also occupy a fairly central position within the villages. Half of *S. Cosimo’s* plaza is reserved for a box. With its ‘skeleton’, almost a spectral structure, a box well conforms to nocturnal activities: apart from children who sometimes climb up the tubes, people rarely use it during daily leisure time. A skeleton compared to the solid, thick architectural structural solution of the villages where it is inserted, taller than its surrounding edifices, its ‘level’ is also higher than that where village’s daily life is spent.

Within these villages everything relates to the institution of hospitality. Communication is also at stake: from the doors that must be left open, to the food provisions brought to the village which have to be consumed there without leftovers, from the offerings after masses, to the nightly incursions and stealing, from the continuous circulation of people within the village:

In *Annunziata* it is customary to keep the doors open . . . you can’t even see them because they are always kept open you just see the curtains. Hospitality cannot be neglected. If someone were to keep the door closed you’d see it as a form of hostility: this person would be criticised ‘what’s the point in her coming to *Annunziata* if she keeps the door closed’? . . . the thinking is that everything should be available . . . and if you bring provisions from *Bitti* than you have to finish everything here; I mean, it’s not nice to take drinks and sweets back home!161

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161 *Annunziata*, 27 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on past and present uses within the cumbessias villages of Rimedio, S. Cosimo, Gonare, Miracolo, Anmunziata, and Sauccu. It has been argued that a good part of women’s past socialising, their communicative and communal activities within the villages, has been substituted by a prevailing individualisation and ‘privatisation’ of tasks. Particularly, cooking, laundering, eating, and sleeping all have become more or less private moments, usually not shared with others, where the term moment stays true to its Latin origin meaning ‘momentum, [i.e.,] movement’ expressing a unity of space and time (Norberg-Schulz 1996: 57). Moments shared together were also movements shared together, bodily movements, preparation of food, laundering, sleeping, etc.; it was a spatial, physical, and social sharing. Now they are mainly moments/movements of single individuals. Outdoor activities are now mainly reserved for leisure. The introduction of new furnishings and newer inner spatial arrangements are the products, and in turn have produced, a progressive specification of indoor functions that furnishings themselves have contributed to define acting as physical separating planes. Moreover, the communicative side, both that taking place between people from within the villages, and that extended to the external contacts with outsiders has undergone profound changes: whereas past villages could boast their ‘cosmopolitanism’, many of the present-day ones include just a few outsiders. There has also been a notable change in participation in novenas: over the last 50 years the participation of extended familial groups has been superseded by that of small groups. These results have been achieved working on, or better, re-working the aforementioned communality that found a spatial correspondent in either a continuity of inner spaces or a continual exchange between inner and outer dimensions. Whereas some villages have lost this dimension, others
have maintained it, if not in terms of communality, at least in relation to a spatial continuity between inside and outside realm.
Chapter 6

I make while I pr/lay: novena and the performative agency of devotees

'Religious buildings arise as human creations, but they persist as transforming, life-altering [places]. They are at once expressions of and sources of religious experiences' (Jones 2000: 22). They are events and are eventful. In the wake of Norberg-Schulz’s (1996: 221) definition of architecture as the ‘art of place’, I intend this definition as entailing two different yet interwoven meanings: on the one hand, the recognition of architecture as intrinsically ‘performative’ in its nature, staying true to the meaning of ‘making’, creative ‘unveiling’\(^{162}\), or ‘a mode of knowing’ from the Greek word \(\text{techne} \ (T\epsilon\chi\nu\eta)\)\(^{163}\). On the other, it is the same product/symbolic outcome of that creative unveiling.

Viewed from the perspectives of the author/artist and interpreter what emerges from these premises is that the ‘art of place’ is essentially a modality of cognisance. The being of architecture’s reality, in fact, exceeds any kind of particular and personal contribution deriving from individuals experiencing it either in building or in using it. While in the previous chapter I have been concerned with past and present daily experiences within the \(\text{cumbessias}\) villages, in this chapter I shall investigate daily devotees’ ‘religious’ and ‘ritual’ experiences within the sacred compounds. The discourse will be articulated, as we shall see in the first section, on

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\(^{162}\) Heidegger claims that the Greek word \(\text{techne}\) meant a creative “unveiling” (Entbergen) of truths and it belonged to poiesis, that is to say the “making” (Norberg-Schulz 1979: 15).

\(^{163}\) Our term Kunst [German word meaning ‘art’] derives from Kennen which means: to know about a thing and about its making. Therefore, \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\eta\) and art do not mean a ‘making’, rather a mode of knowing. Yet, this
the theoretical premises that a focus on devotees' religious experiences cannot be extrapolated from the architectural setting in which they take place. Rather, I shall be following the Gadamerian theoretical formulation of the notion of play (developed in the next chapter) as it has been elaborated by Jones and apply it to devotees' experience of sacred architecture. However, as a premise, I intend the encounter with the sacred architecture of the cumbessias villages as a hermeneutical game: that is to say that devotees' experience of and within these sacred places should primarily be considered as a dialogue, an experience of comprehension and mutual exchange. As implicit in the Gadamerian metaphor of play, this dialogue presupposes a profound and serious engagement by the two 'players' in our case represented by the cumbessias villages and the devotees. It is this deep annual involvement of the two aforementioned parts that permits them, as we shall see in the next conclusive chapter, to reframe their own identities and prospect a renewed horizon of meanings.

In the remaining sections, the focus will first be placed on the historical development of the Marian cult in Sardinia and subsequently spreading of devotion to this figure. There will be highlighted past and present modalities of relations between heterodox expressions of popular religiosity and more orthodox devotional practices following the canons of the Church.

I will subsequently concentrate on the concrete experiences of interaction between devotees and sacred compounds. With this regard, my concern for a whole set of devotional expressions and ritual events such as processions, masses, miracles, ex votos, and legends, is formulated on Jones' notion of 'allurement and coercion'. Within the foregoing hermeneutical dialogue between devotees and the cumbessias villages, allurement is the invitation or the magnetism, that the work of sacred architecture exercises on devotees spurring them to engage in a dialogue with it. This

knowing process has for the Greeks the fundamental trait of an unveiling... what is in front of us'
appeal takes the form of something familiar: indeed, I shall be arguing that it is precisely those aforementioned legends, masses, and history of miracles, that exercises this alluring pull on devotees fulfilling their expectations. At the same time, however, they also partake of the ‘coercive’ power inherent in each artistic (including that with religious architecture) experience which appeals for a redefinition of oneself. On these premises, it will be argued how the very idea and practice of pilgrimage has undergone a significant change throughout the last decades: previously conceived as an earthly as well as a religious/spiritual communal dimension, pilgrimage has progressively distanced those meanings, becoming today a rather individualised practice, carried out for the sole spiritual purpose.

6.1 Religious architecture and devotees’ expectations: theoretical premises to a hermeneutical inter-play

Architecture, as a performative monumental art is then an event, a process of cognisance and, as such, historically bound. The author and the interpreter are both hermeneutical engagements, i.e., processes of interpretation bringing forth a certain truth. My own truth, the world I carry with me, made up of my cultural background, personal history, traditions, pre-understandings and pre-suppositions, reveals its finiteness (as the sole creator of meaning) and the need for the engagement to be intended as eminently relational. From the encounter of another individual with the work of art, many other meanings will be brought to light exactly because a new world of pre-understandings is now engaged in the relationship.

The work of art and especially sacred architecture (as my primary concern) is an autonomous world: it is not closed but is rather relational and eventful: ‘[it] hold[s] within [it] inexhaustible reservoirs of ontological possibility’ (Linge, D.E., (Heidegger 2000: 27).
Introduction to *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Trans. and ed. Linge, D.E., Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1976: 102. Quoted by Jones 2000: 23). Being the truth it embodies truer than reality itself, the relational performative/artistic act (of art and therefore architecture) becomes a cognitive act for the artist/beholder. Yet, the essential operative modality of art entails the parts, i.e., the work of art/sacred architecture and the author/beholder to be themselves engaged in a relationship, to come into play. In the event of this inter-play my own world relates to the work of art, my way of being relates to [knows/interprets] the work of art (and of a sacred architecture) way of being.

Neither the artist nor beholder/devotee dispose of the work of art, of that religious building. They do not dispose of its own truth; rather they just enable it to come out through/in their encounter. Yet, during the dialogue with the artist/beholder, the work of architecture ‘is brought back to reality, to the history of the individual [of the community of devotees] and the world’. The work of art ‘occurs’ because it ‘is inserted within our world’ (Vattimo, G., ‘Introduzione 1972, Postilla 1983’ to *Verità e Metodo*, by Gadamer, Hans-Georg, trans. Vattimo, G., Milano, Bompiani, 2000: xxxv, xxxix). Through its mediation and interplay with our world, the being of the reality of the work of art (and religious building) is incremented. Otherwise put, it is as if the work of art and its proper reality becomes richer, clearer. This happens because of the relationship, or conversation, the world of the work of art entertains with the world of the subject who is dwelling upon it, representing or contemplating it. In this way, the work of art and religious building become richer, clearer in the sense that it clarifies to itself what it really is. The increment of being the work of art achieves means that it apprehends something more about itself. The work of art soon reveals and shares its new meaning to the author/beholder. The author himself, together with future interpreters/beholders, will undergo the same process of
increment of being in future eventful encounters. Author/observer/interpreter will participate in the work of art or religious building ‘way of living’ (Vattimo 2000: xxxix); in its world they themselves let emerge.

Yet, both the author’s and the beholder’s way of living and relating to the world will undergo a profound challenge from the encounter/dialogue with the work of art, because this dialogue/event entails a deep involvement in what it has been termed a ‘true experience and an experience of truth’ (2000: xxxvi). Gadamer (2000 [1962]), in fact, contends that within artistic experience the encounter with the work of art (for us sacred architecture) is something quite different from getting oneself lost in a world of dreams; it rather presupposes a re-adjustment of one’s own way of being in the world. Art recovers its lost value of knowing experience carrying within itself and leading to specific truths. The world of a work of art or religious architecture differs from that of those who engage in conversation with it, dwell in it. It is a true world from its origin because a work of art arises already inserted into a reality/context that it carries within it, transmuted in form. Norberg-Schulz (1979; 1996) has asserted that the truth of the world of architectural work of art as deriving from the event/process of ‘apprehension’ of human being in his encounter with given natural datum. Apprehension is itself derived from and inserted into the hermeneutical dimension of this encounter and dialogue ‘with the other, an other which comprehends[understands] me better than I do in relation to it’ (Vattimo 2000: xl). We shall see how the experience of art leads to a self-understanding.

The process of comprehension undergone between author/observer and religious work of architecture is a hermeneutical act. Yet, despite the belonging of these two subjects to quite different worlds not always engaged in dialogue, the conversation and comprehension between the two is still possible because of their co-belonging, i.e., their mutual sharing of parts of their own worlds. The heideggerian
premise contending the human being as a *Dasein*, i.e., a being-in[with]-the-world, in fact, reconciles the two worlds, that of beholder and that of the religious building. Reconciliation passes through the recognition of their mutual belonging within the same historical horizon. Devotees, beholders, author, we have seen everybody bringing forth their own horizons, historical, cultural and social backgrounds. In the event which is the encounter, the two worlds are shared and mutually created as far as the beholder carries with him his own world (i.e., carries his own pre-understandings, presuppositions, questions), itself partly determined by the work of religious architecture he is contemplating, dwelling, living (Vattimo 2000).

Beholders/devotees and religious architecture in which they dwell and live: these two subjects and their worlds are joined by a sort of familiarity which is manifested and exercised through beholders’ pre-understandings sharing the history of the work of architecture. This, in turn, allows beholders a major accessibility to the world of the work of art.164 Familiarity, however, does not entail an exhaustion of work of architecture’s possible meanings: this fact confirms the multiplicity and variety inherent in its world ready to be open by another interlocutor. From our encounter/dialogue with the sacred place it ‘comes to light what it is’ (Gadamer 2000 [1962]: 249). The reality opening itself in front of us is always just a partial accomplishment of certain expectations and meanings.

6.2 The alluring pull of the sacred places: the reasons for a dialogue

Every encounter or conversation between devotees and *cumbessias* villages is a mode and a moment/event of mutual appropriation, which in my examples may take multifarious forms: legends of foundation, stories of miracles, personal narratives

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164 Gadamer terms this process ‘fusion of horizons’ where the opinions of the ‘interpreter’ of a work of art and literature ‘are always involved in the re-enactment of the sense of a text’. This does not necessarily
specifically related to these places, religious rituals, processions, common beliefs. All these are special kinds of apprehensions, constitutive of either places or communities. How is this eventful conversation set in motion? In other words, why do people decide to go to a cumbessias village? What is in there that ‘allures’ them? In the following section I will concentrate on what I would term ‘ritual uses’ or religious experiences/interactions with people, the divine, and the place. They will be considered as other powerful alluring reasons themselves defined by, and defining, the notions of familiarity, identity, recognition.

6.2.1 Novena as a devotional practice: overview on the historical development of Marian cult in Sardinia

Referring to ‘Annunziata’, ‘Rimedio’, ‘S. Cosimo’ is, in devotees’ words, to refer either to the saint or to the cumbessias village. These two dimensions, spatial and devotional, are incredibly interwoven. Devotion to the Saints and to these places is, in our case, handed down within families, ‘from mother to child’ and, more at large, reinforced within communities (Christian, W.A. Jr., Person and God in a Spanish Valley, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1972: 72).  

In particular, the figure of Mary has been historically at the centre of both individual and communal devotional references and worship practices including novenas, prayers, processions, special masses and other acts of devotion. Five out of the six cumbessias villages, with which this thesis is concerned, are dedicated to Her figure patronising a specific village and relative community as a whole. The

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represent a limit or an imposition rather a more optimistic ‘opinion and possibility . . . helping a truer appropriation of what it is said in the work’ (2000 [1962]: 793).

165 ‘We have heard it from elders (sos mannos), elders themselves have heard it from elders, . . . so it is, a ladder!’ (Annunziata. Excerpt from interview).

various ‘advocations’\(^{167}\) that characterise the Virgin are likewise adopted in the naming of the sacred compounds. In this respect, the various degrees of particularity they present should be ascribed to either their strict responsiveness to the peculiarities of the natural locations in the landscape in which are inserted — e.g., Sauccu, should be read as Saint Mary of Elder because the site boasts a great quantity of this particular plant. They should otherwise stem from the most relevant stages of Mary’s life (so that we can reckon the Nativity of Our Lady or Immaculate Conception (\(Immacolata\)), Annunciation (\(Annunziata\)), Assumption (\(Assunta\)), etc.). Pinna (1995) analyses the phenomenon of the two-fold acculturation within Sardinia’s religious history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. He works on religious extra-ecclesiastical sources, including literati, geographers, soldiers, historians, travellers, etc. Specifically, he refers to the work of Domenech who, at the end of nineteenth-century Sardinia, recorded the religious popular practices of pilgrimages and novenas dedicated to the Virgin. These practices together with votive offerings, processions with adorned carts, manifestations of penance, etc., as discussed by the extra-ecclesiastical sources, were included into the category of ‘superstition’ this being a ‘linguistic seal impressing a character of alterity and inferiority to a whole set of practices and beliefs not consistent with the authors’ own religious parameters’.\(^{168}\)

The Marian cult, the origin of which can be traced back to the early stages of Eastern Christianity, spread in Sardinia through the first Greek monastic orders during the Byzantine domination on the island (A.D. 534–c.900).\(^{169}\) Yet, historical

\(^{167}\) I have borrowed this term (in Spanish \(advocacion\)) from Christian (1972: 47) who defines it as ‘a variant form of a divine figure’.

\(^{168}\) See Piras 1958; 1961: 44. Moreover, in relation to the aforementioned relationship between a sacred compound and the natural landscape Christian, when writing about the uniqueness of Spanish shrines and the unique advocations given to the Virgin to whom the shrines are dedicated, refers to them as ‘located images’. We only partly subscribe this formulation recognising its limit when applied to the cumbessias villages whose ‘placial’ dimension is a constituent part of ‘the ‘images’ (1972: 46).

\(^{169}\) The first sign of an oriental monastic tradition on the island dates back to the second half of the sixth century, precisely soon after the defeat of Vandals by Belisario in A.D. 534. Recognised as ‘basilians’ by the Roman Curia in the eleventh century, which wanted to distinguish them by the monks following the Latin
tradition contends that the first image of the Virgin and relative spreading of the Greek monasticism within islander Church should be somehow anticipated: it supposedly began thanks to the Sardinian Bishops, Eusebio and Lucifero, exiled to Asia Minor. Particularly Eusebio (A.D. c. 283–384), Bishop of Vercelli, is said to have taken with him three statues of the Black Virgin from Palestine. One of them has been kept in Cagliari while the others have been destined to two Piedmont sanctuaries, Oropa and Crea.\(^{170}\) The Byzantine domination introduced the worship to what Munoz (1905) has termed ‘types’ of the Virgin such as the Virgin of Odighetria. Many other saints derived from the Greek Menology, i.e., the gathering of saint’s biographies, were worshipped in the island: among them our Saints Cosma and Damiano, S. Michele Arcangelo, S. Barbara, S. Costantino, S. Sofia, S. Elena. The veneration of these saints derived from Mary’s life were themselves introduced in the West and in Sardinia from the Christian Orient where they were already part of liturgical festivities.\(^{171}\) The religious colonial panorama of medieval Sardinia has been subsequently characterised by the introduction on the island of the Latin rule from the early tenth century: the rule was spread by the Benedictine and Mendicant monastic orders mainly ruled by the Pisan influence on the island, so determining the spread of numerous churches specifically dedicated to Mary. A further development of the Marian cult on the island was subsequent to the arrival of the Aragonese domination (1324–1478) and the influence it determined in various respects: to them it is ascribed the introduction of other devotions such as Monserrat, Rimedio, Pilar, etc. (Piras 1961: 177). The monastic order of the ‘Sons of S. Francis’ in conjunction with

\[^{170}\text{(Piras 1961: 23–29). From other historical sources it is supposedly the presence on the island since the fifth century of a Greek monastic centre, as ‘it could not be otherwise since the Benedictine order was not yet founded’. On the spreading of the Greek Byzantine culture in Sardinia and the relevance of its influence on Sardinian religious and popular traditions see Cherchi Paba 1962: 6). For a wider religious-historical perspective from Byzantine dominion onwards see also Argiolas (1979); Filia (1909); Boscolo (1978); Carta Raspi (1953); Casula (1994); Pinna (1989); (1995); Piras (1966).}\]
the Spanish colonisation (1479–1720) which brought the title of Nuestra Señora, i.e., ‘Our Lady’ to those already known, stimulated the construction of new churches and promoted the devotion to the Virgin. It is under the Spanish colonisation that new venerations were added (to those already known). From the second half of the fifteenth century, venerations stopped making reference to local natural peculiarities (1961: 194).

Despite Her being Theotókos, i.e., the Mother of God\textsuperscript{172} and the Mother of the Church and despite the Church’s official declaration remarking the existence of just One Mary, the Virgin seems to abandon this universal title. She now embraces a more suitable and well-specified dimensions, spatial and devotional within the communities of devotees, being near to their human vicissitudes for whom She is somehow different in each of Her own transmutations in form. Munoz in his Iconografia della Madonna. Studio delle rappresentazioni della Vergine nei monumenti artistici d’Oriente e d’Occidente, Firenze, Alfani e Venturi, 1905, remarks how the same iconography of the Mother of Christ changed greatly throughout the whole history of Her artistic representation. From the hieratic figure derived from a primeval Byzantine definition, depicting a Virgin deprived of feelings and emotions, a purely divine presence (this character enhanced by the neutral pictorial background) there has been a challenge towards a Medieval more humanised divine figure to whom address invocations and sing laude of love and glory. She is now represented in the delicate moments of a woman, while feeding Her divine Son, showing to and through Him, Her nearness also physical to human kind. She is no longer addressed as a ‘Queen of Heavens’ sitting on a distant throne, rather

\textsuperscript{171} The Basilica dedicated to Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome is the first Western church specifically dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Spada 1994: 101).
\textsuperscript{172} The fundamental proclamation of the Marian dogma of the Virgin as Theotókos dates back to the Council of Efeso (A.D. 431) (Piras 1966: 68). On the numerous advocations of the Virgin with particular reference to those used in Sardinia see Piras (1958) and Spada (1994).
Her role is of mediation between the divine and mortals; Hers is the role of the 
Mother of mortals. She protects, recovers, embraces, and shares sorrows. Started on 
the wake of Mediaeval monastic orders, such changes in the conception of the Virgin 
were consistent with a change in invocations, as seen within the evolution of 
Sardinian Marian cult. The iconography of Mary's main figures is derived from past 
pictorial elaboration also consistent with most of the present-day statues of the 
Virgin, so that we could see the 'Immaculate Conception' represented as the Virgin 
treading a snake with Her feet and wearing a crown, the Annunciation whose figure 
is standing in an act of devotion, the Assumption having the figure laying in a 

What is certainly unusual in the statues representing the Virgin in all five of 
the cumbessias villages regarding their semblance, is that each statue has its own 
original dimension, expression of face, material in which it has been carved, clothes it 
wears. Each Mary is known for Her particular character, this fact having a decisive 
influence on devotees' responses and apprehensions: '... Her face is always angry'. 
... '[She looks at you] with haughtiness, like a Sardinian woman, with a sort of 
austere behaviour ... yes, it is Her expression but you should consider how you feel 
inside yourself, because She mirrors what you have inside'.173

6.2.2 Devotees' maps of legendary locations

The affection communities feel for their own cumbessias villages does not prevent 
them from extending part of that feeling to another place/saint, or even more than 
one. A sort of geography of relationships exists, that is structured in, and structures, a 
great number of devotional interchanges among different cumbessias villages with 
some of them, due to their alluring power, representing the nodal points of these
intersections. Moreover, this sort of map is sustained by traditional legends, reinforcing the creation of this virtual territory. The official legend (Diana, F., *Leggende di fondazione dei santuari nella tradizione e nella religiosità popolare*, Dolianova, Grafica del Parteolla, 1997: 39) of the ‘three evangelic Maries’, stemmed from the popular elaboration around the well-known figure of Mary Magdalene, into whom those of ‘Mary of Magdala’, ‘Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and the anonymous sinner woman weeping at the foot of the Nazarene during a feast given by Simon the Pharisee’ converge. More popular versions present other personages within the legend, among whom the sole Virgin of Gonare and S. Barbara remain more or less a fixed presence. They were supposed to be sisters who, after a quarrel between themselves decided to follow different paths each leading to a specific point within the inland territory so that they could not see each other any more: the Virgin of Gonare decided to go on top of a mountain, S. Barbara went to Olzai, and the third personage usually occupied the bottom of a valley. With this regard, in fact, I have gathered various versions of the legend all including a different third element not always ‘a’ Mary, e.g., The Virgin of Gonare, S. Barbara of Olzai, and The Virgin of Martyrs in Fonni; The Virgin of Gonare, S. Barbara of Olzai, and S. Paolo in Monti; The Virgin of Gonare, the Annunziata of Bitti, and S. Barbara of Olzai, etc.

Moreover, devotees tend to adjust the legend using their own saint to replace the missing third person.

[... what have you heard about the Three Marys?] The Virgin of Gonare, S. Barbara of Olzai and’... ‘wasn’t Our Lady of Carmel?’ ... ‘no, [the Virgin] of Sinne! ... in Orotelli they say ‘of Sinne’. [the church is] in the plain of Ottana, between Ottana and Orotelli. ... The Virgin stopped there on Her way to Gonare ... in fact, these cumbessias villages Olzai, Gonare and Orotelli are positioned in this way [using three fingers to indicate three points in the territory] (70 and 65 year old women); [the Virgin of Sinne and S. Barbara of Olzai] had a quarrel with the Virgin of Gonare because S. Barbara wanted to stay on the highest mountain of Olzai, but the Virgin of Gonare said “where I put you, nobody will see you unless they go there specially”;

173 *Annunziata*. Excerpts from interviews.
[another version where the Virgin of Gonare says] ‘Barbara of Olzai, you’ll never see me, if you don’t come to me, you’ll never see me (73 year old woman).'

Apart from the inherent relevance this story entails in relation to the so-termed ‘legends of foundation', it witnesses a sort of underlying spatial [dia]logic, unifying communities sometimes far distant from each other, a communal logic at work in the management of the sacred, an alternative level of communication among different communities, a shared system of symbols at once inhering and addressing topology and devotion. It is true, in fact, that the six communities each with its own specific reference either devotional or topological to a particular cumbessias village (intended as a dialogical spatial-devotional unit), are united in, themselves forming the geographical network of relationships. Particularly Gonare stands at the centre of this network, so that devotees from distant villages have already gone to visit or long to do so at least once in their lives. Moreover, the communication or the link devotees establish with other cumbessias villages can be said to work at a (reinterpreted) sub-liminal level, i.e., a relation arising on this side of the threshold (limen), not outside but while staying inside of our own community. Mostly women, in fact, are perfectly aware of the religious festivities within the liturgical calendar pertaining to many cumbessias villages spread within a more or less vast territory so that theirs is a mental and sentimental link established with that saint/place while being at home.

174 (S. Cosimo. Excerpts from interviews). The legend tells the truth: Gonare, in fact, can be seen from great distances and from the top of Gonare there is very wide view, from the east right over to the west coast. Yet, Gonare is not visible from the nearby village of Olzai!

175 On the meaning of ‘legends of foundation’ see note 45 in Chapter 2.

176 Christian (1972: 44) adopts the formulation ‘territory of grace’ to refer to the area of pertinence, diffusion, and ‘benevolent’ influence of a specific saint.

177 I am referring to distances such as those between Gonare (Orani/Sarule) and S. Paolo (Monti), from Rimedio (Orosei) to S. Cosimo (Mamoiada), from Annunziata (Bitti) to Gonare (Orani/Sarule), etc.
6.2.3 Novena as an eventful devotional chronotope\textsuperscript{178}: alluring devotion

\ldots A dwelling place must possess a certain felt familiarity, which normally arises from reoccupation itself. That to which one returns is increasingly inhabited by the spirit of the \textit{familiaris}, the indwelling god of inhabitation; \ldots As signified by the German \textit{bei} and the French \textit{chez}, I then feel familiar with being in its ambience. I feel that I belong there \ldots because I am so much with the place—and it is so much with me that we seem to belong to each other (Casey 1993: 116, 128).

The religious moment of a novena represents the starting point of the dialogue between devotees and \textit{cumbessias} villages. The dialogue is that of children and adults together since, as already noted, devotion is handed down from mother to child, from community to individuals: ‘it is a tradition we know from our ancestors because as children we would come here with our parents’; ‘I am attached [to this place] maybe because I’ve been coming here since I was a child and at home I have always known the tradition of the Virgin of \textit{Annunziata} . . . it was a sense of belonging . . . also my grandparents felt a deeper feeling [for this Virgin than for other saints]’.\textsuperscript{179}

The dialogue is set in motion with promises, requests of favours, thanksgivings: for health and work related problems, peace within the family, and simply for mere devotion. ‘I can’t explain it, I’ve been always attracted without making any promises’.\textsuperscript{180}

Among these, health problems certainly still represent the prevailing reason for which people attend a novena, although since the Second World War, the slow

\textsuperscript{178} M. Bachtin (1981: 84) has borrowed the mathematical notion of \textit{chronotope}, literally ‘timespace’, directly from its original application within Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and applied it to literature. The Bachtinian formulation is of a ‘literary chronotope’. The author reformulates the notion now intended as ‘place’ of the fusion of spatial and temporal indicators into ‘one carefully thought-out, concrete whole’. We apply this concept to our own idea of sacred place, where space thickens, and ‘becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history’. (Bachtin 1981: 84. Also in M. Bachtin, \textit{Estetica e Romanzo}, 1997: 231–232). The same concept of \textit{novena} is in our opinion a chronotope, an expression of the fusion of time and space, at least for Sardinian people. Implicitly temporal in its essence, it nevertheless sends back to its immediate spatial character, being the two dimensions inextricably intertwined. The participation in a novena, in fact, entails the praying for nine days and do it in a certain sacred place. In my instances the same formulation of the question ‘which \textit{novena} are you following?’ includes an inherent reference to another underlying question: ‘in which \textit{place} are you going to for the \textit{novena}?’ We shall see how the historicity intrinsic in the novena as an event, is inevitably placed. The explicit temporality of the term \textit{novena} sends one straight back to its place.

\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Annunziata}. 65 and 67 year old women. Excerpt from interviews.

\textsuperscript{180} (\textit{Annunziata}. Excerpt from interview). Gallini (1971: 34) refers to a decrease in the penitential character of a novena since the early 1960s.
improvement in the quality of life has determined a progressive lowering of this type of devotees’ request. Once the divine favour is granted, a devotee usually returns annually to give thanks and praise the Saint for it; the mechanism of devotion and affection for the saint in this case works calling devotees for many years, usually for their whole lives: . . . ‘every year mum found the excuse to promise . . . [she has come] for 32 years . . . with a few interruptions because of my father’s illness . . . but anyway, for 32 years . . . [she said] ‘I owe it to Her to go, I owe it to Her to go’; ‘as long as I’m alive, and as long as I can, I’ll always come here’. If, for any reason, they have not had the chance to go to give thanks at least once, then, at their death, usually a daughter, or eventually a son, has to go to the cumbessias village in their place, to fulfil their parent’s obligations.

A novena touches the most personal and intimate cords of human life, the more personal and private ones. The request of favour is usually formulated individually by the devotee in a direct conversation with the Saint. The chronological and spatial mechanism of its subsequent development, however, are increasingly communal, from the experience of spending nine days with other people all sharing similar feelings and expectations to the religious ceremonies and daily moments and the shared agency underlying these acts. Devotees go beyond their individualistic intentions in a more subtle yet institutionalised way: ‘I’ve come here because this place was very dear to my mother, my father, my sister; very dear! When I heard it was rumoured that . . . nobody was coming [for the novena] then I said to my relatives . . . “I’m going, firstly because I have promised to do so, but also in order to attract other people”. . . I was hoping, and I said to myself “now, [through my

181 Annunziata. 65 and 69 year old women. Excerpt from interviews. The latter is a recurring phrase among devotees.
presence at the novena] I shall advertise the village to others myself. Theirs is a public service for the community, the Saint, and the cumbessias village.

Devotion is a patently female affair (Fig. 261–263): women are those who express the requests, who give thanks and praise to the saint, who decide to go to a cumbessias village, who instruct the newcomer, ‘now go to the church to see and greet the Virgin!’ Yet, despite the not always explicit, although great affection, men harbour for their saint, they do more than simply follow their women in their promises. They themselves promise, they themselves, especially widowed fathers, decide to go to a cumbessias village together with their daughters’ families:

One thing you notice here is the men’s faith . . . why, in Bitti do you see any of them going to the parish church? . . . here, especially if you go to evening mass, the altar is full . . . the men of the village all go there to attend the mass’ . . .; ‘we come from far away, we come here with devotion . . . and I don’t miss a Holy Communion here, while at home I never go to church, but here . . .; If I want to hear it, I listen to the mass at home from the loudspeaker and, from 10 a.m., [I listen to] the Pope’s mass on television; here I feel like going [to mass] because I’m here for that reason. . . .

Particularly in Annunziata, elders sustain the luring power of the Virgin: in their words ‘issa ti ponet s’elettricu’, i.e., She electrifies you, or ‘juchet sa calamita’, i.e., She has a magnet, meaning the lifelong attraction an individual, once having arrived at the village and having met the Virgin, starts feeling for this place and for Her.

In Annunziata a folktale confirms the attraction the Virgin exercises on people and the ‘need’ She has of them:

Here, they told us . . . [that] . . . when the priori went away from the village at the end of the novena. There, where there was a small balcony, they said they could see the Virgin who was sad, “the Virgin’s sad” [they said] and once arrived at the Craru Mannu [i.e., Wide View, toponym indicating a point on the slope of the mountain along the path leading to the cumbessias village, the sole point of the path from which it is possible to see the sacred compound] they could see Her waving at them’; ‘ from

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182 Rimedio. 65 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
183 Annunziata. Excerpt from interview.
184 Annunziata. 30 year old woman and 76 year old man. Excerpts from interviews. ‘When the church is full of people I usually sit behind the altar and from there I can see the devotion in the faces and many men whom I’ve seen crying as they approached the Virgin; . . . who were laying down flowers or candles, [they] looked the Virgin and wept . . . and, you know, these things are also very contagious.’ (Gonzare. Excerpt from interview).
the *Craru Mannu* they saw a lady ringing the bell and they said She was the Virgin. Look, my grandmother told me some stories like that. 

As already noticed, a shared religious-cultural ‘ground’ works defining the frontiers and communal horizon of expectations and questions with *[in]* which devotees approach and subsequently engage in conversation with their sacred compound and the Saint; allurement will be effective only in so far as the individual is religiously and culturally informed. The fore knowledge an individual carries partakes of a personal, meaningful history itself punctuated by experiences which are the sum of an ongoing multiplicity of apprehensions, translated in stories, legends, folktales:

I’m not a believer! . . . but it’s incredible, when you go into the church and see the statue of the Virgin, . . . those who are not from this village perhaps can’t feel what a person from *Bitti* can feel. . . . She exhudes, I don’t know, something strange . . . Perhaps listening to the stories told by elders about miracles at *Annunziata*: I’m profoundly involved with *Annunziata*: . . . just looking at Her picture I have with me . . . because when I left for the military service my mother in secret put it into my wallet and wrote onto it: ‘be trusting, love mum’ . . . you know I was going away from my own place, I was 19 years old and it wasn’t easy, so every time I opened the wallet . . . I could see the image of the Virgin together with my mum’s writing . . . just to look at it, it gave me the creeps, . . . so, you know, there are also personal things that remain.

Devotees and sacred images interact dynamically both making substantial contributions to their dialogue thanks to a deep engagement, a ‘to-and-fro exchange’ (Jones 2000: 45). Seen from this perspective, the alluring power works on both sides: people are attracted by the Saint while people, as devotees or possible future ones, represent an attraction for the Saints.

The conditions for the eventful occasion of dialogue are settled: ritual-architectural appropriation now develops precisely through ritual events and ceremonial occasions where dead ancestors revive, where miracles and folktales work as active mythic-historical and emotive backdrop for the ritual performances, where new gatherings are attained, where devotees are either audience or active.

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185 *Annunziata*. 81 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
performers, where new liturgical places are created, where men, women and children
all interact re-working spatial and devotional old meanings and constructing new
ones.

6.2.3.1 Prelude to the encounter: the changing dimension of pilgrimage

Dupront (1993) has remarked that pilgrimage is a journey towards the Other. It is the
first stage that leads to the encounter with the religious architecture of the cumbessias
villages. It is precisely at and within these places that devotees place their hopes for
the encounter with the “Alterity” of the sacred. The journey and effort of pilgrims
entail the need of something extraordinary, a sort of heterodoxy of daily life.

The relationship between devotees and sacred place starts before the novena
and it becomes substantial during the pilgrimage\(^\text{187}\): part of the allurement the place
of the arrival displays to the devotees entails the offering to them of a return to what
is primordial, to their lives without troubles and threats. For this allurement (and, as
we shall see, also for the coercion) to be more cogent the place of the encounter
should be distant from those troubles: the place must really be an ‘Other place’:

When I distance myself from my town, I start forgetting about my current problems”
. . . “the fact of leaving your town is already very important in itself; you completely
leave the context you live in . . . and you enter into a completely different atmosphere”;
“Annunziata is much dearer to those from Bitti, than Miracolo is . . . maybe because it’s
a long way away from Bitti . . . because here you go to Miracolo and then you simply
go back home, there you are completely outside of this world, it’s another world . . .
(Annunziata. 27 year old woman and 50 year old man. Excerpts from interviews).

Pilgrimage itself is an extraordinary act: within it time and space are somehow
suspended (Fig. 264-291). It is first during the temporal and spatial in-betweeness of
the pilgrimage that phenomena belonging to another suspended spatial and temporal

\(^{186}\) Annunziata. 39 year old man. Excerpt from interview.

\(^{187}\) The reader should be aware that concise descriptions of the complicated ritual passages inherent in many of the
pilgrimages we deal with in this section are due to the need not to exceed the number of words prescribed
for the writing of this thesis. Moreover, the importance given to the pilgrimage to Annunziata is not in any
sense indicative of a lack of concern for the other realities.
dimension occur: during the journey towards the cumbessias village of Annunziata, in fact, pilgrims share part of their path with the souls of the dead. Plenty of accounts about past and present pilgrimages describe these encounters.

The time and space of the departure seem rejected, at least for the time being: what remains are the spiritual, emotive and physical projections of the journey, which somehow already live within the time and space of the arrival. A pilgrimage certainly represents an extraordinary way of living the non-urban landscape not only because of the unknown path but also for the recognition along with it of special places (stopovers) that mark the path, and engender and boost the expectations of the pilgrims:

[the atmosphere you were referring to is already perceivable during the path?] ... when you pass beyond Mamone (the jail) you are 10 km away from Annunziata and you already feel it ... just talking about it gives me the creeps ... seriously, it's been an experience that has really touched me ... you can't even see the sanctuary during the journey because you leave Bitti during the night and arrive at Annunziata at dawn. You feel something special when you get there, there's something special in the air ... but you know, when you talk about these things, they kind of lose their meaning (39 year old man);

... For me it's a very different experience because I never used to go to the country ... and it is an occasion for me to go ... you can talk to people you've never talked to before; it's a way to meet people ... you know what happens after you pass beyond Mamone? You can't wait to see the view of Annunziata: 'we should see it in a minute' ... you become anxious about it; you look at the landscape, and appreciate it but, I don't know ... it doesn't give you the same ... the fact is that you are always thinking that you're going to the Annunziata and you'll see the Virgin; ... (30 year old woman) there are a lot of narrow paths; you arrive at a point where you can see the valley and, in my opinion, that's the moment of peace, when you can say 'now I can die happy', because in those moments you realise you're looking at something beautiful; before, when you couldn't see it yet, you could already hear the sounds of the village, the voices of the children. ... (30 year old woman) (Annunziata. Excerpts from interviews).

'Indeed “within each of art’s expressions something is announced, cognised and recognised. And linked to this recognition there is always something dismaying, a sort of amazement ... and fright ... for the very fact that something similar has happened and that man has achieved this goal” ’(H.G. Gadamer, Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung (1964–78), in Gesammelte Werke, 10 vols, J.B.C. Mohr, Tübingen, 1985–95: 155. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 122).
Along the journey to our cumbessias villages there are just a few places from which the pilgrims may see for the first time the places they are yearning for: they are montjoies\textsuperscript{188} or places where the pilgrims receive the anticipatory joy of the freedom from the pain of the journey and of their lives. That view is the prelude to the end of suffering and the accomplishment of one’s own expectations. That is also the first stage of the encounter with the sacred place, there where the sacred place begins at least visually:

[W]e were coming by car, me and my daughter and we were there above at that hairpin bend called su Craru mannus\textsuperscript{189} my daughter said ‘we should see it after this bend’, ‘but I couldn’t see it’, I said . . . and all of a sudden I said to her ‘[Annunziata] there it is!’ She said ‘it’s just the desire you have to see it that makes you say this’. ‘No, I’ve seen it, I swear’. Every year it’s the same thing, I get goose-bumps . . . it makes my heart thump . . . I don’t know where these feelings come from, they’re strange sensations, especially if I think that I’d already been here when I was a child . . . but now I think about this moment the whole year, it’s a wonderful emotion (Annunziata. 65 year old woman. Excerpt from interview).

It is also the inherent bodily effort of the march that engraves and translates the aforementioned alluring pull into a physical alluring pull: walking along difficult paths entails in fact a bodily effort, a spatial apprehension and spiritual apprenticeship: the special place that is the pilgrimage route is somehow conquered by the pilgrims’ bodies. Along the path the pilgrims are also apprenticed to the significance of a sacred journey, the meaning of a spiritual and psychical commitment. The pilgrimage is a mere prelude to what I have been arguing are the processes of self-understanding and reformulation of self that devotees experience in their encounter/dialogue with the otherness inherent in the sacred place. With this regard, Dupront (1993: 47–48) has remarkably argued that ‘in the classical meaning peregrinus [pilgrim] is the stranger, a person coming from another land . . . for the aim of the pilgrim as is revealed by the name he bears, fundamentally consists of self-

\textsuperscript{188} I have borrowed this term from Dupront (1993: 45–46) who uses it to refer to those peaks along the route of a pilgrimage from which the pilgrims may see the aim of their efforts, that is, the sacred place at the end of their journey.
experiencing himself as different throughout his journey. He thus discovers within himself a stranger he never thought he was, because he had always been limited within the boundaries of his daily life'. The pilgrim experiences the encounter with the Otherness of the sacred, of the path, of the other people with whom he or she is sharing the journey: his concentration on himself, his pains, sorrows, threats, and hopes do not prevent him to close his world to the Others: to experience the Other can already be intended as a journey, a pilgrimage: ‘Gadamer considers as very important the idea of experience, *Erfahrung*. The German word *Erfahrung* is related to the notion of journey, *fahren* and entails a change’ (Vattimo 1996: 2. Emphasis added). The pilgrimage is then the metaphorai and experience of change: how can it be otherwise? How can we talk to strangers, see new landscapes, listen to other discourses, share hopes and despairs, and then remain the same?

Generally speaking, among our *cumbessias* villages pilgrimages have somehow changed their meaning over time: up until 40, 50 years ago, in fact, the concept of a pilgrimage was rather that of a religious procession. In the majority of villages this long journey from the town to the sacred place was actually conceived in relation to the moving of goods needed by the pilgrims: they moved there essentially on foot, horse and cart and moved just the first and the last day of the novena. People used to move in large groups, each carrying his or her own food provisions for the nine days, while the carts brought other food, and mattresses.

When referring to the early 1900s, devotees used to say ‘*we came here by*’ . . . There is a very rare use of the word pilgrimage. I am then forced to admit that it is, at least when used in reference to that specific period, a borrowed word. Significant in this respect, change has been registered throughout the last few decades: pilgrimage is a word that is now used to encompass the reality of those people who, despite

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189 See section 6.2.3
having a car, make a conscious choice to move to the villages on foot, solely for religious purposes. To deny the existence of pilgrimage as essentially and exclusively a religious practice, does not imply the denial of other forms of pilgrimages bearing this specific intention which existed and still exists although partially changed among our realities. These pilgrimages were, and still are, organised by groups of women who decide to go to the villages to attend just one mass and go back home the same evening. Physically they are incredibly demanding. They could, and still are, done every day during the novena or, in the simpler cases, a few times a week. Some informants in Gonare told me about ‘the fifteen Saturdays’ (sos bindichi sapados) a practice entailing a pilgrimage from the villages of Orani and Sarule to Gonare for fifteen consecutive Saturdays, dedicated to the Virgin. This practice, valid until just a few years ago, was carried out by groups of women. Nowadays, these kinds of daily pilgrimages are accomplished through the use of cars or buses: men and women, singularly and in small groups attend the masses, one or more times during the novena. Yet, daily pilgrimages on foot are still very frequent (Fig. 292-294), as is the case of Gonare when, during the novena, groups of young men and women arrive early at the village and knock at the door of the pilgrims on novena. They ask for a breakfast of coffee and milk. Yet, many of the pilgrims are then going back with some friends who arrive by car at the village to pick them up.

Ritual pilgrimages (probably their rituality is their strength) still resist the aggressive lure of motorization as in the case of Sauccu: in this case the journey still prescribes the movement of part of the community divided in two separate groups on the basis of a defined schedule with ritual circumambulations of the sacred places while carrying the statue of the Virgin today, as fifty years ago. The specificity of performative codes is also described in reference to past ritual ‘penance’ pilgrimages: walking barefoot and with their hair untied, women could walk the final trail of the
path to the church by walking on their knees and crawling with their tongues along the ground. Nowadays, it is rare to find such extreme examples of penitential pilgrimages.

The picture I have so far sketched has shown how present-day pilgrimages have progressively acquired a more individualised dimension: until the early 1960s they were intended as collective movements towards the Other. The Other was the sacredness of the places; yet, the encounter with the Others triggered off the conversational (with) their inner selves, prelude to the future play once within the cumbessias village. The transience of a community in movement has been superseded by the ephemeral movement of the individual. This has modified the transmutations inherent in the pilgrimage: the majority of today’s pilgrimages do not prospect this change inherent in an outwards estranging movement and the entrance into another projection towards anOther reality, anOther self, anOther community. Pilgrims move back and forth by car, they do not interact with other pilgrims, they miss the aforementioned prelude to the Gadamerian ‘play’. With this regard, in the next Chapter it will be argued how it is precisely the lack of a deep involvement with the religious architecture by those devotees who do not live the nine days within the cumbessias villages that produces a failure in terms of self-understanding and transformation.

6.2.3.2 The Catholic Church and popular religiosity

Sardinian communities are profoundly religious: God, the Virgin and the Saints constitute the pivotal points around which personal and communal life converge.

From birth, through marriage, and until death, to festivities and daily practices, individual and communal lives are greatly imbued at various levels with a religious dimension forcibly bound to a whole set of rules stemming from the
hierarchically structured ‘organism’ of the Catholic Church. The Church works legitimising those stages of life, hence exercising a certain control over people and community’s moral conditions, rejecting those practices and systems of values—direct expression of a popular religiosity—that do not immediately correspond to an orthodox ideology. The practice of the novena, where the spirit of penance, Christian charity, and prayer constitute the essence of religious and spiritual dimensions, is nonetheless encompassed within a whole series of practices, behaviours, relational modalities, and independent systems of values directly deriving from a popular social and cultural elaboration. The novena provides the occasion of the encounter of these two dominions, that of the Church with its rules and its common representatives, i.e., the priests, and that of common people.

If, on the one hand, the event of a novena welcomes categories of people rejecting any form of religious practice, drawing together different social hierarchies and levels old frictions, on the other, it is a sort of ‘container’ in which other tensions are produced between religious and civil authority mirroring the actual tensions already existing within the village of origin.

The state of the relationships between Sardinian society and the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century, was characterised by the Church’s difficulty in having a hold on people. The figures of God and the Saints were at the centre of communal values and invocations. Yet, popular religiosity counterpoised its own expressions and modalities of faith deriving directly from its proper system of values and behaviours. The latter was in many respects distant from the moral precepts of the Church. At the basis of these tensions there were the rigid hierarchical and ideological structure of the Church and social and economic common values. These were organised on communal schemas where the family, the equal sharing of natural resources, and mutual exchanges formed the basis of those values. Despite the
resistance the lower stratum of people offered to the Church, the latter could always count on support for its hegemonic centripetal power from a small part of privileged people for whom ecclesiastical ceremonies were considered as means of legitimisation and continuation of their local power. Villages alternated, in fact, the power of the priest with that of these dignitaries usually doctors, lawyers, landowners, teachers, and chairmen. Gallini (1971; 1978) remarked how gender roles together with class constituted the relevant criteria conditioning the relationship between people and the Catholic Church: whereas important religious ceremonies could distribute other privileges to high classes of dignitaries under the aegis of religious authority, the lower strata of population did not receive any special privileges.

This, in turn, relates to gender roles: mostly shepherds and peasants, in fact, men with the sole exception of the great summer festivities were not allowed to be present at the scheduled weekly appointments of the Catholic liturgy, rather it was a woman’s task. The Church as a religious institution and as a physical place, represented one of the points of authorised socialisation for women. Social control by the community over individuals, especially women, in fact, passed through the Church: puerperal stage meant for women their confinement within their house. Their first public appearance had to be in the church, so that there was the common saying ‘deppo andare a m’incresiare’, i.e., ‘I have to enter into the church’ meaning the restoration through the direct contact with the sacred edifice of a lost sanctity. This practice, up until the 1970s and also within major urban contexts, saw the Church purifying the unclean sexual intercourse and publicly legitimising its fruit, the newly born as an individual, yet not a Christian, being thus obtained with the sacrament of Baptism. Mourning served as be an effective means of social control particularly
over women: during a whole year or more, widows could break their domestic exile only to go to church, to the cemetery, or to work without the possibility to socialise.

Women were privileged subjects of religious and social control; yet, theirs was a major acceptance of the dominion exercised by the Church: residing within the village they personally lived a system of social rules in some way psychologically and culturally more acceptable. Women had, in fact, free access to a whole series of places which I could define as ‘domestic’: the courtyard they shared with others and the neighbourhoods where they could engage in various activities and conversations. Yet, these places could not grant them the access to ‘socially-valued information’ (Booth 1999: 140). The weekly access to the church was for women a sort of freedom still subject to a social control, granting them the possibility to engage in different social exchanges and be part of the most public of the places of the village.

While the figure and authority of the priest could generally be interpreted by women as that of a simple man, a servant to God, male responses were completely different. Men offered resistance to the dominion of the Church and the power of priests. Resistance hinged on an ideological rejection of some of the fundamental precepts of the Catholic Church. Confession and repentance, in fact, did not suit a different moral code reckoning honour, vengeance and silence. Resistance hinged also on the psychological refusal to be subjected to the will to control from someone who men did not consider a real man (Gallini 1971: 169; 1978). Women had limited access to places of ‘socially-valued information’ while men, by contrast, were subject to a minor social control and could have access to more socially valuable information: public areas of male interaction were villages’ central plazas and bar where ‘business, politics . . . social [and religious] life were discussed’ (Booth 1999: 140). The issue of the sphere of influence of the priest into the life of the individuals and the community was here critically questioned; more, the priest was the object of
common derision, his figure (either highly respected by the people or object of sarcasm) was the subject of satirical compositions (Gallini 1971: 169). The plaza, privileged place of male dominion, and the church, where the priest exercised his own authority: social, cultural, and jurisdictional autonomous places were frequently facing each other within the urban arrangement of the villages.

Such forms of latent resistance and public dispute have been maintained unaltered throughout the whole last century either within the reality of the village or during the novenas reaching sometimes the level of a real protest as it happened in Gonare: in 1958, the simulacrum of the Virgin of Gonare was taken on pilgrimage in all the 37 parishes of the diocese of Nuoro. On the 25th March of the same year the Bishop Melas announced the imminent coronation of the Virgin to be held at the church of The Virgin of Grace in Nuoro at the end of the pilgrimage. The announcement provoked a popular revolution against the decision of the Bishop to proceed with this important ceremony depriving the respective communities of Sarule and Orani of their own 'Virgin'. People strongly maintained She should have been crowned in Her sanctuary, Gonare. The immediate intervention of the two villages of Orani and Sarule, against this 'abuse of power', stopped the simulacrum from continuing the pilgrimage to the village of Olzai. Adults, elders, and children all occupied the plaza in front of the church of Sarule where the Virgin was, blocking access to the statue. The crowd tried to reach it, despite the launching of tear gas by the police who garrisoned the area: the Virgin was subsequently taken on procession along the streets of Sarule, then loaded onto a van and brought to the church of Gonare where the lighting of a bonfire signalled the conclusion of the operation.\(^{190}\)

Popular outcry represented a valuable way the community as a whole had, to protest against abuse by the ecclesiastical authority. The latter in turn has always
mediated in order to level the tensions, maintain and eventually reform a certain consent. The centripetal power I have mentioned to define the will of the Church to determine and control social dynamics, moral values and behavioural codes within communities is also useful for us to refer to its ‘cultural hegemony’ (Gallini 1978). Until the first half of the 1960s gender spatial segregation together with high rates of illiteracy characterising lower class women constituted favourable premises for the Church to operate a massive research of consent.190 The imbalance between men and women’s possibilities of access to socially valuable information was reinforced by men’s access to other informational sources when needed by their works while women continued to be bound to their household economy sharing information with neighbours and with men. Between the 1950s and 1960s the scenario was somewhat changed: it is recorded (1971: 150–156) the presence of a more balanced rate of literate men and women, the access by the latter to more social information through the spread of radio and the first television and the effort, especially by young women, to keep up with a changing society.

Consent and mediation eminently operated through women to arrive to other levels of society: mainly the family, neighbourhoods, community. They were recognised by the Church as inclined and, at a certain point, willing to extend their social relations outside of the domestic realm, thus enlarging their spatial sphere of competence from the neighbourhood to the more public ‘church’, becoming themselves ‘public’ figures.192 The modalities the Church adopted for the reaching of consent are still somehow present: women were asked to be responsible for the

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191 It should be acknowledged that I use the term ‘illiteracy’ as done by Gallini (1978), ‘illiteracy’, both for men and women, is here formulated in relation to the dominant, mainland Italian culture.
192 Dr. Zene has reminded me that in many pastoral villages, while men were confined to the sphere of shepherding, women would take charge of the ‘civil society’ sphere. Women interacted with the priest, teachers, doctors, and, at a higher level, with hospital doctors, the judiciary system, police, etc. Moreover, the choice for graduate studies in a family world favoured daughters, rather than sons, who would follow the father’s activity as a shepherd (personal communication).
maintenance of the church, its furniture and sacred paraphernalia. Nowadays, many women still manage the church under the supervision of the priest, arranging the altar flowers, and cleaning the church and the sacristy; others work privately for the priest, cleaning his house, cooking, assisting him, etc., and there are those who attend to more important social, educational tasks such as the catechism of children.

Women were also called upon to become members of religious congregations in charge of a particular Saint and organisational aspects relative to religious festival: ‘On the occasion of many festivities in the parish church, the female religious associations, pass walking in a line in front of the Cross’.\textsuperscript{193} Sometimes being themselves the promoters of newer congregations, women pass through a proper noviciate from a very young age. In Orani many of the women are affiliated to the congregation of the Franciscans.\textsuperscript{194} Such congregations could guarantee the women a certain public honour and social respectability given the noble tasks and more noble destination of their acts.

The mediator power of women is exercised between the religious authority and the community, between the religious authority and men. Masses were and still are means of communication where the message conveyed is for women to be given to their men: if the former are in charge of the management of the church and extra-liturgical questions, the latter are supposedly given the right to manage part of the property of the church and the economy of the whole community. Men, in fact, collect the money needed to accomplish some works to be done in the church, but they are always under the supervision and authority of the priest. Their relationships with the church have been characterised not by a still veneration but rather by a special dynamism, a service for the community and for the Saint. This dimension is

\textsuperscript{193} Tore, G., \textit{Tradizione e modernità a Tonara in un’inchiesta condotta nel 1928 da Giuseppe Tore}, Tonara, Comune di Tonara, 1995: 139.

\textsuperscript{194} Founded by \textit{S. Francesco of Assisi}, the congregation is divided into three orders: monks, nuns, and married.
the same we would encounter among great religious festivals, the same encountered among the priorati for the novenas although these organisations are much more structurally articulated and independent. Yet, despite the greater organisational autonomy these groups have achieved throughout a few centuries, the boundary between religious power and civil male associations still presents many points of contact; still, there is a certain measure of control of the civil activities by the priest, thus causing other frictions. In S. Cosimo the religious authority tended to interfere into questions pertaining to civil organisation:

Today is the day dedicated to ill people. A few days ago a big box was assembled and positioned on the right side of the plaza near the church... men and women of the committee are working to prepare the box for this afternoon’s mass... They are also preparing the altar... they bring a sort of white canopy protecting a wooden table from the sunlight. This will be the altar. It starts a controversy. The point is that the priest does not want the committee to set a big red satin band with which the latter wants to hide a promotional claim on the canopy, recycled from other occasions. For him the red band is an uncalled-for thing, more than the claim it is supposed to hide... it can be clearly seen how the priest has an almost total control of what happens in this place... and it is not over yet... I have heard of many voices of unsatisfied devotees, as [hers] who works in the kitchen. They say that the intent of the priest is that of separating with more emphasis the religious from the festive element, the word of God from the joyful act that accompanies it.195

The novena is conceived as a special religious moment, an occasion of convergence of social differences and various powers no longer contrasted but rather accepted and somehow confirmed: yet, as already noted, a novena can be the stage of the prosecution of old tensions among the actors of the rite. The expression of the power of the Church has found other moments to contrast that of the civil committees in charge of organizing the festive portion of the novena. In many instances it regarded the control of the ceremonial spaces: at the village of Miracolo, the priest disposed moving the festal activities such as dances and concerts to the plaza of the nearby village of Bitti, to which the Miracolo belongs.

195 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from field notes.
Despite the presence of continuous tension between religious and civil power, between the people and the priest, the novena still remains a moment of gathering and great communion realised under the patronage of the Saint: rites, liturgical ceremonies, sermons, votive offerings, devotional chants become ‘vehicles of culture’; through them [the Church] has effectively tried to explain the dogmas to the masses, to induce them to feel repugnance for vice, and to provide an easily accessible moral teaching’.\textsuperscript{196} They are also important mediators of the tensions occasionally running throughout the event of the novena.

The increased level of literacy of younger generations that followed the great social and economic changes during the Sardinia of the 1950s and 1970s, the slow modernisation together with a major accessibility to valuable sources of social information especially by lower class women, and the decrease of social control have certainly produced major changes in terms of social awareness, bringing new critical instruments to be used in the assessment of the power of religious authority and its cultural hegemony. Women of all ages continue to be present at weekly masses, strong in their faith always nurtured by a familiar background of ‘women of church’ and respect for the principal precepts of Catholicism; the church has patently become their realm, religious-educational and social services have been incremented, likewise the affiliations to religious congregations. This level of involvement is a deliberate choice done by literate women who continue to recognise the Church as a point of reference of personal, familial and communal lives. Yet, a certain disappointment and criticism comes from them in relation to the priests’ management of the religious celebrations within their communities. Their constant presence and profound cognisance of liturgical issues, in fact, offers some resistance to the management of

\textsuperscript{196} Dore, G., \textit{Gosos e Ternuras}, vol. 1, Nuoro, Istituto Superiore Regionale Etnografico, 1983: IV–XI. Although the author is specifically referring to the liturgical devotional chants, we consider all the elements as themselves responding to the process of acculturation exercised by the Church on to the masses.
religious matter's new courses sponsored by priests, such as the reluctance the latter manifested in continuing certain festal rituals together with the religious celebrations during the Holy Week, etc..

Men, in their turn, are definitely more inclined to adopt a critical standpoint about the Church and particularly about the power priests exercise from their privileged positions, judging inconsistent the subjects of their preaching and their actual way of living and acting. The majority of them continue to fail to turn up at weekly liturgical appointments, while preferring to converge on great religious festivals and especially novenas.

6.2.4 The daily rituals of the Novena: masses as stationary ritual-architectural apprehensions

A novena is usually scheduled to contain three or more daily masses. To this regard, the liturgical programme of each of the *cumbessias* villages varies greatly: the first mass early in the morning between 6 and 8 a.m. mainly destined for devotees living in the village; one sometime before midday; the high mass at 6 p.m., usually followed by the recitation of the rosary by women only, and a final mass in the evening around 9 p.m. The high mass of the afternoon is called 'the mass of the novena'. It entails the office of the canonical mass soon followed by daily special readings done by the whole lay congregation together with the priest. The readings concern events of the Saint's life, special invocations to the Saint, expressions of special intentions by devotees in the wake of the Saint's example, prayers for protection, etc.\(^7\)

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Ferial time-table of religious celebrations.
8:00 a.m. Lauds, Holy Mass, Novena.
4:45 p.m. Rosary
5:15 p.m. Via Crucis
6:00 p.m. Holy Mass, Novena.
9:00 p.m. Holy Mass, Novena. Celebration for the Dead.

Festive time-table of religious celebrations.
celebration ends with the congregation singing the *gosos*, i.e., metrically defined religious-poetical compositions in Sardinian language, praising the life of Saints and their gestures, what Dore (1983: x) has aptly termed ‘the Bible and Catechism of poor’. *Gosos* constitute an essential part of the devotional dimension of a novena. For each Saint has been written a specific composition whose text is not a simple poetic commemoration of the Saint’s life and virtues but a recalling of historical and legendary events that led the saint to bind himself to a particular place.

The singing by the whole congregation is the moment of the liturgy in which devotees receive a great wealth of stimuli, either devotional or rich in imagery. That of the *gosos* is a powerful instigation for people to engage with others while returning to their true selves.

The high mass of the novena attracts outsiders who purposely go to the *cumbeissias* village for this event; the villagers, when possible, try to avoid that appointment, preferring to attend one of the other daily masses (Fig. 303–308).

Generally, two are the statues of the Saints: one, which is not accessible, is positioned above the altar, while another stands on a pedestal exposed to direct contact with the devotees.

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Holy Masses: 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Chaplain: Don Giuseppe Cugusi

Special Days:
Friday 10th: 4:00 p.m. Penitential celebration with individual confession; 6:00 p.m. Novena
Sunday 12th: Day of prayer for Peace.
Wednesday 15th: Day of Brotherhood. 11:00 a.m. Holy Mass celebrated by the priests of Bitti and women's Congregation from Bitti.
Thursday 16th: 6:00 p.m. Holy Mass celebrated by the Bishop Pietro Meloni
Friday 17th: Traditional torchlight procession
Saturday 18th: Arrival of riders.
Sunday 19th: Celebration of *Anunziata*. 11:00 a.m. Holy Mass accompanied by the choir ‘Oches de s’Amossata’, the Choral ‘S. Antonio’ of Lodè, and from the Choral ‘S. Giorgio’ of Bitti.
Tuesday 21st: 12:00 a.m. Holy Mass of Thanksgiving.
5:00 p.m. Departure to Bitti.

Since the 1950s, there has been an increased availability of means of transportation together with their progressive modernisation. This fact coincided with the impossibility for most people, mainly imputable to working reasons, to steadily reside within the cumbeissias village. These factors lead to a certain decrease of the number of presences by the middle-aged class. A tendency, amongst the ill elders, to attend just one mass of the novena has also been registered.

One of the morning masses frequently entails the saying of the special daily prayer of the novena so that villagers may leave the church’s space for the high mass of the evening, which has to accommodate numerous occasional devotees.
At the end of the celebration, Saints are given an offer of money collected within a specially designed wooden container positioned in front of or below the statue of the Saint, where people gather in admiration: they kiss Him or Her, kiss the robe of the Virgin, kneel in front of Her, admire the richness of the jewels given to Her for gratitude or requests of favours, kiss the face, hand, or foot of the Saint. Generally this is a moment characterised by a deep personal involvement, the emotion deriving from the direct encounter with the object of pilgrims’ own devotion, with problems and wishes: ‘you go to church, you sit there inside and it is as if you were conversing with Her, because it is precisely that, . . . there is a dialogue in there’ \(^{200}\) (Fig. 303–308).

Apart from the canonical celebrations, the full liturgical calendar of a novena includes the so-termed ‘special days’, particular celebrations recurring at each of the six cumbessias villages. These masses are generally celebrated by an important guest such as the Bishop or by a number of priests invited from other villages. Special days include penitential masses (conveying numerous priests for the office of Confession), masses for the peace, brotherhood, families, ill people. These events gather numerous devotees and represent the contingencies for the transformation of the whole cumbessias village into a liturgical space: pews are moved outside of the church whose internal space can accommodate up to more or less 100 people, devotees carry their own chairs (Fig. 309–312) with them, in order not to occupy the pews; the Saints are brought outside on their pedestals, the external plaza becomes the set for the mass celebration (Fig. 313–318). In Rimedio, for instance, a few years ago a good part of the cumbessias village’s internal garden had been steadily transformed with the insertion of an altar built up in local stone together with the statue of Mary positioned beside it (Fig. 319–324a). The same happens in S. Cosimo and Annunziata

\(^{200}\) Annunziata. Excerpt from interview.
where the whole village stands itself as a natural backdrop, a hall for the liturgical assembly. In S. Cosimo the box used for the bands' night exhibitions is also used to accommodate the altar for the celebration of the mass dedicated to ill people. In Annunziata an external altar, positioned at the crossing of the two entrance pathways, is completed with the statue of a white archangel who announced the choice of God to Mary (Fig. 325–329). It is there to ‘announce’ (to the newcomer) the village, the church, and the name of the Virgin Annunziata. Outside religious celebrations unveil the presence of other different dwelling places: more frequently than women, men stand aloof while attending the religious service: they sit on a free-standing wall, simply stand, or use marginal areas leaving women the right to sit on pews directly in front of the altar. Especially in Gonare, the internal dimension of porches is invaded by newcomers and villagers, while external porches provide them the apt visual point from which to follow the service (Fig. 330–333). Some of the smallest cumbessias are converted into religious souvenirs’ shops and raffles (pesca) where newcomers can buy a ticket to which corresponds an object or directly buy sacred images, rosaries, various editions of Gospels, or small medals representing the Saint. In Gonare, one cumbessia has been transformed by volunteers to include the selling of products from developing countries.

6.2.5 Visual expressions of miracles and devotional remainders: ex-votos

Until a few years ago the giving of wax votive offerings was a very common practice, a tangible proof of ‘the thaumaturgic power of a Saint who granted the miracle’. This practice has to be inscribed within a precise social and cultural ‘context’ whereas the

201 Men’s standing aloof during religious celebrations is a condition to which all cumbessias’ villages partake: ‘the saying of rosary has already begun. Men are outside [of the cumbessia]; inside, with the exception of the two priests there are just women sitting around a table. Beside me, the kitchen with a big coffee machine ready to serve the black drink to the guests . . . I help the landlady to serve coffee and biscuits after the rosary. Men, with them the landlord, are still there sitting and talking just outside the entrance door. They drink wine instead’ (Gonare. Excerpt from field notes).
expressions of popular religiosity receive a place and ‘sacral legitimisation’ within the Catholic Church’s official dimension. Votive offerings possess a high communicative and ‘didactic’ value in terms of recognition by devotees of the manifestation of divine power. For this reason the Church has tried to insert this practice into a wider ‘context’ of management and control of faithful masses, adopting it as a ‘special form of devotional propaganda’ (Satta 2000: 203, 190). With this regard, however, Clemente has highlighted the historical difficulty by the Church in accepting heterodox devotional expressions belonging to what has been termed ‘popular religiosity’. The latter, lived as parallel to the official one, has led to the substitution by the Catholic Church of that notion with the more justifiable one of ‘popular piety’\(^{202}\): this entails for the devotee to act ‘in compliance with the teachings of the Church, participate to liturgical life, and practice the Christian virtues’.\(^{203}\)

Nevertheless, the author is aware of the historical effort—to be paralleled to the aforementioned historical difficulty and the synodal proibimos, condenamos, ordenamos\(^{204}\)—accomplished by the official liturgy in including various forms of popular devotion within its canons.

The votive corpus of the six villages generally consisted of jewels, wax candles, paintings, plaits, military uniforms, swords, rosaries, amulets\(^{205}\), and wax anatomical parts. Nowadays, in conjunction with the recent development and spreading of official medicine, most, if not all of the numerous internal and external

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\(^{204}\) Pinna 1995: 205. The three imperatives refer to the intervention of the Church on the issue of superstitions in Sardinia, heightened by Synods soon after the Council of Trent. They witness the need by the official Church to rectify some of the ‘compromises’ it had accepted in dealing with heterodox popular religious expressions in order to acculturate a great part of communities and elevate that religiosity to a more official level. Yet, as exemplified by synodal literature, there were still a few areas, especially those of sorcery and religious practices which the Church openly rejected from religious life.
wax body parts are no longer present within churches (Fig. 334–338). Until the 1950s they witnessed the stream of invocations of favours for health problems. This phenomenon talks about the 'hierarchical intermediary work' accomplished by the religious authority, mostly by priests, in the management of the ex voto. It also talks about the responsibility of priests in deciding not to expose votive offerings to the public because it is considered indecorous. The giving of votive offerings was a special way for devotees to give thanks to the Saints for their granting of miraculous favours:

[I]n the past, She did miracles of heads, hands, of everything, but before [the church] was full [of these ex-voto]; now, nobody gives them. . . . the church was full of heads and many organs, also internal ones, made up of wax, but now they say [priests] that would not accept them any more' (70 year old woman); ‘I had my child almost dying . . . . I was going to the hospital and, passing here in front of the village I told Her that if he recovered I would have given Her the most dear thing I had. My son recovered and I ordered a wax baby, and also gave Her the ring my husband gave to me before our wedding. Now She is wearing it (79 year old woman).207

The church becomes the place where the history of votive offerings, i.e., dialogue with the divine or monologue (in so far as it is the individual who offers), affection, personal commitment, and communal devotion can be retraced. Ex-voto of any kind forcibly works as special devotional remainders to be 'read' by villagers and occasional devotees. ‘You should see Her when She is all adorned . . . it is something that strikes [to the viewer] a feeling of awe because it is really impressive, it has an inestimable value for me: pearls, necklaces of pearls, gold, rings with precious stones, rubies, emeralds, swords, nineteenth-century uniforms and helmets of the Brigata Sassari . . . . (Annunziata. 39 year old man. Excerpt from interview). Within the

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205 It should be noted that in Sardinia a great part of the female jewellery consists of amulets to be worn on the traditional costume.
206 Gallini (1972: 54) still in the 1960s refers to the presence at Rimedio of numerous wax bodily parts covering half of the church’s right internal wall.
207 Rimedio. Excerpt from interviews.
208 The Infantry regiment, Brigata Sassari, was founded in Sardinia in 1915. It had a fundamental role within the First World War. Among the soldiers recruited by the regiment many where from Sardinia, some of them from Bitti. Soldiers from Bitti promised to go the cumbessias village of Annunziata for a novena if the Virgin would save them.
great wealth of jewels of the Virgin there is also a big pearl (sa peroledda 'e su jubu), which is the subject of a local legend: 'In 1946 a family from Buddusò went to Annunziata. The daughter of the couple was wearing a lot of jewels, including a big pearl, and she fainted in front of the Virgin: her parents immediately imagining the Virgin’s desire of jewels, give Her one of their daughter's. She recovered but soon fainted again. This she did many times. The parents decided to give Her this big pearl, which was an amulet against evil eye' .

In S. Cosimo and in other cumbessias villages most of the pews within the church have been donated to the Saints: ‘to the Saints Cosma and Damiano’ or ‘gift of . . .’ these carved dedications are easily readable by devotees attending the religious services. The door of the new church in Rimedio has been recently donated to the Virgin by an old priore in memory of his deceased wife. Although pews and doors cannot be included within the category of votive offerings they nevertheless act as having a similar ‘didactic’ power on viewers (Fig. 339–341). It has been emphasised (Buttitta 1983) the figure of the devotee as being in a permanent condition of debt toward the Saint who accorded her the miracle: the devotee will have to grant the Saint not only the offering but also a commitment for future years. Votive offerings, lasting examples of popular art, precisely work by bringing forth the most intimate and personal part of the individual who has offered it—the wax body parts being the most tangible instance—, as a continual commitment. They are tangible ‘tales’ of miracles and personal experiences (Satta 2000: 203). They are also symbols, either expressions telling about the direct interaction of the individual with the divine power or symbols of a generalised communal interaction with the divine. These simple tales are symbols to be read, i.e., interpreted by the community: the

209 (Annunziata. 81 year old woman. Excerpt from interview). Various versions of this legend are still very popular among devotees who strongly maintain that their Virgin is gulatica, (i.e. greedy, desirous of
community as a whole recognises itself within those offerings as principia of faith, as witnesses of the fact that 'the divinity is present and intervenes into human life. The probative strength of this assertion is based on the direct experience the ex-voto describes': 'I do not see the face [of the Virgin] in itself... most of all, I look at the robe, the jewels She wears, this fact lets you understand how so many people invoke Her, because the jewels are all [ex-voto given] ... to ask for a miracle'... Moreover, this same 'assertion' of divine presence into the 'daily' dimension of human life works on communal religious memory as a 'prophecy', 'it announces that it is possible to participate in the positive [transformative] event of which the ex-voto tells' (Bucaro, G., Gli ex voto di Altavilla Milicia tra storia e antropologia religiosa, in Gli ex voto di Altavilla Milicia, Buttitta, A. ed., Palermo, Sellerio, 1983: 35. Quoted by Satta 2000: 212–213. Emphasis added). Votive offerings trace the history of devotion of these sacred compounds being devotees and their intimate presence constituent parts of that history.

6.2.6 Encountering the past: communicating with the dead

Novenas sometimes provide occasions and special places for another kind of mediation: that between the living, the dead, and the divine. The cumbessias villages almost become points of transition and opportune contexts for this special sort of communication. This mediator process is frequently supported by local folktales specifically referring to the dead and their hypothetical link to the Saint and the place. In Sauccu elderly devotees told young people that the dead attended a novena soon after the end of the 'official' one:

My brother, he was 15 or 16 years old, while pasturing the cattle with a man in that trait (tanca) there in front [of Sauccu], said that this man told him he could see the jewels) and defend the great value of the pearl in exorcising the evil eye either on animals or on human beings.

210 Annunziata. 27 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
dead: ‘Eh, my son, look how many people there are in S. Maria’, and my brother said
‘uncle Giuseppe, there’s nobody there, I can’t see anybody’. ‘Yes, yes’, he said ‘there
are people dancing like on the night before the departure of the obrievi’... and this
man was afraid by what he saw... and so it was how the novena ended, and the story
has been handed down until the present day. 211

In Annunziata, the daily 9 p.m. mass is specifically known as ‘sa missa ‘e sos
mortos’, i.e. ‘the mass of the dead’; the priest and community together invite the dead
and their souls to participate to the religious service. Its choreography and stage
apparatus have a great effect on devotees. It is at the same time a moment of
profound emotive involvement, perceived ‘physical’ mediation between themselves
and their beloved, and a moment of breaking of individual resistance through the
coercion stemmed from this compelling invitation to participate completely to this
event. It is one of the alluring motives to be added to the picture working in assuring
people future commitment with this place.

Men are all positioned in the presbytery around the altar, women, children and
other men are on the sole nave of the church, sitting on two rows of pews, one on
each side. The dead’s mass begins soon after the celebration of the canonical service,
when the priest lifts the Cross and intones the first Latin verse of the Miserere 212
followed by the choir of men singing it in the presbytery. Throughout this whole
second part, the church’s bell rings and the priest and the devotees free the space of
the corridor between the two rows of pews: nobody can occupy it. With the
congregation now responding with the De Profundis 213, this moment signals the

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211 Sauccu, 84 year old woman. Excerpt from interview.
212 The Miserere, whose name derives from the first word of the text of the Psalm 50 (51 in Judaic tradition), is a
highly dramatic poetic composition, part of a Judeo-Christian liturgical tradition. It basically manifests the
‘human soul’s repentance for its sins. This composition elaborated throughout many centuries has been
slowly re-framed becoming ‘an universal expression of praise to God’s mercy’ (Baroffio, B., Note. per il
progetto di ricerca sul Salmo 50, in Canti liturgici di tradizione orale, Arcangeli, P. et al. eds, vol. and 4
long-playing records, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo, 1987: 29–
30). See also Leydi 1987: 38–43.
213 ‘[De Profundis ] i.e., ‘out of the depths’ is the first words of Psalm 129... The De Profundis is one of the
fifteen Gradual Psalms, which were sung by the Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, and which are
still contained in the Roman breviary. It is also one of the seven Penitential Psalms which, in the East and
the West, were already used as such by the early Christians... The Church recites these psalms
principally in her prayers for the dead; it is the psalm of the holy souls in purgatory, the words of the
Psalmist applying well to the longing and sighing of the souls exiled from heaven. It is recited at funerals
emotional apex of the celebration, precisely because the passage has been freed to allow the souls of the dead to enter the church in procession, reach the altar and ask indulgence for their sins: 'Look, it was something that moved us . . . and then they said to us to move over from the corridor because there were the souls there . . . it was very touching for us because we felt it, . . . it gave us the creeps'; 'it is the mass of the dead, of all our dead . . . and, you know, it touches you deeply'.

Beyond ritualised religious occasions, there are many other chances within this village to encounter the dead: they are said to arrive with the pilgrims. Once at the entrance path in front of the white angel statue (s'anghelu) (Fig. 342), standing on the slope of the hill acting as the cumbessias village’s gateway, pilgrims explicitly request the dead if they need to be carried into the church on their shoulders, this being also a sort of penitential act by pilgrims. The formula for the request was ‘if there is any soul to be carried, I shall carry it’. People tell about the incredible weight of a soul: ‘Aunt Caterina felt a heavy weight on her . . . she couldn’t walk anymore . . . and the others couldn’t even carry her to the village’. Moreover, the need of the souls to be carried on pilgrims’ shoulders starts during the pilgrimage long before their arrival, at certain points along the path. Pilgrims’ personal experiences are punctuated by these kinds of encounters; they are ‘presences’ walking beside, behind, and in front of them. Groups of women were seen walking together at a distance so that those who saw them during the journey to the village where they could be found already there at their arrival. In fact, they could not. Dead frequently are said to attend this sacred compound: present and past folktales abound with their presence.

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214 Amunziata. 30 year old woman and 39 year old man. Excerpts from interviews.
215 Amunziata. Excerpt from interview.
216 Ruiu refers to a trail along the pilgrimage route called ‘sa pecata ‘e sas Cottes’, a steep trail that a legend describes as particularly hard for pilgrims because of the souls’ need to be carried on their shoulders (Ruiu, G., Studio socio-antropologico sulla religiosità nei santuari bittesi di N.S. del Miracolo e della SS. Amunziata, Università degli Studi di Roma ‘La Sapienza’, 2000–2001: 119).
One folktale that is widely known, is that telling of a father who saw the souls on procession and questioned them about the possibility of having his young dead daughter back. Dead are again said to be physically present: three skulls, two adults and a child’s found at the end of nineteenth-century in what has been subsequently called ‘*su ribu 'e sas mortes*’, i.e., ‘the river of deaths’, dwell within the church on an apposite shelf. The place itself is structured to encompass these suggestions, reactions, dialogues between the two dimensions of life, providing a whole series of dwelling places and ritual events as sets aptly containing these encounters.

### 6.2.7 Relating the body to the place: ambulatory apprehensions

The *daily* life within these sacred compounds takes place outdoors. This fact requires that it is the encounter with the place in all *its various external interstices* that the first and immediate setting of the relationship between place and people occurs. The edifice of the church stands as the most important setting for the mediation between devotees and the divine. Religious life, however, articulates either ‘stationary’ or ‘ambulatory architectural apprehensions’ (Jones 2000, vol. 2: 197, 194). While the church together with its front plaza and other clearings within the sacred compound represent the most appropriate religious dwelling places for the celebration of the masses as a stationary model of apprehension, processions, Via Crucis, and torchlight processions, should be certainly included within the second category of ‘ambulatory apprehensions’.

Processions are special, ritual and theatrical modalities of relationship with and apprehension of spatial and religious/devotional contents. Masses entailed devotees’ participation as a sort of huge *bodiless* audience, their bodies being fully enraptured in an unmoving contemplation, while processions reactivate devotees’ role as players, stimulating a complete bodily participation in the religious scene.
Until a few decades ago, internal and external processions were integral parts of the liturgical calendar of a novena. Theirs was essentially a penitential character: devotees, in fact, upon direct request to the priest and the offer of a certain sum of money, could carry the simulacrum of the Saint along the paths within the village precinct or sometimes circumambulate the external walls to subsequently re-enter from the gateway. As for the novenas, processions were again set in motion by similar devotees’ intentions for health, working and familial problems: the invocation of favours, formulation of promises, and thanksgiving for granted favours.

Started as a need by the priests to regulate the numerous requests for this kind of penitential acts, this ritual practice has been now almost completely abandoned. It survives in the villages of Sauccu, Gonare, and Annunziata. Within the latter, processions are a daily affair: early every morning, soon after the first mass, women and a few men carry the statue of the Virgin with them: they proceed divided into two parallel lines, women in the front and the priore’s wife (prioressa) carrying the banner representing the figure of the Saint. They are followed by the men in charge of the transport of the statue. The procession within this village winds along the same path of the Via Crucis, itself a daily appointment for devotees. Women follow the priest and his reading of Christ’s route to the Cross. Men again tend to stand aloof from the crowd. The procession finishes in the church (Fig. 343–357).

In Gonare, this practice entails a major physical effort because the path that leads to the church is quite steep and was practically developed on the slippery rocks of the mountain’s slope, worn out and polished by hundreds of years of continual use. Not only are devotees given an exact sensation of the limit of their bodily nature, but they also physically interact with the place: they touch, sit down and rest for a while, and stop while praying in front of one of the thirteen crosses. The torchlight procession in Gonare is, for these reasons, particularly difficult yet an amusing
practice: women, men, children all participate united, listening to the mass and descending again together under the light of torches and candles (Fig. 358–362).

In Annunziata the torchlight procession, starting soon after the last night mass, now winds from inside the village toward its exterior following the two main entry paths. Devotees are provided with candles and many of them carry big, lighted wooden torches (sas merzas). The simulacrum of the Virgin, carried by men with the priest walking in front of it, is preceded by the villagers and other devotees who arrived purposely for the procession: the arrival at the church is a very touching moment, with the Virgin giving Her blessing to the community. Ambulatory apprehensions tug devotees into a bodily involvement where mere contemplation is substituted by participatory interchange: people literally accompany the Saint, walk beside and with Her. Within these places a profound communion is realised.

6.2.8 Coercing signals

Cumbessias villages are punctuated by sacred symbols constantly experienced by devotees: on the one hand, small built-up and cave-like shrines where the Virgin is surrounded by candles, plastic flowers and rosaries (Fig. 363–364), statues of angels, altars, and the crosses of the Via Crucis. On the other, a great number of permanent and occasional devotees’ names carved into the paving rocks are still today perfectly legible by the pilgrims slowly ascending the path to the church of Gonare; some of the oldest ones are almost completely covered by musk and lichens. No dedications: simple first names with just the initial of the surname and the year of the pilgrimage; many are the Ave Maria and simple carved crosses. They date back to between the 1950s and 1980s. They stand as powerful reminders of devotees’ presence, establishing a bond between themselves and that place, them and the Saint. These are a sort of signatures of their passage and signs of future commitment (Fig. 365–366).
Mythico-historical legends merge with devotional practices, the former feeding into
the latter: in *Gonare*, many devotees still easily recognise the ‘cradle’ (*su brasciolu*),
‘the resting place’ (*su imbaradorju*) and some other powerful points where the Virgin
was said to have rested. Spread along the path ascending to the church, in fact, are a
few special rocks whose names derive from subsequent absorption and elaboration of
the legend of foundation of this village. Devotees ascending the mountain or
descending from the church usually stop to touch the rocks: the majority of them
retrace the Virgin’s gestures and imitate Her positions. All of them make the sign of
the cross after having extracted a white powder through the rubbing of a stone on the
rock where the Virgin put Her hand. This is a sort of independent place from the rest
of the path being enclosed by rocks and by the presence of a tree whose trunk has
developed horizontally, working as a sort of door post to signal the entrance and exit.
This oak is also said to be sacred as the nearby rocks: people usually pick up some of
its leaves to keep at home as a blessing or to boil them and drink the water, believing
it to be beneficial for various pains. Devotees attain direct physical contact with the
place by bringing home some sort of sacred relic, pieces of sanctity, and by doing so,
they partake of that sanctity (*Fig. 367–373, 375*).

6.3 Reading the past through our narratives

The past returns in the words, discourses, and personal and collective narratives. It is
a past that, as recalled in the previous examples of interviews, justifies the present. It
is a past made up of extraordinary events, legends, simple stories: it inserts the
present along the diachronical trajectory of the past in order to render it more
plausible and acceptable to them. Informers display of the past only beautiful
moments, nice memories full of affection, nearness among people, friendship. Should
I doubt the truthfulness of their words, of the past they display? I am inclined to
believe that probably part of that nearness, affection, more specifically that in excess in their words should be rather read as a ‘historical mythisation’ that is to say that particular enchantment that temporal distance lends to past events, somehow positioning them under a better light. We should, however, bear in mind, that communities being symbolic ‘objects’

![Fig. 374 Josef Albers, White Line Square XVI, 1966](image)

...of individuals’ creation possess their own past. Individuals prize it and recognise themselves in it. They consider it meaningful, useful, and fruitful for the future. To claim ‘in the past, we were more united’ or to cite moments of communal union, means to look into the historical baggage of the community for those objective meaningful referents that have become symbols of past unions and proximities. It is as if I were dealing with what Jones has defined as ‘the reception history’. This term indicates not just the ‘history’ of the encounters between individuals and the work of art or religious architecture. What I wanted to point out was also the other side of those encounters: the ‘history’ of the encounters between individuals in those places, in the cumbessias villages. It is and it was in those encounters that, each time, a
community was created, re-formulated on the basis of changed or rediscovered ethical principles themselves elaborated on previous ones.217

Likewise individuals bearing presuppositions, pre-understandings and cultural-historical baggage, communities (made up of individuals and their meaningful relationships), see their past inscribed in those relationships; communities are brought to light in those very moments in which individuals go back to certain events and relationships they have lived in the past. The past of the communities is itself inscribed in those social relationships, encounters, events and in everything that may stem from them such as legends, tales, etc. Each individual is then partaking of the creation of his/her community as symbolic construct. He/she is an author with an endless agency. In the event of the encounter among individuals belonging to the same community, the novena and the sanctuary act as the spatio-temporal elements or containers within which and through which the community is renewed. In the encounter in/with the sacred place some values and meanings emerge: there are so many relationships, ritual-religious and daily exchanges, devotional moments leading to a physical and emotive proximity, a proximity of intents that is shared, that is communal and that creates community. Such encounters have to be inscribed in the ‘reception history’ so that people in future times could be brought back to those experiences, so that this past can be efficacious for future employment: the past will work by the very fact of its being remembered and used as a valid model, giving validity to people’s own community, being a support for the lived present. Challenges and novelties are not dangerous being framed within a historical context which can guarantee for their validity, acting as a valid reference point for continuous comparisons. Challenges are then justified. (Yet, if they are
inserted outside of every known and meaningful reference allowing for a possible comparison, they can only generate indifference and refusal).

‘In our everyday discourse, the past itself symbolic, is recalled to us symbolically’ (Cohen 1985: 101). We have already seen throughout the last two chapters how in our instances, rituals, ceremonies, ex-votos, and many other symbolic elements, act as symbols through which ‘a’ past, communal as well as individual, is displayed. These symbols should be intended as meaningful resources legitimising other future encounters: these symbols constitute the past structurally adding themselves to it as the squared figures of Albers’ painting (see Fig. 374) ‘... the recollection is of a way of life, of complex characters, of a large fabric of values and altitudes’ (Cohen 1985: 102).

The past returns in the words and discourses of people as a symbolic dimension that, as such, is refashioned: of it new meanings are recollected. The past itself is embedded with values and norms, the same norms that act as the frame for the insertion of another ‘square’, those norms that make people claim ‘that thing has to be done in this way’ and sanction the activities of the present as right or wrong. The symbols of the past and the past as a symbolic dimension act as an anchor for the community and for individuals throughout changing moments. I am unable to demonstrate it, yet I strongly believe that if had my research been carried out in the 1960s and 1970s, people would have portrayed their past in a very different way. Their answers would not have shown a beautiful past, nor purported a past of unity and cohesion among devotees during the novenas. They would also not have complained about the changed liturgical appointments, either because they would still have been in use, or because there was a strong desire and modernising thrust, especially from younger generations. Arguably, their perception of the past in those
years would have been quite different. It would probably have been a mental map made of memories of a past spent in poverty, a life of hardships, not quite such a beautiful memory to be conjured up. Nowadays, in light of the most recent social, cultural and economic challenges Sardinia, and especially the centre of the island, has undergone since the period between 1950 and 1970, other cultural models have entered into the social texture. They have been elaborated and absorbed. Nowadays, for example the attendance of stable devotees to the cumbessias villages has changed and is still changing: in the village of Rimedio, for instance, in 2002 only 40 of 80 cumbessias were occupied. Part of the population, especially those adults between the ages of 40 and 60 years, notice this change; they feel the lack of people within these places and relate this phenomenon to what is going on within the urban context of origin: moments of exchange, encounters during and after work have sensibly decreased throughout the last decades. In this changed and endlessly changing context, the past is portrayed as a beautiful time. In such a past dimension, discontent is not present, it is not even possible. Discontent remains in the present. The timelessness in which memories are positioned may thus well resolve/absorb present discontent. ‘The valued past and the continuity of tradition are now maintained either through past stories or through present symbols and actions’. Symbols and symbolic actions ‘are fundamental referent[s] of identity’ (Cohen 1985: 103). Through these symbols past is made present and available to devotees. Cumbessias villages, as seen before, have plenty of symbolic ‘presences’: people living them (such as rocks where they once went playing, trees they used to climb, stories they used to listen to, rituals they used to participate, etc.) are assigned a powerful, tangible role of support of ‘valued tradition in which resides the idea of community’ (1985: 103). These symbols bring the past back to enter again present experiences within/on these sacred places.
Like Ricoeur, de Certau placed a strong emphasis on the power of narrative to shape human environments and transform them. Indeed, in terms of everyday life in [the cumbessias village], it is narrative as much as architecture or the planning of environment that shapes identity and enables people to use [the sacred place] as a means of creative of effective living. . . . Stories are more than descriptions: they also take ownership of spaces and are therefore culturally and socially creative. Because human stories define boundaries, also create bridges between individuals, narrative is also a vital factor in the creation of the [cumbessias village] as a community rather than merely an agglomeration of buildings and spaces. The narrative structure of such communities enables people to shape the world that surrounds them . . . and also creates ways of mapping the city and thus moving around it effectively' (Sheldrake 2001: 160–161).

The symbols we import from our past to legitimate, dismantle or in some way substantiate our own present experiences/conversations stem from past events and conversations inserted within a determinate historical panorama. Individuals' own narratives bring back into present/now a historical world proper to them, to a certain community, to a certain place. The term proper means that the historical world now revisited in memory and emotions, stemmed from the encounter(s) of individuals with the sacred place and with other people. It is henceforth a limited world, yet open to future appropriations. The world the devotee recalls, being a historical, different world, contains different symbolic referents, elaborated by that subject within its own or proper horizon. The truth he/she recalls of that world belongs to him/her. At the same time, since the symbolic referents are shared by all although elaborated singularly with different meanings, it will be this sharing within the difference that will work to reinforce the community.

At issue is what [people] . . . choose[s] as worthy of discourse; every indexical act entails forces of attention and of oblivion, simultaneously in the past (in what was included and what excluded) and the present. . . . Critics and historians discover that whatever is deemed trivial or worth forgetting may, upon close scrutiny, evince a “strategy” that will to efface, marginalize, or even repress more complicated and ambivalent designs' (Conley, T., For a literary historiography, translator’s introduction to The writing of history, De Certau, M. ed., trans. T. Conley, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988: x).
Present narratives show their tendency to exclude certain types of events and to recall a sort of selection of them: the 'strategy' is that of making the past of nearness and union fruitful for the necessities of the present community: it has to make it more comfortable, nearer to past ideals of community. There is also an unconscious dimension of narratives: it is within what is evoked but cannot be translated through language. We are now facing the territory of experience that Lacan termed and De Certau adopted of the réel, 'a world of unmarked space and time . . . what we touch, read, see, hear, and smell'. Our representation of it . . . 'is strictly filtered through a system of knowledge and belief that is perforce circumstantial and local but continually present and always renewed through representation' (Conley 1988: xvi).

6.4 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have been going through tales of miracles, mythico-historical episodes, legends of the dead, votive offerings, shrines, carved names, sacred rocks, crosses, religious ceremonies, processions, etc. They underlie the devotees' practices and experiences, they convey messages about the community that has elaborated them. They all work and are re-worked by the devotees and their encounter with the sacred place. With this regard, I have argued that while enrapturing and compelling them to enter the game dazzled by the promise of a special beauty and the recognition of themselves, their lives, their forebears, their dead, their places, the devotees are yet so deeply involved, so scarcely protected from any kind of internal and external working force that the same recognition is a prelude to a new cognisance. As I hope to make clear in the next chapter, in fact, the devotees are overwhelmed by a series of external and internal stimuli at once alluring and coercive: they slowly work on them. I have been showing how devotees listen to legends, stories, personal experiences, they listen to the Word of God; they see these
places as plenty of ex-votos as public 'liber miracolorum', powerful reminders such as crosses, cut-in names, shrines, statues, people praying and weeping (Dupront 1993: 418); they experience masses, processions, Via Crucis, they experience their own and their parents' lives there as within a temporal continuum of past and present; they feel the deads' souls, friendship, commonality, devotion. They are not alone, they feel the presence of the Saint in there. Yet, they also listen to, see, experience, feel themselves: throughout their conversation with the Saint and the place they are inevitably spurred to converse with their own selves and, as it happens conversing with friends, they engage with another intimate self different from their own, saying new things, encouraging towards new views of the world, of others, of their own world, moral values, and modalities of relationship. The Gadamerian play or the mechanism through which ritual-architectural events offer a return to the self is inherently twofold: devotees return to themselves because they go back (either physically because they return to them, or mentally, retrieving past personal events, including an inherent historical dimension of the return) to these places so familiar to them, so intimately known, already experienced as places of peace; yet, while in them[se/ves] they are somehow coerced to change the object of their attention: I go back to my self because it is only from it and from its experiences in/with this place that I can let another re-worked newer self to emerge. I will argue how selflessness preludes to a new self. Powerful and eventful architectural and religious experiences to which devotees participate free and provide insights about other values and horizons. The novena, as seen earlier, is the container of these eminently religious experiences. Yet, its eventfulness becomes clearer when considered in its chronotopical dimension: it is here where the historical and placial plots converge into a 'concrete whole', from where a new ontological horizon of individuals and
communities is founded. The old being just has to undertake the path towards that new horizon of meaning.
Chapter 7

Sacrifice and participation: a special way of lingering

In this final chapter what remains to be done is to take a more in depth look at what I introduced in the previous chapter: I have been theoretically mapping the Gadamerian notion of ‘play’ as the metaphor or ‘spatial trajectory’ leading us towards a deeper understanding of the relationship between beholders and sacred places (Fig. 480). Whereas the previous introductory steps have shown us the multifarious worlds represented by these two subjects, the next steps aim to provide a better, and deeper, understanding of what happens when the mutual engagement between the two is already started. What is the topic of their conversation or play? Is their dialectical engagement fruitful? In other words, shall they remain barred in their positions or is it possible for them a re-adjustment, a revision of their standpoints? In trying to respond to these delicate and difficult questions, what emerges are a few basic points that can be easily summarised in just a few simple keywords: familiarity, identity, serious commitment, transformation. In the following paragraph the previous theoretical steps will be further developed; throughout them I shall attempt to highlight the foregoing main points in relation to our ethnographic instances introducing them as sorts of stopovers along a trajectory.
7.1 'All playing is a being-played': the Gadamerian moral for the encounter of two worlds

Jones (2000) adopts the Gadamerian metaphor of 'play' in order to apply it to the specific study of religious architecture. Religious architecture is here 'read' in terms of what Jones has termed ritual-architectural events, i.e., those ceremonial and ritual events themselves at once products and producers constituting the hermeneutical dimension from which that architecture is born. Jones elaborates two basic moments within which the hermeneutical dialogue between beholders and a work of art is articulated. He paraphrases Gadamer's notion of architecture's 'double mediation', at once 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' sorts of functions exercised through 'decoration'. On decoration Gadamer writes: 'the essence of decoration consists exactly in operating that twofold mediation: attract the attention of observer on itself, satisfy his tastes, and redirect him beyond itself, to that wider enlivening context it [decoration] accompanies'.

From 'decoration' stem the two functions of 'allurement and coercion': allurement and coercion are those essential moments, constitutive parts of the more encompassing mechanism of architecture through which that hermeneutical conversation may take place. Allurement is the 'initial appeal' a work of art exercises upon the viewer, a sort of invitation, a 'magnetism exercised by some sacred architectures' luring people to become with them 'partners' engaged in a hermeneutical conversation. To borrow a relevant formulation from Freedberg,

[To] perceive an image in terms of the intimate and familiar depends, in the first instance, on perception of similitude. However mistaken we may be in our perception, we empathise with an image because it has a body like ourselves; we feel close to it

220 Jones 2000: 74–77. See also pages 78–85.
because of its similarity to our own physique and of our neighbours; we suffer with it because it bears the marks of suffering' (Freedberg, D., *The power of images: studies in the theory and history of response*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979: 5. Quoted by Jones 2000: 77).

However, in the first alluring pull, without necessarily arriving at a deeper engagement between a devotee and a sacred place, more than similarity is at stake: the faithful are literally appealed to by a sense of familiarity,

the character of his relationship/experience of sacred art and architecture participates in the [dimension] of homecoming (or homesickness) . . . a reunion with oneself and one’s past'. Devotees are allured by what of themselves, of their own histories and identities is present in a particular sacred place; what happens is a reconciliation with themselves in a place which has ‘something to do with [them]’ . . . (Jones 2000: 76, 78).

7.1.1 Familiarity

The relationship between devotees and *cumbessias* villages, as seen before, is characterised by a profound sense of familiarity, of belonging: over the years they have personally constructed their own sense of familiarity made up of stories, legends, memories and personal experiences of/within one of these places. Each time they attend a novena, live there and engage in a conversation/exchange with the place, with other people, this sense of belonging is re-elaborated leading to a confirmation of it (very rarely to its rejection):

It’s been a long time since I last came here . . . the first time, when I arrived here again it was in 2000 and this experience threw me straight back into the past . . . so many memories bound us to the sanctuary of *Annunziata*. . . . (69 year old woman)

One year we couldn’t come here because my husband and I were out of Sardinia for work . . . but I felt I unwell for many months because we hadn’t been able to come to *Annunziata*. The Sunday after our return we came here right away . . . I miss the *Annunziata*, I feel a different attachment to it . . . (40 year old woman)

I’ve never been here before, my wife used to come, but I didn’t . . . Then it happened that I have been attending the novena for three years–without not being a *priore*–and immediately, the year after, I became *priore* of *Annunziata*: now, I can’t tear myself away from this place. (60 year old man)

Yesterday I attended the mass, and when I closed my eyes I could see my mother again, because I first came here with her and my sister who died a few years ago . . . and when I go back to these thoughts I let my mind wander and don’t listen to the mass anymore. . . . I remember what was before; I come and find my dear beloved again, just as if it was yesterday . . . so I love this fact, I feel in peace with my self and the world. (69 year old woman)
It is an attraction that can’t be described... for us it’s beautiful... (30 year old woman)

I remember when there was the feast... the novena, ... and people were so nice to each other... but also now... for example at present I only know a few people here because I have been living outside [of Sardinia] for 40 years... but I have found the same atmosphere of the past here, at least for me and it is precisely this that I like. For me Annunziata is a point of reference, a place of meeting, affection and dear memories.(69 year old woman)221 I love this place because my mother spent her childhood here, because my grandparents were marzinarios here... my grandfather lived here for four years and he and his family went to Marmoliada only for the party for the Carnival... I always had the image of these people cutting the torrone clear in my mind... the vision entering the village from the doorway... the place was incredibly dusty... I was wearing a white dress with white shoes... we were walking and I remember my mother telling me “walk well, because you are getting your shoes dirty. (45 year old woman)222

Familiarity may then go beyond the mere experiential dimension being substantiated by/through not just the mere recalling of old memories but also through stories and others’ personal narratives. Familiarity is here intended as more than a personal attitude but also as a value relevant in itself. It is a body-like memory, developed by each individual from childhood to adulthood. The various images of children playing, climbing the trees, and hiding themselves behind the more remote corners of the cumbessias village, are perfect examples of this. It is through them that future familiarity is constructed and present familiarity confirmed. It is on these premises that, as we shall see, the subsequent transformations should be regarded and it is precisely through them that transformations attain their strength over those who pass through them. Selflessness is a condition of self-abandonment, attained in an environment of confidence.

‘... here there is a magic that catches and conquers you, and gives you’.223

Devotees abandon themselves to what is familiar in these places, and it is precisely this abandonment that allows familiarity to be nurtured and concretely substantiated for future encounters, novenas.

221 Annunziata. Excerpt from interviews. Emphasis added.
222 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
223 Annunziata. Excerpt from interview.
Yet, in the interplay between the two parts, once the attention of the faithful has been completely caught up into this sort of familiar world to which he partly belongs, the ‘uneasy sense of the unfamiliar’ of what has been initially withheld, arises provocatively coercing him to re-adjust himself (Freud, S. “The Uncanny”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, Hogarth Press, 1955, 17. Quoted by Jones 2000: 64). Otherwise put, the devotee is compelled to open his eyes, re-direct his attention to another world which is not his own. Rather, it is the world of the sacred place itself offering him a totally different set of stimuli and concerns, again coercing him into re-working his present (and future) own way of being, looking, relating to the world outside.

Within Gadamer’s fruitful ‘play’, this notion stands metaphorically for the being of the work of art. Here the ‘players’ of the hermeneutical game, i.e., devotees and religious architecture, are both deeply, seriously, and reciprocally involved if not encompassed in the experience of art, of play. Every good play entails the complete absorption of players into it, in a mutual relationship where there is no subject/object distinction. Within the play’s ‘proper essence’ one is totally lost, absorbed . . . Play does leave nobody’s identities to exist. . . . Players (or poets) are not anymore; what exists, is just what is played by them’ (Gadamer 2000 [1962]: 229, 247. Emphasis added). Moreover, ‘every playing [to play] is [entails] a being played (2000 [1962]: 237). Within the interactive hermeneutical process that is the work of art, in fact, play realises itself transmuting in form a certain meaning within the multiple horizons of possible meanings. In the play that a work of art (and religious architecture) is, the involvement of devotees on their hand, is total and authentic to the extent that their own very identities have to be considered non-autonomous in respect to the game that is now played (i.e., the dwelling in a sacred place or the participation and
contemplation of a religious building), or seriously compromised at least for the time being.

7.1.2 Identity

'...But more than comfort is at issue in the elective affinity between houses and bodies: our very identity is at stake. For we tend to identify ourselves by—and with—the places in which we reside. . . . the resemblance . . . is two way. A dwelling where we reside comes to exist in our image, but we, the residents, also take on certain of its properties. How we are, our bodily being, reflects how we reside in built places' (Casey 1993: 120).

Familiarity entails re-cognition, re-cognition recalls identity. We are familiar with something that belongs to us and we partly belong to that something. Devotees belong to the[ir] cumbessias villages and cumbessias villages belong to their devotees. They are both profoundly and mutually bound, theirs is an existential sharing of their identities.

I've been coming here since I was I child . . . . S. Cosimo is part of me.(68 year old woman)
. . . . it was in S. Cosimo that I lost my name. (45 year old woman).\textsuperscript{225} Leaving Bitti . . . going there [to Annunziata] . . . you forget about your own town . . . [and about yourself] . . . I forget about my town, my problems. . . . (27 year old woman).\textsuperscript{226}

These two sentences witness the seriousness of the play and the engagement it requires from its players. I chose these two examples on purpose, to show how in the encounter and subsequent conversation between the devotees and the cumbessias villages, that it is to say in the play, more than familiarity is at stake. Particularly the second one represents this fact: the informant lost a small tag with her name on it while, being a small child, she was walking along the plaza in S. Cosimo. She remembers this event perfectly. But in her rendition, what is displayed is a loss of

\textsuperscript{224} Gadamer's formulation certainly finds a better translation into the English version quoted by Jones (2000: 55) saying: 'all playing is a being-played'.
\textsuperscript{225} S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
\textsuperscript{226} Annunziata. Excerpt from interview.
identity, a selflessness attained through a complete re-cognition of herself in the place. It is almost as if she had left herself there: she has put her identity in the place’s care. And every novena, for years, she has recognised herself in that place.

Within the play of art, devotees’ identities are subsumed in a *theoria*, i.e., a ‘true involvement; [it is] not a making rather a suffering (*pathos*), . . . [it is a] being caught, almost enraptured by contemplation. . . . Attending [or audiencing], as an individual’s way of behaving, has the character of the being beside oneself’ (2000 [1962]: 273). At the same time, the working of a work of art requires the beholder to be ready to respond to its ‘appeal’, also being able to receive and listen to it (Vattimo 2000: xlviii). Even more, the working of the work of art (and our religious architecture) appeals to the world and life, to ‘religious and moral’ values of a beholder, who is then able, for this fact, to recognise himself in that work of art: ‘what is properly experienced in a work of art, what in it attracts our attention is the fact that who is contemplating it is allowed to either cognise something [new] or recognise himself’ (Gadamer 2000 [1962]: 251).

Jones seizes upon Gadamer’s formulation, re-elaborating it in what we have seen to be his ‘mechanism of architecture’ expressed through the interplay of ‘allurement and coercion’, or ‘reassurance and disruption, . . . [there is a] conservative, reassuring component of order. . . . [within] ‘a continuity of tradition’ . . . and a disconcerting component of variation, otherness, strangeness’ (2000: 65, 81, 66).

### 7.1.3 Serious commitment

Devotees are first and foremost caught up in the *cumbessias* villages; they are attracted by and bound to them by what they recognise of themselves in these places. They search what feels familiar to them, what they have left there in terms of
emotions, memories, places, etc. Yet, they are aware that the worlds they are entering are somehow different, they are potentially different and it will be precisely their commitment that allows them to be so. Devotees are also attracted by this difference, by the otherness displayed by these places.

Moreover, selflessness is inherently a distancing from ourselves. This detachment, or separation, from ourselves is one of the requirements the dialogue between devotees and cumbessias villages needs for it to start. We shall see that where this detachment is not respected a serious commitment in the dialogue cannot be attained leaving the parts closed in their own positions.

At Annunziata it’s a completely different thing . . . maybe because it’s away . . . Annunziata is isolated, there’s no TV, there’s nothing there . . . (79 year old man)

. . . a person going to Annunziata to attend a novena lives a very unique situation because [the village] is (foras dae custu mundu e bi nd’at un’atteru in cudd’doru) completely outside this world and there’s another one over there . . . there are people who you don’t know . . . let’s say that in a small town [Bitti] everybody knows everybody else but, you know, there is no familiarity, intimacy, so you are tend to have certain types of relationships there. Plus, you have to follow a whole series of rules . . . there are the communal moments, masses, etc. . . . so you are caught by a reality which is here [in Bitti] and transported in another one, because there you create another reality. . . . (50 year old man);

Well, the fact of leaving your town, this is already an important fact, because you go completely outside of the environment where you live and are used to living . . . and enter into a completely different atmosphere . . . I don’t know, maybe it’s just my impression, but for me it’s a bit like going into somewhere that’s totally peaceful . . . (39 year old man);

In Annunziata you have to stay there, you must stay there . . . at Miracolo you’re conditioned by the fact that it’s very close to Bitti. In Annunziata, instead, there’s this sort of detachment, you’ve got to be strong to stay there, it’s 35 km from Bitti (27 year old woman);

. . . [is there anything special that you cannot find at Miracolo?] the peace, this place is a symbol of peace . . . it’s isolated, it is not like the Miracolo that is in Bitti, . . . one could came here, it was an old symbol of peace and everybody had it in mind . . . (83 year old woman);

It’s the silence here, there’s no TV, no radio, but there is entertainment . . . I’ve been coming here for the whole novena for 3 years now . . . I really love it, . . . the more I keep coming the more I feel this place that holds me, do you see what I mean? (60 year old man);

. . . You have to go there, you have to live that place, you have to stay there. . . . It’s such a unique situation there, one that you can’t find anywhere else. . . . (39 year old man).

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227 Annunziata. Excerpt from interviews.
The alluring process is completed by what I called a *serious commitment*, which is the degree of involvement the devotees have in their encounter with the place and with the new reality they find there.

Serious commitment is the prelude to the subsequent transformation: the Gadamerian dictum ‘all playing is a being played’ presupposes exactly the seriousness of the players. Devotees accepting to reside in the *cumbessias* village for the whole novena (i.e., commit themselves with the place, the rules of the game) accept a loss of control and expose themselves to unknown consequences. Novena, as a ritual-architectural event, in fact, also means/entails a participation to an unfamiliar way of knowing and being.

Serious commitment is enraptured in the care: the care of devotees for the place, the care the place itself demonstrates welcoming to them. Yet, the first rule entailed by a ‘serious’ commitment is that of requiring the devotees to engage in the game for the whole nine days:

... If you haven’t lived this situation you can’t understand... you might imagine but you won’t know the truth... (39 year old man);
... only those who go and live there can understand it... (30 year old woman);
... before staying here for nine days, I couldn’t understand what it meant to live here for the whole novena... (62 year old woman);
... When you come here [to Miracolo] you can attend the celebrations and go to the corso after wards... whereas there [in Annunziata] you have to stay there, you have to *live together* with other people... (27 year old woman);
... There are so many things that have to be done while in the Annunziata, like cleaning the church, organising the Virgin, Her clothing, then there’s the communal lunch because there are so many people coming from Olbia, so many from Bitti, you see, it’s different living in Annunziata than being at home, the fact that you have to prepare the lunch and gather together with other people, sometimes strangers, sometimes you eat at one person’s *cumbessia*, the next day we eat here... the food we prepare is much simpler than what we prepare at home, but it’s nicer, I love staying here, the fact that when you get up in the morning you open the door and find yourself here, and you have those small rooms, so you have to huddle together, everything is untidy, this is lovely... (65 year old woman);
... during the novena people could become *comari* for ever... it was a beautiful custom... those who were *comari* kept their mutual esteem and affection for the whole of their lives... to be ‘*comari* of Annunziata’ almost meant to become family (87 year old woman);

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228 *Corso* is the the main, central street of a town where young people usually spend their evenings going back and forth.

229 *Comari* refers specifically to the union of two women, while two men or a man and a woman became *compari*. 
people stay nine days there and it’s a real emotion; . . . then the friendship remains between them . . . (83 year old woman). 230

The life of a devotee entails a serious commitment: people commit themselves with the place and the others. People are united by a religious commitment.

Spotlighting the Gadamerian dictum ‘to play is a being played’ in light of what has been said, results in the re-definition of oneself throughout a process of ‘self-understanding’ or ‘self-apprehension’: this process is set in motion by and accomplished through our ‘relationship with something else’, i.e., sacred architecture’s world, at once familiar and exotic, known to us and completely new (2000 [1962]: 217). The being played, passes through this cognisance and recognition of ourselves and our own world we are now offered or even forcibly spurred to redefine and see it under a new light: we are thus encouraged to change our own way of being, living and relating in/to the world: ‘. . . sacred architecture lay[s] before ritual participants and spectators information . . . that compels people to change not only they way that they think, but also how they act and interact with others. The informational disclosures transacted in apprehensions of [sacred] architecture include insights not only about deities . . . (which also carry obligations), but about . . . ethical standards [and personal insights]’. 231

7.1.4 Transformations I

[in Miracolo] you don’t live here . . . while, there [in Annunziata], you stay and get very close to other people that you don’t know . . . it’s a different situation even when you go back to the village [of Bitti] and see how the greetings people exchange among themselves have changed; . . . it’s really beautiful (27 year old woman);
. . . the friendship between those who have gone to Annunziata remains (50 year old man);
. . . after nine days spent here [Annunziata] you go back home full of a sort of inner and different kind of joy that you can’t find on any other occasion . . . if, for example, I go to the church of Le Grazie in Nuoro, the feeling’s different . . . I believe that

230 Annunziata. Excerpts from interviews.
there's a kind of magic here that catches hold of you, and conquers you, and gives you something at the same time (35 year old man);
... it's nicer... there are people attending the novena day by day, they come here by bus, they listen to the celebration, have some biscuits from priorato or some relatives. ... they come here at 4 p.m. and go away at 6:30 p.m. We really enjoy staying outside late at night... we sit under the porch over there and start telling jokes and other funny stories... (74 year old woman);
yesterday we were having dinner under the porch... it was raining. There was a group of us, and there was an old lady... we started telling dirty jokes... this lady, who is very religious and not used to telling these things in this way... told us "what a shame... a married lady saying these things!" and I replied... "zia, when we leave this place we're completely transformed, I'm cured of my inner pains" I told her! I was laughing so much that... this is the fun that we live compared to those who come here only for a mass and then go away immediately... it's fun for the soul and for the body and we live it that for the soul much better... because we attend at least three masses a day, we live the spiritual side more than those people because we go on procession in the morning, and at night there is another mass, beautiful, the mass of the dead with the choir singing... it's full of atmosphere; that's why this place is beautiful, the only place for Annunziata is this place, the sanctuary is this... here we live in a better way... the day after tomorrow we have to go back home... just now when we were getting settled into this world... the people who live the novena here for the 12 days live this experience even better... (65 year old woman).
I like the prayers, the masses, everything... but also the environment... throughout the years the environment has changed, it's a little bit colder... before it was so beautiful... now those things are partly gone, people are different, but it's still beautiful (76 year old woman);
... in the town [of Mamoiada] for example, I live in the upper part... we don't see each other for months on end (70 year old woman).

'... The truth is... the encounter with an alterity which we assimilate and that, then, we do not let it remain in its otherness rather, absorbing it, we become different from what we were before [the encounter]' (Vattimo 1996). These few quotations from interviews display precisely this sort of encounter with the existential alterity portrayed by the cumbessias villages' own world. The world of the devotees encounters the world of the sacred place throughout nine days of 'serious commitment': the transformation people feel and experience is what Gadamer claimed to be an 'increase of being': the hermeneutical conversation enraptures completely both parts. This dialogue entails the transformation of the parts engaged in it: the religious architecture, the novena, the place as a whole work on the devotees, offering them a newer perspective upon their own world and their own way

232 Annunziata. Excerpts from interviews.
of relating to it. Through the hermeneutical experience that which was once inconceivable, foreign, other, external to me and my world, those people whom I did not know, are allowed to become part of my world, they are transformed into familiar people. A certain degree of unfamiliar, uncanny, always hidden in the world we live cannot be ignored anymore. What is more peculiar of this element of otherness, strangeness within the familiar is that it is never completely discovered: that is why the future experiences/encounters/conversations between devotees and Annunziata, or S. Cosimo, etc., will always be productive of an undetectable source of diversity, itself a source of future allurement for devotees, hence meaningful commitments.

What is, then, the transformation attained by devotees during the novena in a cumbessias village? In which sense is theirs a transformation which can be called an increase of being? What the informants have told us about the eventful experiences they have lived demonstrate that they have discovered more about themselves, their own desires, profound needs, expectations; they have obtained some answers; they have been spurred to modify the way they related to the people of their own communities, either those they already knew and those they were not very familiar with:

I lived a nice experience... there was a person from my town [Mamoiada] that I didn’t know... I couldn’t tell if she was a good person or not... “who knows what she’s like”,... instead it’s been a great discovery for me that taught me that you have to meet people you don’t know, talk to them... and maybe you already have an idea about them while, instead you have to get to know them better... [what is it that, in your opinion, helps people to become more united?]... the place, because here [in S. Cosimo] you really know people, you can be closer to them... for example there was this lady. Me and my daughter, we didn’t know her... she said in reference to my daughter Margherita “look at that girl... she looked like a bit of a snob... but instead she’s really sweet”... this lady, every time she sees me she tells me “give a kiss to Margherita, where is she? Tell her to come over” and she’s always happy when my daughter goes to see her. This is just to explain to you that if I hadn’t come here to S. Cosimo that lady would have kept the same feeling towards my daughter... (45 year old woman).233

233 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
Yet, transformations can be attained only through what I have called a ‘serious commitment’ or a deep, sincere involvement in the conversation/play during the nine days celebration of the novena. As explained by an interviewee, those devotees who come and go, who do not live in the village during the whole religious festival, cannot undergo the same process of reshaping of the self they instead fully live. They cannot have the possibility to change their minds about the world, about the people of their own community for whom they already have an idea, maybe a wrong one. By not entering into the play completely, the game reveals itself to be innocuous, unfruitful, unproductive. For the play to be fruitful and meaningful, Gadamer has explained, the players have to be fully, totally encompassed by it. This involvement can be attained only by passing through the process I have been describing, a process which is not immediate, but rather requires a special ‘modality of lingering’ quite close to the religious building, in the place:

Now, the work of art possesses a proper time that, likewise that of the feast, imposes itself on us, . . . and within which what is, it is a letting be’ and this happens ‘not in a repetitive way but in a way determined by the encounter itself’ of man with the work of art. . . . As we have seen, Gadamer employs the expression Gelassenheit (letting be) which, in other circumstances, he varies with the expression ‘letting something be’ [...] ‘Within the experience of art one needs to learn from art itself a particular modality of lingering’; ‘one has to go back and forth, go out and circle it, go along it slowly and attain what the building promises to everyone for its own sentiment of life and for his own edification’. . . . We are here dealing with a lingering which, being a brother of the Heideggerian aufriss (the tender caressing of things in order to let emerge their profile, Aufriss) ‘is characterised for its being never boring’ . . . ‘the more we linger, let ourselves be involved by the work of art, the more it talks to us, appears complex, rich. The essence of the temporal experience of art consists in learning how to linger. This is perhaps what for us as humans is eternity’ . . . an eternity which, for Gadamer, mortals experience while lingering close to the work of art . . . it has same relationships with the vergängliche Ewigkeit (transient eternity).234

234 Here the Moretto refers to Hölderlin’s verses in the Hymn La festa di pace: So ist schnell/Vergänglich alles Himmliche; aber unsonst nicht (The eternal passes by rapidly, but not in vain). With this regard the author quotes a comment on this verse by Hölderlin from which it possible to draw a comparison between the ephemeral (yet almost divine) time experienced being in a relationship with a work of art and the ephemeral time of the passing of God, the eternal: “‘The transience of the eternal is not useless; yet, the passing over of the gods is the modality of their presence . . . . The God has a proper time, a proper measure, he stays only for a while . . . . Yet, the passage has been useless and men have thought about them for a long time. . . . The proximity of the gods is accomplished through a continuous thinking about them, the keeping of them into memory”’ (M. Heidegger, Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”, Gesamtausgabe, vol. XXXIX, Frankfurt a.M., 1980: 110. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 154. Emphases added).
Cumbessias villages are also places of peace, reconciliation. ‘A place of reconciliation does not homogenise people or environments but creates space for the diversity of human voices to participate . . . a space of reconciliation invites all who inhabit it to make space for ‘the other’, to move over socially and spiritually, . . . and in that process for everyone to be transformed into something new’ (Sheldrake 2001: 168. Emphasis added). They are also places belonging to the Christian religious tradition. And these communities are communities of Christians whose understanding of spirituality most probably resides in what Sheldrake has defined the ‘practice of living’ which, for Christians, is directly linked to the idea of discipleship. At the very heart of discipleship lies an idea of continuous transformation, an unchanging progress towards what is other, what is elsewhere: ‘an important feature of Jesus’ practice was to push people . . . away from familiar places into locations they found disturbing; . . the actions of Jesus redefined the nature of what was “centre”’. It is also in discipleship that we find a continuous tendency toward conversion, transformation. Moreover, a reference to the ‘Trinitarian foundations of Christian belief demands that [the practice of] “living” be understood in social and communitarian terms’ (Sheldrake 2001: 69, 147).

The devotees’ lives in a new setting, awakened and imposed by the hermeneutical dialogue they entertain with the sacred place, allow them to be sensitive to other and future appeals. Historicity, implicit in the eventful character of such conversations, leads us to frame them in terms of sequences of ‘ritual-architectural’ interactions (‘including irreverent, eccentric appropriations’) between devotees and religious architectures in the case of the cumbessias villages having a look at them throughout past decades (Jones 2000: 196). Taken together in
this historical frame the aforementioned sequences have constituted the ‘reception history’ of *cumbessias* villages. They have highlighted how the process of ‘self-understanding’ can be extended to the sacred architecture. Self-understanding itself includes an understanding of others: this means that the ontological transformation we incur is such thanks to the mediation of the work of architecture which have lent us an element of otherness. Architecture shows itself to be mediating between past and present identities and appropriations as Gadamer (2000 [1962]: 337) has aptly remarked: ‘Architectural works do not stand still along history as banks of a river rather, they are dragged along by it.’

### 7.1.5 Transformations II

Is the transformation achieved in a one-way sense? In other words, is the ontological challenge valid just for one part of the players, in this case the devotees, or is it the devotees’ dynamic commitment in the play itself fruitful for the place’s own development and increase of being?

We have seen how *cumbessias* villages, being themselves the symbolic outcomes of hermeneutical dialogues (between the human beings and the given natural environments) are inexhaustible funds of otherness . . . theirs is the coercive power for change, they are ‘triggers’ or catalysts in/through which new meanings may be highlighted. Lingering: this is a Gadamerian suggestion, this is what he has discovered of the work of art, its proper time and what he has told us to do when we find ourselves engaging with it. The more devotees linger in, alongside, within, at, by, around the *cumbessias* village, the sacred place, letting themselves be involved (seriously committed with) in what this place has to say to them, the more they are transformed, the more they let emerge another meaning of that place. I may complete this claim by adding that in the novena, i.e., in the lingering or in the activities the
devotees carry out while living in the cumbessias village, these places receive their completion, they become what they really are; what emerges in/through the novena is the sacredness that is what these places represent/are, their being precisely cumbessias villages and not markets, not theatres. Put it another way, in the novena which is basically a special way of lingering, the being there of what is represented in the cumbessias villages, i.e., their being sacred places, emerges. Through their ‘tender caressing’ of cumbessias villages, devotees let emerge the shape of these places, or, through devotees’ presence and care, these places emerge for what they are, that is to say sacred places, and more particularly cumbessias villages. This caressing is renewed every year in each encounter: each novena is the event in which and through which devotees linger close to these places and let emerge their being. Yet, every novena, being an event is historically bonded, every year presents itself with different premises than those of the previous year. Moreover, devotees engage in this experience with different attitudes, problems, expectations, questions, and needs. That is why the meanings they let emerge from their hermeneutical encounter with the otherness inherent in the world the cumbessias village displays to them, is never exhaustive, never completely determined: the product of each hermeneutical encounter, of each eventful novena, unveils some meanings while veiling others.

At this point, another question calls for our attention: I have already clarified that cumbessias villages, places, and built-up places are the products of a hermeneutical dialogue between beholders and a given natural environment. They have been created as meaningful places precisely because they derive from a dialogue itself entailing a deep involvement, and partly because they ascertain the sensitivity needed to catch up certain details in the discourse. The configuration of today’s cumbessias villages are the result of a number of continuous adaptations, continuous dialogues, hermeneutical experiences which have lead to the unveiling by those who
have lived these places, of different meanings throughout a historical trajectory. These meanings—Norberg-Schulz, would suggest to us—have been concretised in new forms, adjustments, renovations, or abrupt changes of the built forms of the *cumbessia* villages. Let us recall the village of *Sauccu* and the round *muristenes* only part of which still survive, now substituted by and joined with another kind of architecture. What should be noticed here is, however high the degree of symbolic value the new architectural definition has maintained, the village of *Sauccu* still exercises a strong alluring power over its devotees, and being symbolic in its essence still allows those devotees to engage fruitfully in a dialogue with itself, and it still lets them linger within and alongside its internal paths. The challenges in architectural terms this *cumbessia* village has undergone throughout, especially the last two centuries, have not undermined its meaningfulness. In my opinion, the transformations have been the result of a hermeneutical conversation, they have not departed from the meaningfulness of the natural data, the context, the people, the function. With these premises I am then able to frame and explain the more recent transformations within the *cumbessias* villages: at the village of *Miracolo*, for instance, nobody has stayed for the whole novena for at least two decades. I have recorded, though, from the words of our informants a sensible decrease in the presence of devotees living in the *cumbessias* as stable pilgrims for the nine days of the novena. Asked about this phenomenon, informants found a rather comprehensible explanation to it, imputing the increased presence of cars as responsible for the quick visits the pilgrims now make to the village instead of the former nine-day stay. The cars allow devotees to come to attend a mass and leave immediately after it. Yet, in my opinion this fact more than being an explanation of the cause should be read as a symptom of something more profound. It could be argued, in fact, that the architectural transformations the *cumbessias* village of *Miracolo* have undergone
since the 1950s and 1960s have been carried out altering the previous equilibrium of the place and have not been the result of a hermeneutical process. ‘The formulations of Norberg-Schulz, Gadamer and so many others demonstrate . . . that architecture characterised by an inordinate amount of innovation finds no audience. Architecture that departs too radically from established conventions is neither meaningful nor transformative—more likely it is dismissed as bizarre or simply ignored’ (Jones 2000: 91. Emphases added). In the instance of Miracolo, changes have displayed themselves to be meaningless in the eyes of the devotees who do not recognise themselves anymore in that place. The architectural novelties displayed at Miracolo, as for example the church, the orphanage, etc., have been planned departing too much from the original meaningfulness of the place as it was before. This place is, as it is today, unable to exercise any kind of allurement over those people who, for years, lived their lives waiting for the moment to go there for the novena. This cumbessias village has exhausted its meaningfulness, has stopped being a symbol, a meaningful outcome of a conversation/encounter. Planners have departed too much from the original values people assigned to this sacred place. Its sacredness has not been lost, however; yet, the place misses those devotees who precisely with their lingering along its plaza, their lively going back and forth from one cumbessia to the other, their dances in the cortile, during the novena, animate it, bringing its being out for what it is, a cumbessias village.

There is no caressing, no lingering; there is no allurement itself given by similarity, familiarity and no transformations can be attained there anymore because there are no people willing to stay and listen because there is nothing to be heard. Miracolo is no more ‘existentially productive’. Meaning is an effect that is experienced, not a message that must be found’. The Miracolo has become a sign pointing out towards something other, it does not partake of that something, it is not a
symbol anymore. The ‘Heideggerian dynamic of concealment and revealment’ cannot be attained in this place, it becomes an unfruitful theorem to be applied somewhere else (2000: 189. Emphases added).

Nowadays, to talk about Miracolo entails an implicit reference to the sole church, not to the whole complex, not to the entirely renovated cumbessias, which are always empty during the novena. Gadamer sustained that the work of architecture being itself a mediation between past and present, between tradition and innovation, should keep this mediator capacity alive once it undergoes a process of adaptation or renovation: the religious edifices of Miracolo were symbolic outcomes of a hermeneutical dialogue. The result or the ‘effect’ of the dialogue has been concretely symbolised using the material available in a certain epoch, the dialogue itself is framed within a certain epoch, a certain portion of time and space. Architecture is a performative art and it is henceforth ‘occasional’ yet not bound to contingency rather included in a possible line of future commitments. The need for an architectural continuity of tradition means precisely to allow the place the possibility to be meaningful for future exchanges. The architectural transformations of Miracolo have been then carried out departing from Gadamer’s teaching. If the new Miracolo would like to talk to its previous devotees what would be the topic of their conversation if its newness has deleted those places in/through which devotees constructed their own memories, stories, legends. What about itself can Miracolo now tell to devotees that is also partly theirs’? Norberg-Schulz told us that an edifice is the result of a process of translation and it is itself a translating symbol. Is the Miracolo still able to translate his world to the devotees in order for them to know it? The fact remains that nothing symbolic or alive is in it, and a possible effort by devotees to engage in conversation with it would be useless.
Nowadays, devotees are no more fascinated by this place: the Miracolo does not resemble anybody. Devotees have no reason to live there, since they may attain a quite similar spiritual involvement simply going there for one or more masses and then going back home. Miracolo's alluring pull has been lost in the very moment in which its architectural mediatorial capacity between tradition and innovation has been secluded into a once-and-for-all meaning.

My task, however has not been that of retrieving the original meaning the authors, i.e., builders intended in relation to the sacred compounds, whether this operation might ever be possible or interesting for our purpose; rather, I have been strolling along those multifarious encounters between devotees and the place sites of our present concerns, elucidating how it is that precisely in the event of these encounters that either communities (of devotees) or these sacred places are mutually born.\footnote{Entailing an indirect reference to devotees' presences, Gadamer explains that:}

It is through the occasionality of its own being a representation, that the work of art enriches its own significance; . . . every performance [in our case it has to be read as encounter/appropriation] is an event which is not to be added to the work as something autonomous; it is the work of art itself which, in the event of the performance, occurs. Work of art is occasional in its own essence, so that it is the sole event of the performance that makes it talking, bringing to light its content (2000 [1962]: 317. Emphases added).

\section*{7.2. Conclusions. Cumbessias villages as places of transformation}

The meaning of the work of art . . . is characterised by a declared ecumenical accent. With its work, in fact, the artist does not want to express the community in which he is inserted, rather 'community is formed through his own way to express himself' and, on the basis of his intention, 'such community is the Oikumenē, it is the whole inhabited world, it is really universal'. The factor enabling the artist to construct these ecumenical worlds . . . is a particular quality of his language [symbolic language] revised within the Greek and Christian history. 'Symbol' refers to the 'tessera hospitalis'. In other words, a symbol is 'something thanks to which someone can be recognised as an old friend'. . . . Man is . . . like a fragment; that is why there is love, the waiting for someone, of the fragment that will arrive to complete the happiness that

\footnote{To better explain the relevance of event of the representation/encounter as every time productive of new meanings, Gadamer makes direct reference to the instance of festival: 'Being a festival, it is not a sort of identical historical event. It is neither something determined once and for all by its origin so that it may be possible to refer to an authentic festival to be counterposed to subsequent ways of celebrating it. On the contrary, the regularity of its celebration is implicit in its origin. Hence, the festival is, for its original essence, something always different. . . . Its own being stems from recurrence itself' (2000 [1962]: 269).}
is realised in the encounter. This comparison can also be applied to the experience of the beauty as intended in art. The experience of the symbolic, which takes place in the presence of the work of art, means ‘that this single [particular] . . . represents a sort of fragment of being, and that a corresponding being may complete making a whole of it and lead, in this way, to salvation; or that the other fragment is the missing piece wholly completing our fragment of life’ (Gadamer 1986: 42, 34. Quoted by Moretto 1997: 156–157. Emphasis added).

I have reached the end of the trajectory. I have explored the life of the people living a special kind of religious experience within places I have called *cumbessias* villages. Yet, in order to complete the scenario, I should return to our main question and clarify exactly what kind of experience is lived by the devotees within these sacred places. Moreover, through what kind of process is this experience lived? And, eventually, what is the effect it produces on the devotees? In answering these questions I shall try to chart, understand, and partly explain the recent challenges this experience has undergone.

Whilst it is not my task to engage, at this stage of the work, in a thorough explanation of my theoretical premises, it is, however, appropriate to remind the reader of the main points that have signed and constituted our trajectory. The argument being advanced in this thesis is that a sacred place, hence a *cumbessias* village, should be intended as a work of art. With this regard I have welcomed and entirely adopted the Heideggerian elaboration of the notion of ‘work of art’ already cited in Chapters 1 and 4 that we briefly revive here: ‘Works of art are privileged things, *things* which *work* on us, setting truth to work, disclosing the truth of things, disclosing the *world* in which things manifest themselves and the *earth* which draws them back into itself’ (Moran 2000: 215. Emphases added); ‘Our term Kunst [German word for ‘art’] derives from Kennen which means: to know about a thing and about its making. Therefore, τεχνη and art do not mean a ‘making’, rather a mode of knowing. Yet, this knowing process has for the Greeks the fundamental trait of an unveiling . . . what is in front of us’ (Heidegger 2000: 27). This creative
unveiling that the notion of work of art is, has been conveyed by Heidegger in his notion of place: a place, likewise a work of art, is a thing and as such it possesses a gathering power as he explains with the example of the bridge.236

In Heidegger’s words, to build is already to dwell: he pushes the comparison further, maintaining that the essence of being human is that of being a dweller. The relationship between human beings and places is particularly close: as already seen, the German word bauen, to build, ‘also means . . . to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, [and] . . . to remain, to stay in place. . . . Wunian means to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace’ (Heidegger 1993: 349–350). With these premises, our closeness, as human beings, should not to be intended as a dominion or a taking possession of places. Through our own being we already dwell and take care. What the Heideggerian notion of Dasein, in fact, has substantially purported is precisely that ours as human beings, is an existential proximity with the world we inhabit. We are inherently and already being[s]-in/with-the-world. Therefore, our relationship with places is characterised for its being a hermeneutical engagement: as takes place within our relationship with the work of art, our hermeneutical engagement is a creative process, hence an interpretative act. Through our special engagement with a given environmental context, the places that come to light or give themselves to us are things as works of art, they gather the world around them. Moreover, places are things, they are built-up places. As dwellers we are also builders. The edifices we build, and religious buildings are special kind of edifices, are works of art or results of our hermeneutical engagement/conversation: they are works of art, outcomes of the art of place that is architecture: ‘a work of art sets the truth to work; this operation is a creative process, because if the work of art gathers its world within it, it does so in a new way, it is an interpretative process and a

236 For an explanation of this notion as done by Heidegger see Chapter 1, section 1.3.
subsequent concretisation of certain aspects of that world (Moran 2000: 216). We only discover certain truths: the truth of the work of art is never completely attainable because it is implicitly relational. There always is a reserve of meaning to be discovered in subsequent encounters.

This dis-covering or unveiling and subsequent creative process is in the hands, or we should say existence, of the human beings. We do not dispose of a work of art, we rather enable it to express its world. We relate to the work of art as interpreters. Yet, as the foregoing argument has suggested, an hermeneutical engagement presupposes an interaction, so it is for a conversation. There are at least two partners in a relationship. And as it happens in a conversation the two parts engaged are mutually involved. I have shortly outlined how we work on a work of art/place. In order for us to better understand the operative process through which the work of art works on us and how this interaction/relationship/conversation is mutually constitutive of devotees and cumbessias villages I have been welcoming and adopting the Gadamerian metaphor of ‘play’. As already explained in paragraph 7.1 of this chapter, I intended the encounter between the devotees and the sacred architecture of the cumbessias villages as a hermeneutical game: in other words, the devotees’ experience of, and within, these sacred places has been considered as a dialogue, an experience of comprehension and mutual exchange. The metaphor of play presupposes this dialogue entailing a complete involvement and serious engagement by the two ‘players’ in our case represented by the cumbessias villages and the devotees. We have seen how it is precisely through the devotees’/beholders’ complete participation in the work of art or cumbessias village’s own world (i.e., during the novena) that this eventful dialogue coercively enables an increase of being—what I have called a transformation—either for the devotees or the sacred
place itself. It is what Bakhtin termed ‘“enlargement of consciousness” through the dialogic engagement with alterity’ (Jones 2000: 88).

I would now like to attempt to answer the two questions with which I began this last point: what kind of experience is lived by the devotees within these sacred places? It is an experience that can best be summarised by the term: participation. It is an experience of participation and creation. Devotees, as explained in the previous paragraph of this chapter, living the novena, hence participating, are agents whose agency is directed either towards themselves or towards the cumbessias village. They are at the same time agents and reagents. The same experience is that lived by the sacred place in the encounter with the devotees. Cumbessias villages in fact do not exhaust their meaningfulness, being recipients of always diverse stimuli and topics of conversation with the devotees a fact that enables them to be never-ending fruitful symbols. With this regard, I have charted the history of the reception of these places highlighting only their orthodox appropriations. Yet, ‘unorthodox, even disruptive, irreverent, or eccentric appropriations of sacred architectures, if usually condemned by believers and ignored by scholars, ought to invite our special interest rather than our resentment or disdain’ (Jones 2000: 196). To convey their dimension of meaningfulness, I should mention some of what Jones has termed ‘unorthodox’ or ‘irreverent’ appropriations: the Ferrari cars rally of Annunziata organised in the year 1996 by an independent group of adults from Bitti who simply wanted to enliven the urban centre. The rally, which was organised in a different period from the novena took place in Bitti and moved to Annunziata. The cumbessias village has been transformed to accommodate the numerous vendors who arrived from the village of Bitti and other neighbouring towns to sell various traditional produce such as honey, cheese, torrone, and sweets, . . . Likewise, the plaza of the cumbessias village of Gonare, in 2001 and even in the previous year has become the scene for showing
Modolo’s new creations. Modolo is a young and internationally known Sardinian fashion designer. In this case the event was held one evening during the novena. Moreover, as we have seen, the cumbessias village of S. Cosimo has been the scene for the past four years for an agricultural and food fair. For this occasion almost half of the cumbessias and part of the plaza become the sites for the merchants to display their produce. The cumbessias are rented part to the devotees who go there during the summer to rest. Part of the cumbessias are rented to the merchants who transform them into shops during the day while they become alcoves for the night. People seem to accept this new phenomena. They do not judge these events as threatening to the sacredness of the place.

Yet, I have asked what kind of process is that through which this experience is lived? And, eventually, what effect does it have on the devotees? I could paraphrase these questions in this way: is there any element that is witnessing the ‘outcome’ of this process, witnessing that this process has been effective or that it has taken place at all? My answer with this regard is clear: the experiences that devotees live in the cumbessias villages can be is read through the transformations they in the end attain. We have already seen and dedicated to them an entire paragraph to the explanation of the process through which they are attained. Transformations are the points of arrival of these experiences.

What emerges from the exploration of the cumbessias villages as works of arts and the way they are experienced is the value and importance of the creative act which is inherent in participation. It is precisely the participation or that which throughout this thesis I have frequently called engagement the key element that helps us to provide an explanation of the contemporary challenges or the kind of evolution the relationship between devotees and cumbessias villages has undergone during the past few decades. In Chapters 4 and 5 I have highlighted two kinds of evolutions: on
the one hand, the architectural challenges of the *cumbessias* villages carried out mainly between the 1960s and 1970s in order to accommodate devotees’ desire for modern conveniences. In the last decade we have assisted to a certain resumption of these works: the old works mainly consisted of furnishing these villages with the basic facilities (such as electrical systems, plumbing, sewage system), renovating and restoring edifices, such as the church and the *cumbessias*. However, substantial works of internal renovation have been carried out within all the six villages not to accommodate more people but rather to allow a small familiar group to stay for nine days with the comfort of a private bathroom. The foregoing Chapters 4 and 5, in fact, have shown a tendency towards a privatisation of *cumbessias*’ inner spaces in conjunction with an increased need for intimacy and privacy, at least at the level of the individual sphere. This factor has evolved to the detriment of the original communality of these internal spaces: from being mostly public places shared by numerous people, the *cumbessias*, while maintaining their single-room shape, have been increasingly lived as private alcoves. The introduction of basic furniture has reinforced this process: the sole grass-leaf mats that the pilgrims used to bring with them to sleep have been superseded by a whole series of pieces of second-hand furniture such as kitchens, refrigerators, cupboards, mats and mattresses. Moreover, this public/private internal separation has also been attained through the use of curtains that separate the intimate sleeping area from the more social, communal space of the kitchen/dining room. The second kind of evolution refers to the challenge in the articulation of internal and external spaces in these villages which has been paralleled by a substantial change in the activities carried out in these places, not so much in the religious rather in the daily realm. The lives of devotees during the 1940s and 1950s were punctuated by a series of communal activities engendering an incredible sharing of spaces and bodies, a continual
encounter/participation regarding either the private or the public spheres. People shared the same cooking fire, slept within the same cumbessias, tended their personal toilet together in the same bushes, laundered together at the same fountain, ate together, danced together. Nowadays, many of these activities have taken a more private dimension. Public lavatories, private kitchens, private bedrooms have changed the old panorama: devotees today act by themselves. Yet, there are still many occasions in which these activities are carried out together by groups of friends or relatives. Eating together is one of them, and so is cooking. Communal participation in these activities is still present.

Over the last twenty years, a challenge in devotees’ participation in the novenas either in number or in the modality, has also been registered. During the last century, and through to the 1960s and ’70s, a consistent part of the devotees resided steadily within the cumbessias for the whole nine days of celebration; beginning in the 1980s an increasing number of people limited their participation to the last two or three days of the festival. Particularly, in the last decade, informants referred to a consistent daily transfer of devotees. Nowadays, a generalised tendency registers people attending one mass during a whole novena or simply spending the last festive day within the village. It is a rather diffused and recent phenomenon: at a close proximity because of the unavailability of data, I can affirm that since this last decade an average of 10% of the total of cumbessias within each of the six villages has remained vacant during each novena. Transfers are not definitive, rather daily.

Moreover, there has been a substantial decrease in the number of participants to these religious events. Informants recount that until the 1950s to 1970s each cumbessia could host 10 to 15 people sleeping together in the same space. Over the last decade each cumbessia has hosted no more than four to five people at a time. Moreover, there has been a challenge in the composition of the groups attending
these events. I have registered a generational gap: a consistent number of stable participants to the novenas, in fact, are elders followed by their nephews and nieces. The generational gap is represented by middle-aged devotees. It is precisely this generation, together with adults between 20 and 35 years old, that is nowadays adopting the foregoing new modality of participation in the novena.

The dimension of the journey to these villages has also profoundly changed. Compared to the past pilgrimages of the 1950s and 1960s, in fact, the village is daily reached by car or more rarely by bus. The past experience of communal participation and sacrifice the pilgrimage on foot represented has been slowly superseded by a more ephemeral and individual movement towards the cumbessias villages. Yet, this rapid move toward these sacred places has not modified, at least not completely, the component of amazement inherent in the arrival, the anxiety of the expectation generated by the journey.

In seeking to understand the reasons of the recent changes this kind of experience has undergone throughout the last decades, particularly what has been purported as devotees’ decreased durable engagement with the cumbessias villages, it is desirable that I attempt to provide an explanation of this phenomenon. I should try to answer the foregoing questions. The picture I have so far sketched talks about a sort of decrease and metamorphosis of devotees’ agencies inherent in participation, engagement, serious commitment, and sacrifice. I maintain, in fact, that it is precisely in the removal of this agency and its creative capacity that the cause of the above decrease and metamorphosis should be sought. The community of devotees has been slowly yet relentlessly deprived of its creative role. Devotees have been relieved of the responsibility of creation. What is more, they have lost their sense of responsibility for creation. How? Throughout the whole thesis I have tried to hover
above and sometimes to enter more deeply into the experiences devotees lived within the *cumbessias* villages. They were in charge of many duties, the first and most important being the participation in the novena. Theirs was a relationship either with the religious dimension or with the place itself. With this regard, they were responsible for the construction of their alcoves, in the past for the production of their poor mats they used to sleep on, they had to build the porches in front of their own *cumbessias*. They also had to embark on a long journey to reach the *cumbessias* villages from their own small towns. They had to bring previously cooked provisions that had to last for the whole novena and provide for a numerous group of people. They could not wash themselves as carefully as at home, nor could they avail themselves to interior bathrooms but instead had to use ‘public’ bushes, or, more recently, public lavatories. If it is true that *cumbessias* villages’ recent amelioration has been carried out mainly in response to a changed time and people’s desire for modern conveniences, this fact has, however, produced a shift in the assignation of responsibility from people themselves to priests and other agencies such as the *priorati* who were the only people who could manage extensive and big works of renovation and restoration such as the aforementioned furnishings and other substantial works within the village. So the dimension passed from being one in which the single person or the family could decide independently for their own *cumbessia* and participate in eventual works of renovation of maintenance to one in which the agency for these works has been transferred to priests, *priorati*, committees, etc..

The mediation between people and places started to pass in the hands of these other figures who sometimes, as happened recently, had made recourse to outside collaborators for the completion of the works. There has been a shift from a direct

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237 On pilgrimage see Chapter 6, section 6.2.3.1.
relationship between people and places to an indirect, detached one. Nowadays, many of the works carried out in the cumbessias villages have been done without any kind of consultation with the interested communities and have assumed a definitive guise. New roads, substantial changes in the plans of the villages and of the cumbessias, have not seen the mediation of people. Places have been changed by others. Moreover, there has been a shift in the perceived identity of the cumbessias villages. Their special architectural characteristics have attracted the attention of authorities such as the Monuments and Fine Arts Office, and the Sardinian Region itself, which has authorised a series of actions in order to protect them from damage. The Region has also financially sponsored a number of substantial interventions within these sacred places under previous authorisation of the Monuments and Fine Arts Office. This shift should not be dismissed as irrelevant mostly because it addresses precisely the foregoing modified relationship between devotees and their places. These places have not anymore to be read as cumbessias villages lived, acted, and created through devotees’ own peculiar agencies and engagements; rather, they are places that need to be preserved not by those who have done it for ages but by impersonal and external agencies. The care for these places is no longer just for devotees.

There is, yet, another element I should not forget to highlight: people themselves have lost/dismissed their sense of responsibility for creation. More than in other periods of the relationship between devotees and cumbessias villages we can assist to a pressing request for modern conveniences and comforts. Devotees accept comfort, they experience these places as easier, without the need to suffer for the lack of water, for the need of a shower, for the need of a bedroom, etc. Today’s life within the cumbessias villages is much easier than that of even just 15 or 20 years ago. Their life in these places seems to eschew any kind of sacrifice or responsibility:
There are some young guys, students and workers who wanted to rent a *cumbessia* to attend the novena all together . . . they’re very young guys. However, to *keep* the tradition of the *Rimedio alive* these very brave guys, very good guys have wanted to come in order to live the novena among other people. There’s little entertainment because the families that used to start the entertainment at night are . . . those who have died, those who are sick, those who have family problems . . . so they no longer come here . . .

[why in your opinion people have lost their interest in this place . . . is it really a question of money?]

I think money may also be a reason . . . now in *Orosei* we’ve got rich!
The problem is that they’re abandoning . . . neglecting all this beauty, because this, here, is *beauty*. This is beauty for the soul and for the body, because you return here to be a simple person again, you return to need the Virgin. For goodness sake, I don’t mean that they don’t love the Virgin in the same way, the fact that we are here it does not mean that we love the Virgin more profoundly than other people . . . because they’re working or praying this we can’t judge it . . . because they work . . . in *Orosei* people work a lot . . .

[Before you told me that you once asked a friend of yours why she didn’t come to *Rimedio* for the novena. She replied, ‘I don’t go because there’s no bathroom inside the *cumbessia!*’ and you have answered to her ‘yes, but when I was born the bathrooms didn’t even exist!!’] Yes, you are right, and I’ve added ‘. . . and you are like me, because I come from a poor family so it is for you’. . . . In the past the rich people of *Orosei* could be counted on the fingers of a hand, but they also came here for the novena. At those times, there were no bathrooms here . . . and they came all the same, and why now people don’t come here? To tell you the truth, I don’t know why we have become what we are now . . .! It is not fair!

[what is then the difference between praying from home and to live here for the nine days of the novena?]

Well, I’ve had an argument with this girlfriend . . . I *come here because it is a sacrifice*, it is not the same thing to pray from home! Because if we go together to *Orosei* tomorrow I can show where I live and that I could come here on foot on a daily basis, because I love walking, I don’t drive and I’ve no driving license. I could have a nice walk every morning to come here, and every afternoon and then, I could go back home at night to sleep in my house, in my bed, with all the comforts that I’ve there . . .

There have been some people who have told me ‘look, I am also attending the novena coming every day and it is a sacrifice as well!!’ I replied ‘no, it is not true, the *real sacrifice is to sleep here*’. They have told me ‘why don’t you go back home for the night?’ I said ‘no, I’ve come here because I want to do a small sacrifice’ and, in the end it is not such a big sacrifice . . . it is so beautiful for me to clean the dishes using a small basin, and see the others doing the same outside, to go back in time, here we become more . . . it is not true that it is the same as in *Orosei*, because there’s the car and everything, we have all comforts there, you can get a shower and come here all made-up . . . I mean it is not bad, but it is not the same to live here . . .

[what is that one loses not staying here?]

I’ve told you, . . . maybe the other people who are not here are better than ourselves who are praying here, maybe they’re praying more than us, I can’t tell . . . yet, there’s something that is lost in that way . . . when I am here and I sit down I realise ‘I am so close to the Virgin’. I sit there on the pew in the church, I look and talk and I feel so quiet with an inner serenity, a tranquillity that I don’t feel at home. And when I go back home from the novena, this experience enriches me for the whole year because I’ve met people who I didn’t know although we are together from Orosei, here it is possible to become friends . . . This morning I was moved by the departure of the guys . . . It remains within myself that sort of internal richness because I’ve known people who I didn’t know very well . . . Here you experience small things that let you become different, at least it is what happens to me, but I’ve seen that it is something like that also for others . . . this morning one lady has gone away after the first novena, she
works in a bank from morning until evening, and she told me ‘here I am born again’. The daughter told her ‘mum, we can come back next year and you can take your holidays in September so we can stay for the first and second novena’ . . . Here we can cultivate friendships, can savour simple things, it is a very different life, while in the town I don’t disturb a neighbour . . . . The young girls now prefer to go back to Orosei at night, to go to a pizzeria . . . everything has changed for me and other families we are here now mostly because of a real vocation but also to be the starting point for these girls to rediscover the sanctuary . . . (65 year old woman).

Their participation is limited, is not complete, because to participate entails a suffering, a renunciation of one’s own world to live/participate in the world of the other or to put it another way, to let the other enter/participate in one’s own world. Participation so intended hence entails a proximity, a serious commitment. What is missing is a participation/engagement with the place, and with people, and with the self. If the cumbessias villages are works of art, devotees should be regarded as artists. They have this role in the play. Like artists, those devotees who still participate/engage themselves and their world in a conversation with the world of the cumbessias village, literally shoulder the responsibility to translate to the world, through their works of art, problems and conflicts belonging to the world itself; the artist, as the devotee, burdens himself of the anxieties, worries, and needs of their contemporary world. Devotees, being artists, are called to run the risk required by responsibility, liability, serious commitment, a complete engagement entailing the sacrifice of themselves and their selves in order to reach the others’ and their own. The result, the outcome of this commitment, whether done seriously and completely (in other words, respecting the rules of the Gadamerian play) is a transformation of their own world, the achievement of another perspective onto this world, new ethical standards from which to structure their lives. Such transformations, as seen earlier,

238 Rimedio. Excerpt from interview.
extend a sort of beneficial shadow over the whole community, reinforcing social
bonds at the same time reinforcing the community’s symbolic boundaries.

Yet, the life of an artist as it is generally portrayed has never been simple, nor
easy, but rather quite problematic. So it has been and still is the life of devotees with
the difference that life between the 1930s–1960s Sardinia was quite hard and required
families continuous adjustments in order to keep along the line of subsistence.
Throughout the last 40 years, however, problems and duties have substantially
changed in kind and quantity. Probably they are less in number, less in the nature of
their hardness but are certainly perceived as a heavy burden for those who live them.
I support this claim accepting the risk that it can be dismissed as a truism.239

Yet, in this strange game, I have highlighted two realities, an ‘as it should be’
and ‘as it actually is’. The ‘as it should be’ reality considers that the more duties and
problems within familiar groups, or simply for single individuals, the more the need
to go to the *cumbessias* villages to attend a novena. The more I live a troubled,
problematic life the more I need the help of my community, the help of Christ; the
more I need to participate, i.e., to share with others my own life and problems, to
commit myself seriously, i.e., to *abandon* myself to the mercy of God, to attain a sort
of selflessness in the encounter with the work of art that is the *cumbessias* village, in
a word to forget about myself and my problems.

On the contrary, the ‘as it actually is’ reality shows to us that the more
devotees live a troubled life, or simply the more their daily duties and engagements
are pressing, the less they have the possibility to go to the *cumbessias* village to
attend a novena, or the less they are willing to accept ‘other’ sacrifices there since
they already live them every day. If these devotees accept to go to a village they do it
on the condition that their stay is comfortable. Otherwise they simply don’t go or go
by car for just one day during the novena and then go back home immediately afterwards.

Yet, as we have seen, it is precisely the act of participating, the act of sacrificing oneself that allows their engagement/conversation to be fruitful and the place be meaningful for what it is, a sacred place, a place, a sacred work of art which is doubly transforming if lived properly. To live cumbessias villages properly means to share one's own troubles, worries, and pains with Christ's pain, to share them with other people there, to deliver their selves and their worlds to the intrinsic otherness of these places. These places are places of reconciliation, with the self and with others, reconciliation with/in Christ. These are places of peace, places of rest, literal openings, dots, where everything stops and from which everything starts again.

Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" suggests commitment. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1.14). The Christian doctrine of Incarnation offers an image of God's irrevocable commitment as remaining. Similarly, it seems to me, Duns Scotus' very Franciscan concept of haecceitas demands that believers become similarly engaged with particularity, with contingent reality, with specific places. By remaining here and there, Scotus proclaims, we encounter the face of God (Sheldrake 2001: 29. Emphases added).

Within the cumbessias villages and the lingering they, as works of art, impose on us, the daily troubles stop for a while, they are reconsidered under a new light, the light of hope. With this premise we can understand better how it is through sacrifice, participation, and serious commitment that the artist may be called an artist and attain his own creative agency. It is then clear how those people who accept to sacrifice themselves are deciding to go back to the cumbessias villages every year, or every time it is possible, independently from the presence of conveniences or not. And, paradoxically, those daily troubles and duties of the life of an individual are the reason that spur people to go to the cumbessias villages. Those people who slowly

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239 I, in fact, affirm this on the basis of the oral material and personal experience during fieldwork.
lose their own sense of responsibility from the engagement these villages entail and require, simply stop going there and thus generate a gap.

As seen above, a consistent percentage of these people are represented by the adults and middle-aged devotees. The introduction of new conveniences in conjunction with the recent renovations that almost all the villages have undergone has changed these places. *Cumbessias* have become quite similar to their homes in their villages and therefore, they reason that it does not make sense to go to a place so similar from the one they are departing. The *cumbessias* of Miracolo, as we have seen, have been completely renovated, inside and outside. So it is for the whole village. These places are not familiar to their devotees. Moreover, they are/represent the complete refusal of the sacrifice. To neglect sacrifice means to neglect the reality of this place, what the place already is, a sacred place. That is also a reason why the more the *cumbessias* villages are renovated (departing too much from ‘established conventions’ as noted by Jones [2000]), the fewer number of people are willing to go there, and the less they are attracted to the novenas).

There is a generalised tendency to consider the additions of conveniences and renovations as incentives favouring the arrival of people to these places for the novenas. Yet, it is precisely the presence of such conveniences that limits the agency of sacrifice/participation/serious commitment/involvement that makes these places more similar to those of the devotees’ towns of origin. More specifically they render the life of devotees so similar to that of their towns of origin:

The whole of S. Cosimo is beautiful for me... and there’s also the fact that the people are so united... I love this fact.
[This means that it is something that you don’t live in your town of origin... is that what you mean?]
Well, not exactly, it’s something that is disappearing in Mamoiada, because before the town was more united than it is now... Here there’s still a traditional atmosphere... . I mean, to live in a small room, lots of people sleeping in the same *cumbessia*, to eat all together, live there and also... there’s no bathroom.
[So it is this sharing of sacrifices that creates the union you are talking about. . . Do you think that if, in the future, bathrooms will be included in each cumbessia nothing would change in reference to the union of people, the spirit of the sharing...?]

Sure, it would certainly change it... (45 year old woman);

Yes, we're better off avoiding certain things such as the [presence of] radio, the TV... because, otherwise, perhaps, some people would stay inside their cumbessia to watch his film, his soap opera, while now [that there are no such things here], instead, he has to go out of the cumbessia and talk to people he doesn't know; . . . in the evenings and at night people linger outside to talk until late as it was in the past here, while now in Mamoia TV has... (43 year old man);

[Here the life is eminently lived outside not inside the cumbessias?]

Yes, you can’t keep many secrets in this place, I mean, there’s no privacy because people pass by and see you, you enter their cumbessia, they enter your cumbessia, everybody enters your cumbessia, but it’s wonderful, I like it (20 year old woman).241

The argument being advanced here is that the meaningfulness of the symbol which is the sacred place is reduced so much that it is no longer capable of luring people to go there. It does not allow people to get involved with it and their world; it does not even let the mutual process of transformation be attained. With these premises, transformation cannot be attained. It is as if the cumbessias were transformed into motel rooms, cumbessias villages into motels, the novenas into spiritual vacations. It is as if the devotees would have no agency at all on the place they are living. That is why the cumbessias villages of Annunziata, Sauccu, and S. Cosimo, which have not stopped promoting participation and sacrifice, still keep their high degree of stable attendance (for the whole novena) almost unaltered, while others such as Miracolo, Rimedio and partly Gonare, have been and still are suffering from a continuous decrease of stable attendance. This phenomenon can be explained if we look, as we have done, at the architectural evolution that has characterised these places. In them, architectural works have departed from the inherent meaningfulness of these places presenting themselves as a mere taking possession of the nature of these places and their worlds. If we look at the pictures of these places as they were previously and as

240 Here the informant stresses a person is watching his movie in order to emphasise a private/personal dimension that constrasts with another one that is public/communal. To watch a movie while being in a cumbessias village is then considered a private act and is highly contrasted to the community of devotees.

241 S. Cosimo. Excerpt from interview.
they are today we immediately realise how they are the outcome of a ‘possession’, a discourse rather than of a hermeneutical dialogue.

At this point, I have reached an understanding that links the efficacy of the creative act (of the devotees) to participation/involvement/serious commitment/sacrifice. The only way through which a serious commitment can be achieved is through sacrifice.

It isn’t easy to sleep here because, I mean, there’s no light, dust and stuff fall from the roof at night. . . .
You hear noises at night [they laugh] but it’s nice . . .
. . . and water filters through the roof while it rains . . . it’s a sacrifice you make. . . .
‘because some of these cumbessias are quite old . . .
I’d have preferred that all the cumbessias stayed old like this one . . . because if you’re making a promise. . . I mean you should fulfil a promise . . .
[You are saying that it is better not to make any renovation to the cumbessias?]
Yes, I’d have preferred to keep them as they are now . . .
Yes, but there are many who don’t understand this fact, everybody wants the cumbessia with the indoor bathroom, and this and that . . . but the priest keeps saying that to come here is a sacrifice, we’re not on holiday!
If you come here, it’s not to enjoy yourself, you make a sacrifice in coming, because it’s a sacrifice to sleep like this, eat in a such a hot, narrow space, with no light, it’s a sacrifice that you are making. . . .
Here we become normal people again, we’re not at home. . . . (12 year old boy)\(^{242}\)

It is the only way through which devotees may, at the end of the novena, talk about a real participatory involvement, of theirs as a ‘true experience, and an experience of truth’ as Vattimo (2000) reminds us.

Who are those who want to live a true experience, who want to be transformed?
Are those the people who let themselves be absorbed by the work of art/cumbessias village and its world? Within this world these people seek the experience that may challenge their own world. They want to change, that is why they still go there, they want and need to be changed. Like all others they live a stressful life, are pressed by duties, worried by troubles, but they still see in these places a possibility of change, they see a hope for transformation.

\(^{242}\)Rimedio. Excerpt from interview.
Are these my final words? Mine has also been an experience of transformation through. My direct involvement in the novenas within the sacred places and together with the people I have been talking about in these pages. Mine has been an indirect engagement attained through the long writing of these pages. I cannot put the word ‘End’ to this work because there is a world within it: I can only hope that someone else will, through these simple words, these simple people and places, be able to unveil other dialogues that the sole rich meaningfulness, of what I have been exploring, may entail.
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Appendix 1
The village of Bitti rises 565 metres above sea level, 34 km NNE from the town of Nuoro, in the historical region of the Barbagia. Bitti's territory spreads over a significant 21,588 hectares and presents an enormous plateau which declines eastwards forming vast gullies and gorges. The land is rich with cork, oak and holm oak. The actual village of Bitti includes the adjacent village of Gorofai which has now become one of its districts.

Angius estimated the population in 1833 to be 2,500 inhabitants. The village of Bitti's economy was and still is based on sheep farming: already in the mid 1800s in fact 600 people, that is a good 24% of the population, were occupied in the sheep farming sector which had a zootecnico patrimony of 55,000 sheep, 2000 goats, 1000 cows, 6000 pigs and 350 horses. This activity produced cheese, milk, leather, wool, part of which was used for trading outside the village. Agriculture, on the contrary, occupied 1.8% of the active population. The rest of the labour force was made up of craftsmen, blacksmiths, farriers, woodworkers and builders. The most important cultivation was that of cereals, especially barley, wheat, legumes and broad beans of which a part was used to exchange with the nearby villages; a considerable part of the land was kept for vegetable gardens and vineyards. The women were mainly responsible for the vegetable gardens, the harvesting and helping with the cheese production. They were also in charge of the weaving which produced clothing, covers and other fabrics. The fabrics could also be bought from nearby villages in case of necessity. In the village of Bitti there were a few clothes stores which sold fabrics.

Halfway through 1800 there were many academic men and there was already a school. Today the village even has its own Liceo Scientifico, but there are many students who prefer to commute to the nearby schools in Nuoro. From the post-war period, Bitti has assisted in a marked depopulation with a surge towards the coast. Already from the 1960s, demographic growth has maintained a negative trend. From 1985 to 1997 Bitti lost 1/6th of its population. What is more, the percentage of over 65s at the end of the '90s registered 20% of the total number of residents. Today the village counts 3,375 inhabitants.

There is also a high number of unemployed university graduates registered; the active population amounts to less than 31%, the contribution to the workforce reduced during the 1960s because of the percentage of elderly, a decrease in the local productive structures, and the emigration of the young. In 1998 the unemployment rate exceeded 25%. In the 1990s the farming sector, which occupied 40% of the workers in widespread production, suddenly began to decrease in 1991 due to the expansion in services. Today the fertile areas destined for vegetable gardens, vineyards and olive groves are widespread even although they contribute in only a small part to the village economy (choosing unskilled and part-time workers) whose production only supplements the family income and has more of a recreational value. Today the leading sector in Bitti's economy is still sheep farming with a
significant sheep zootechnic patrimony. There have been various incentives for the agro-pastoral sector through both the agricultural reform in the 70s and European Economic Community backing in 1999 which, although being a sector strongly attached to a traditional type of production, have contributed to the birth of various structures of milk transformation. In fact with European financing (Patti Verdi) in addition to the dairy, nine co-operatives have been formed to create further small associated dairies. The forestry commission occupies 65 people. The handicraft enterprise is very important, especially in the building and manufacturing sectors, this last one being an alimentary one dealing with the production of bread and traditional cakes. Over the last ten years an alternative form of tourism has appeared connected with nature, archaeology, culture, and gastronomy, with the birth of farm holidays and naturalistic and archeological guide services (Comunità Montana n. 10 “delle Baronte”, Aggiornamento del Piano Socio Economico della Comunità Montana n. 10 delle Baronte, Part 1, care of the Banco di Sardegna, Special Projects Office).

Cultural occupations which unite the community are organised by the various cultural associations: the women mainly meet in gyms or civil voluntary and religious associations such as Avis (Associazione Volontari Italiani Sangu) or Croce Azzurra, and ACI (Azione Cattolica Italiana). The parish community has a lot of members. Such associations organise many activities including theatre, courses in pottery and leather goods both for adults and the disabled, computer and English courses, conventions, exhibitions and film reviews. Both teenagers and adults attend the folklore associations which often form folk groups that animate feasts and reviews.

There are 21 bars in the village which are meeting places enjoyed mainly by the men. Only one pub-disco exists, and it operates only during the main festivals when the students who study away come back to the village. Other meeting places are the pizzerias either in the village or in the nearby villages and private houses.

**Mamoiada**

Mamujada as the locals call it, is situated in the Barbagia of Ollolai, 18 km to the SSW of the main town (Nuoro). With an altitude of 644 metres above sea level, its territory covers 5251 hectares: including the cumbessias village of SS. Cosma e Damiano and the slope of the artificial lake Talorwhich rise from the Lidana plateau, leaving the basin from where the village of Mamoiada emerges (Bonu 1968). The territory is rich with natural springs. With 2594 inhabitants in 2003, Mamoiada has grown considerably since the first half of the nineteenth century compared to 1771 inhabitants in 1841. This community also took part in the migration flow, popular with many other communities in the centre of the island. The years between 1855 and the early 1970s clearly show this increase. In the nineteenth century the community of Mamoiada had a mainly agricultural vocation, with 200 out of 419 families occupied in farming.

Around the village there are signs of the effects of the ‘Editto Sabaudo delle Chiudende’ (dated 1820) with various sheep pens enclosed within dry walls.
Barley and wheat were cultivated along with broad beans and a number of other legumes which were exchanged outside the village with other communities. The village was surrounded by vegetable gardens, orchards, olive groves and vineyards which satisfied mainly consumers inside the community. Agriculture and mulberry cultivation were another two sectors whose use (for trade and weaving in women's clothes) benefited Mamoiada. Up until then, the territory was rich with woods full of holm oak, English oak and cork. Like other villages in the centre of the island, Mamoiada was also engaged in sheep farming, a sector that occupied 136 out of the 419 families then present. Its zootechnical patrimony included sheep above all, counting 20800 together with 1,260 goats, 1,600 swine and 1,600 cows. The rest of the population dedicated themselves to handiwork in iron, wood and leather. Mamoiada was also important for constructing wooden carts. The village was already an active trading centre of farming produce like broad beans and of sheep products like cheese, wool, skins and leather. The leather was sold in Orsoi, while the wool in Orosei, Orgosolo and Ogliastra (Angius 1887). Compared with today the job sector has changed considerably:

Agriculture in 1967 occupied only 15 people who cultivated essentially vines instead of cereals. The vegetable gardens like the rest of the nearby villages remained an operative reality. The raisins obtained became a fundamental element in the production of the characteristic cakes. In this way the vine, like the almond, have always represented an important cultivation linked directly to the production of traditional cakes in many areas of Sardinia. Today wine producers have united to create a cooperative of wine merchants.

In 1967 there were 130 shepherds with its zootechnic patrimony reduced to 21,000 sheep, 600 cows, 800 swine and 10 horses. The goats have disappeared. The woody areas of the territory have today become property for wood companies to exploit. There are many bricklayers, miners and other workers. Trade has spread such that in 1991, it occupied 22.4% of the active population. Commercial activity in the village has increased notably, with many shops and workshops. The village has particularly benefited recently from the new road which connects the village with Nuoro where many of the villagers work and therefore commute daily.

The level of education has improved with respect to the nineteenth century with about 60 university graduates and 365 with school certificates, the number of women exceeding by far that of the men in both cases.

There are many cultural associations in the village where young and old can meet. The young often meet in the bars (10) or private habitats, but often choose to get away from the village to go to a neighbouring one. There are two aggregation centres: one for the men and one for the women. At their center, the women take part in manual activities like pottery and sewing, and they also have access to various publications and journals. There are also voluntary associations like the Croce Verde and Avis, together with these, there are a number of other associations dealing with local cultural traditions such as dancing and making carnival masks.
For a while the community of Mamoiada has kept up relationships with nearby villages either for exchanging products or to celebrate religious occasions or other important civil holidays. Recent episodes, such as thefts perpetrated to the loss of the Mamoiadinoms led to a deterioration of the relationship between the two bordering communities of Mamoiada and Orgosolo. Nevertheless, the last ten years has also seen the two communities becoming closer, particularly through marriage, often between the girls from Orgosolo and boys from Mamoiada.

Orani

This village lies 24 km to the WSW of Nuoro. Situated at 521 metres and running halfway down the river Tirso, the territory of Orani covers 13,052 hectares. In ancient times, like today, this village is full of natural springs was rich with cork trees, holm oak, English oak and yews.

In 1857 the community of Orani counted 2266 inhabitants, a population that has risen steadily to reach 3152 inhabitants in 2001.

Situated on a hill, this village’s land has been developed mainly for the agricultural sector together with a little sheep farming. According to Angius (1833), in the first half of the nineteenth century, Orani had 250 families dedicated to farming (which amounted to 330 people), and 100 to sheep farming, (with 370 shepherds, many of whom originated from Mamoiada, Orotelli and Orgosolo to whom herds were left for them to watch over), 50 to handiwork and other various activities. In 1843, its zootechnical patrimony totaled 3,500 cows, 15,000 sheep, 1,500 goats, 5,000 swine and 200 horses. Angius also mentions 240 weavers who worked on domestic fabrics and 3 merchants. Farming in this century developed mainly around cereals, wheat and barley, but there were also many vegetable gardens which grew cauliflower, onions, lettuce, tomatoes and every other type of vegetable. There were also many orchards, olive groves and vineyards.

Round about the 1930s, in Orani, the sheepfarming sector operated a dairy with 20 workers. In 1934 the village already possessed two inns, a chemist’s, a petrol station, a garage for cars and farming machinery, 12 food stores, 4 fabric stores, 8 wine and liquor retailers, a mill, a bakery, a goldsmith’s shop, 19 cobblers, 2 carpenters, 5 blacksmiths, 6 woodworkers and 6 cork retailers.

In 1845 there was already a school with 25 pupils taught by Franciscan monks who had their monastery in the village. By the 1950s it was joined by a lower secondary school.

At the beginning of the 1900s, Orani first began public and administrative services, like the postal and telegraphic service, electric lighting, which arrived in 1927, and the public waterworks (Ziotto 2000).

One of the most relevant voices for the economy of this village which started last century is that of mining. The economical exploitation of the talcum quarries had already started in 1910; in fact by the 1930s, 3000 tons of talcum was being mined. There were alternate and complex events
related to the management of the quarry. In the 1950s the established number occupied in this sector included over 200 people.

In the same years, a strong migratory flow was registered following a crisis in the agricultural sector which made many people abandon their fields and villages taking themselves abroad to France. A second migratory surge 10 years later took the villagers towards the north of Italy, Holland and Germany. A flourishing number of workers employed in the talcum quarries, increased around the 1970s following the industrialization process. At the end of the 1970s and the 1980s, two of the companies which managed the talc extraction went bankrupt. Now the mining industry is that of feldspar. The increase of the mining sector in the course of the 1900s brought notable consequences to the social level of Orani. In the first place the creation of a working class in a mainly agricultural and sheep farming community meant, on one the hand, for a good part of the families, the passage from an economy based on its own means of support and exchange to an economy based on wage earning. In fact, nearly all the families in Orani have had relatives in the mines. The construction of this same village shows the importance that this sector has had on the various levels of the Oranese community. Another consequence has been the high rate of mortality in the male part of the population even after a period of ten years due to the manifestation of silicosis as a result of mining. It should be noted that today, like 70 years ago, the mining industry recruits almost exclusively unskilled labourers and skilled personnel. From the 1930s up until today, none of the young Oranesi have furthered their scientific knowledge in the mining area and this fact proves how the mining sector has had a negative effect on the social level. Today the quarries of Orani have been included in future development plans in the area of the so-called Geo-Mineral Park.

Over the last ten years, the tertiary has developed significantly, with the expansion of services, 56 alimentary trading activities and 19 restaurant activities, 2 industries and 103 handicraft businesses. These last ones have a certain quality and their products are traded all over the island, the rest of Italy and the world. A highly appreciated example can be seen in the tailored work of Modolo whose clothes have a national importance.

There are various cultural associations (8) which give the community the possibility to meet weekly or monthly. In the village of Orani like a large part of those in central Sardinia, we can see a close parallel between a community attached to traditional values and practices and a modernity of customs spreading continually.

**Sarule**

* Sarule, emerges 30 km to the SW of the town of Nuoro. Belonging to the villages of the *Barbagia of Oliola*, it lies 626 metres above sea level and covers an area of 5265 hectares.

It has a population of 1,905 inhabitants which has grown little since the first half of the twentieth century when it counted 1,457 (Angius 1987).
Like many other villages in the hinterland, Sarule has an economy based on agriculture and sheep farming. In the nineteenth century over half the population were occupied with cereal farming, particularly wheat, barley and legumes. Vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens were for the family’s domestic use only, preferring to barter other products such as those acquired by the handiwork of sheep’s wool in the nearby territory of Gavoi. Its zootechnical patrimony in the 1800s were included 1,000 cows, 2,500 goats, 1,200 swine, 200 horses and 2,000 sheep (Angius 1887). In over a century the agricultural sector, particularly zootechny has proved to be on the increase contrary to regional and national levels. Up until 1991, 93.5% of farmland was designated for sheep farming. Sheep rearing is the most productive activity of the village today as in all central areas of the island: from a census taken in 1996 it results that there were 8,7 sheep to every inhabitant, totaling in 17029 sheep in 1998. But even today the activity of sheep rearing remains underdeveloped because of both the lack of shepherds and the continued resistance this productive activity has towards mechanization of any sort.

Like last century, today the family income still comes from sheep rearing which is integrated marginally with vegetable garden, fruit and vineyard cultivation. Those together with olive groves are the most relevant forms of farming even if, as said before, the activity is only minimal from an economic point of view.

The few farms which do exist in the territory are small and very fragmented. The industrial sector is practically absent and counts on the manufacturing sector by way of a few textile handicraft companies: in fact Sarule is famous for its carpets ([Piano Socio Economico del Nuorese, 2001, Comunità Montana n.9 del Nuorese]). In 1991, 23.6% of the village of Sarule were unemployed. In the last decade, however, a high rate of women have entered the job market choosing work ranging from textiles and alimentary to that of assistance.

The village has 5 bars and various cultural and folklore associations, although the few moments of activities of these centres do not create the conditions for social integration. Among the many there is s’Arula which is run by a group of women who organize activities for children. There are two folk groups which meet only to prepare for religious feasts and other similar happenings. The Proloco also meets only to organise local holidays. Apart from a few past and present clashes regarding the bordering land, the relationship between Sarule and its neighbour Orani has however shown the two villages to be close, and there have been many matrimonial unions between the two populations.

**Bortigali**

Bortigali lies in the Marghine region, in central western Sardinia, 50 km to the WSW of the town of Nuoro. It reaches an altitude of 510 metres. Its position is rather distinctive, located at the foot of the biggest trachyte formation of the region, that of Mount Santu Padre (1026 m). Its territory, which covers an area of 67,46 square km, has been destined for sheep farming and agriculture for over two centuries.
Angius (1987) writes that in 1833, the farming area, which was extremely fertile, resembled those observed in other central areas of the island destined mainly for wheat, barley, legumes and potatoes and planted with orchards and vineyards. Such a type of production was to be found again a century later: in the 1960s in fact, the principal crops were again those of wheat, barley, vine, almonds and fruit trees.

A large part of the village territory was destined for sheep pastures: the zootechnical patrimony then is in fact explicit in such a sense counting 20,000 sheep, 2,500 cows, 700 pigs and 500 goats. Since then there have been various exchanges and trade between Bortigali and the nearby villages like Bosa where dairy products were sold (Angius 1987: 517). Livestock, in a more important manner compared to two centuries previously, continues to represent the strongest sector of the village economy. At the beginning of the 1960s, in fact, in the Marghine area alone, 74% of the farming area was destined for sheep farming, and the zootechnical patrimony counted 89,588 sheep, 56,000 cattle, 2,262 horses, 782 goats and 2,673 swine (Vacca 1964).

As regards the farming economy, the 1960s saw the formation of a few manufacturing industries put to use in transforming, selling and exporting their dairy products. As far back as 1930s, there were already a few companies which dealt with exporting the cheese bought from the associated co-operatives, to America. It must be remembered that Bortigali was the first to form a cooperative between farmers and the sale of milk and its derivatives. Back in the 1960s the dairy industry held an important role in the economy of the village and the entire Marghine sub-region. The most important manufacturing sector is that of textiles which concentrated on the production of carpets and embroidery.

Regarding the population Angius speaks of 2920 inhabitants in 1833; in 2003 the figure has notably decreased to 1512 inhabitants.

**Orosei**

Situated halfway down the east coast of Sardinia in the gulf which takes its name, the village of Orosei, perhaps the most important and densely populated village of the Barone after Siniscola, lies 19 metres above sea level; and covers an area of 9000 hectares. Lying downstream of the river Cedrino, near the villages of Onia, Galtelli, Irgoli and Loculi, it is positioned 40 km ENE of Nuoro on the slope of Mount Tuttavista stretching in the direction NE-SW. The territory of Orosei alternates between flooding plains and basaltic highlands of volcanic origin called locally golfei which were produced from the slow erosive action of the river Cedrino; it formed long, deep gorges ahead of the flat land of Orosei.

Its agreeable geographic and climatic conditions favour the cultivation of cereals and legumes as well as linen, horticulture, vineyards, olive and almond groves. Sheep farming in the past relied on flocks originating from mountainous zones. Its zootechnical patrimony consisted of goats (2,000) and sheep (2,500), cows (500), horses (500) and swine (400).
The territory today is still extremely fertile and farming continues to flourish, with products traded with those of the internal zones and other areas along the coast, just as was done in the past. Between the years '85 and '91 agriculture was the most flourishing sector of its economy. From '91 the agricultural sector has been on the decline, while the service sector has increased. With the introduction in the 1990s of Regional Development Plans (Legge Regionale 44/76), the adoption of technical devices in 1988, like underground water networks and mechanical means to support farming, have allowed the restoration of vast areas for farming purposes. Traditional methods of farming have changed considerably and today there are some well-known farms which aim towards a highly specialized type of farming such as artichoke production and ornamental plant nurseries of woods and exotic plants, which are exported all over the region. Like the rest of the Baronia, Orrose lacks a strategy for longterm farm development.

Over the last ten years, the village has enlarged its activity in the handicraft industry sector, even though it has not made much difference to its economy. Apart from wood and wrought iron, over the past few years other handicraft activities have sprung up relating to the alimentary sector, like the production of pane carasau, traditional cakes (which the manufacturing companies sell at retail price), fresh pasta, and pork sausage products. These activities concern small companies which deal directly with the customer. Such activities gather 44% of employees from the manufacturing sector.

Mining is another industrial area of particular economic value: the marble quarries of Mount Tuttavista form the most important marble deposit in Sardinia. In 1991, there were 13 quarries and 200 workers in activity. Today there is only one quarry left operating. The mining sector calculates various industrial areas for the cutting and processing of the marble.

In the past ten years, the village has directed many business efforts towards enlarging the hotel tourism sector which has become rather successful and is constantly increasing. In 1991, in the area of marketable services, consistent numbers of employees were reserved to hotel and restaurant activities (32.5%), characterizing more and more a farming village which changes into a place of summer tourism (Carta 1988; Angius/Casalis 1833). If on the one hand the touristic development has brought benefits to certain industrial sectors like building and construction material factories, on the other, it nourishes seasonal work which for the majority means not being legally covered.

In the mid 1800s the registered population amounted to fewer than 2000 units, with people living to a very low average age. At the beginning of the 1980s, the population was however very young. Last century a strong demographic rise was registered in the 1960s and 1970s, and a real boom occurred in the 1990s, a kind of migratory phenomenon from inland towards the coast. Even in 1998, Orrose had a large number of young people with respect to that of the rest of the region and its over 65s amounted to less than 14%. Unemployment rose between 1993–96 and today indicates 14.5% (1999, Comunità Montana No. 10 “of the Barone”, Aggiornamento del Piano Socio Economico della Comunità Montana n.10 delle Baronie, Section 1, Banco di Sardegna, Ufficio Progetti Speciali).
Appendix 2
Here follows a brief historical outline of each of the sanctuaries.

It is important first of all, to point out that the historical research pertaining to the six cumbessias villages that are the subject of this study, is associated more than anything else with legends that speak of their construction, rather than with confirmed documentary sources. The origin and the date of consecration of the majority of these sanctuaries remains, in fact, unknown. It is, however, possible to identify three main historical documentary sources: condaghi, accounts and travel literature. For some of the six sanctuaries, if not all, there is a hypothesis that they were originally of monastic derivation: confirmed historical sources beginning from the twelfth century certify some form of association between the sanctuaries, such as that of Sauccu or that of Gonar, if not during the building phase, at least during the management phase, with the first monastic orders that arrived on the island from the continent during the so-called judicial period, in particular the Benedictine order. This is due to the urban morphology of the settlements including an original central nucleus, represented by the church, and by the cells (or cumbessias) for the monks, which were generally constructed around it. Among these documents there are papal stamps and condaghi, a form of accounts kept of the economic and exchange activities that the most important monasteries present on the island engaged in with the judicial administration, with other monasteries and with the local population in general. Among these, the most well known are the condaghi of S. Michele di Salvenor, San Nicola di Trullas, etc. Other documentary sources from which it has been possible to trace an outline of historical reference to help us understand the evolution of the six sanctuaries, are the novena registers. These registers were compiled annually by the administrators of the celebrations for the novenas, and they contained information regarding the management of the moveable property and real estate of the sanctuaries, the administration of goods donated during the novenas and the organisation of festivities. They date back to around the seventeenth century. Other important historical sources are the writings of numerous travellers who visited the island between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Among these there are writings by Valery, Jourdan, Delessert, Smyth etc...Travellers such as these, experienced and described the sanctuaries and the moments of celebration during the novenas.

Santa Maria de Sauccu

This cumbessias village is located within the region of Màrghine in the territorial district of the village of Bolutana at the boundary with the territory of Bortigali (see Appendix 4.e). The church of Sauccus is 1 kilometre farther on from the area of Badde Sàighes—this latter toponym probably deriving from the old medieval settlement of Villa Santu Selighes—southwards down on the plateau 850 metres above sea level. The area is crossed by the stream of Sauccu the ‘longest affluent’ of the Temo river (Bussa 2003). The term Sauccu could derive from the Latin sambucus, i.e., elder tree. Despite
the lack of documents about its building and consecration, the medieval
ecclesia Sancte Mariae de Sambucco witnesses of the settlement of Benedictine in this area, particularly the Cassinese monastic order since
the first half of twelfth century. Saucce is first mentioned in the Callisto II’s Papal bull dated 1122 together with other churches in confirmation of the Cassinese possessions within the curatoria of Marghine and within the whole island. The ecclesia of Sauccu—included into the possessions of the Benedictine monks of Monte Cassino—presented through Papal bulls and other documents (particularly Papal tax registers) is listed until 1474: ecclesia St Marie de Sambucco (Bull by Pope Anastasio IV, 1153–54); ecclesia St Marie de Sambucco (Bull by Pope Alessandro III, 1159); ecclesia St Marie de Sambucco (Bull by Pope Innocenzo III, 1208); ecclesia Sancte Marie de Sambucco (Onorio III, 1216); ecclesia Sambuco (clericus Johannes Amalrico, 1342); ecclesia ville de Sambucco (Raymundus de Gosenchis, papal nuncio, 1346); ecclesia de Sambucco, (Raymundus de Gosenchis, papal nuncio, 1347); ecclesia St Marie de Sambuco (Bull by Pope Urbano V, 1369); ecclesia St Marie de Sambuco (Bull by Pope Sisto IV, 1474). From the reading of these documents it may be correct to suppose that the church of Sauccu and its eventual monastic complex could be originally a Greek monastery subsequently inhabited (and probably rebuilt following Romanesque architecture’s dictates) by Benedictine monks. It should be remembered, in fact, that since the eleventh century the Roman Curia practiced the politics of re-appropriation of the Sardinian Greek church by sending Latin monastic congregations onto the island. Their arrival was also spurred by the generous donations of the giudici ruling the vast territories of the four Sardinian Giudicati (see note 70). Subsequent documents appear since the seventeenth century: the manuscript Libru de sa ecclesia de Santa Maria de Sauccu recorded the administrative activities of the opera of Sauccu from 1606 until 1691: with opera intended as ‘the religious institution aiming at the management of the edifice of the church, the administration of its property consisting in cattle, and the organisation of the festival’ (Bussa 2003: 21).

In 1837 Valery (1996: 210) wrote about Sauccu describing the rural church as a massive building, and the village, located in the midst of a thick wood, as a religious complex attracting numerous pilgrims who used to reside within the six small hovels close to the church or under wooden huts (see Appendix 4.e). The growth of the religious hamlet is subsequently attested by Merche in 1900 who referred to a small and ‘primitive’ village of ‘forty hovels concealed between elder trees and blackberry bushes’. They are described as having a ‘circular form’, their size not exceeding ‘1 metre’ height and with internal dimensions varying ‘from 7 up to 10 square meters’ (Merche 1901: 9).

Nostra Signora di Gonare.

The church of Gonare is located at 1683 metres above the sea level on top of the conical figure of Mount Gonare, a formation of granites, limestone, and schist (see Appendix 4.d). From its position the sacred edifice visually dominates the whole central territory, north-eastward the gulf of Orsei.
south-eastward the mountain range of Gennargentu, westward the gulf of Oristano and the plain of Ottana, northward Nuoro and its Mount Ortohene. On the southwestern slopes of Mount Gonare, almost 200 metres below the top, on a small plateau which joins this to the smaller Mount Gonaereddu, stands the cumbessias village of Gonare. The presence of various Neolithic monuments such as menhirs and domus de janas, together with many archaeological finds belonging to subsequent epochs, witness of the sacredness and early inhabitancy in the site since the third millennium B.C. (Camarda 1986; Zirottu 1996). There are no documents concerned with the building and consecration of the church: an indirect reference to the sacred edifice is first documented in 1341 in the Rationes decimarum (Sella 1945). Another relevant and direct reference to the church of Gonare is given by G.F. Fara in 1550 (Lai, F., II santuario di Nostra Signora di Gonare, Nuoro, Tipografia Ortohene, in Un anno mariano per la pacificazione, Diocesi di Nuoro, ed., Cagliari, Editrice Sarda Fossataro, 1972: 85–88).

However, the history of the Christianisation of Sardinia suggests to us that the first Christian construction on the site could be erected only from the first half of twelfth century from the giudice of the Giudicato of Logudoro, Gonario o Torre (Zirottu 1996:11). The official report of the pastoral visit by the Bishop Cannavera in 1608 on the one hand presents the church as having an altar and the statue of the Virgin while on the other it mentioned the fact that while the altar and the statue were already there a new church was under construction. On the arcade’s cornice positioned above one of the chapels within the church there is carved the date 1619: probably the date of the end of the works of construction of the present-day edifice. Although there is no certainty regarding the date of edification of the first church we at least have another documentary confirmation about its existence before the seventeenth century (1996: 9–10). Nowadays, the old church’s bell has an inscription with the date 1587. A documentary notice about the cumbessias dates back to 1709, and the official report was written soon after, ‘an accurate survey of the patrimony and of the church’ of Gonare. During that time, the small hovels for the pilgrims were found in an extreme state of abandonment. They were subsequently refurbished in 1907 and in 1912 in conjunction with the important event of the consecration of the church (Zirottu 1996: 79, 147).

Beata Vergine Annunziata

This cumbessias village is located more than 30 km northeast from the village of Bitti, at the far end of its territory at the boundary with the territory of Lodè from which it is only 8 kilometres in distance. It is located at the bottom of a valley at 241 metres above sea level, eastward between the western headland of Punta Sa Donna (1089) and the northern Punta Artaneddu (786) (see Appendix 4.a). The chapel of Annunziata has been supposedly built in the second half of sixteenth century by the parish priest Antonie Canopolio who subsequently became the Archbishop of Oristano. To the same century belong the so-called gosos, i.e., poetical
compositions in Sardinian language praising the life and gestures of a saint (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.1), written by G. P. Arca in honour of the Virgin of Annunziata. First works of refurbishment and enlargement of the first nucleus of the chapel were carried out in the first half of seventeenth century by the parish priest P. Gasole (Rustà 1988). More detailed notices can be found by reading the administrative registers of various churches and chapels within the former Diocese of Galtellì. Written at the end of the seventeenth century, the registers tell us about the patrimony of the chapel of Annunziata (land and cattle) and the various offerings to it by the numerous pilgrims. It is precisely during that century that thanks to the priest M. Serra the small chapel, inadequate to contain the increased number of devotees, had been enlarged to its the present-day size. The work was concluded in 1793. The increased affluence of pilgrims to the church, especially during the seventeenth century, determined the building of the first cumbessias (Fig. 1–2) and the drawing up in 1870 of an official regulation by the theologian G. Marras, parish priest of Bitti, about the rules to be followed in the management of the sanctuary. The regulation was applied in 1877 (Rustà 1988; 2000).

**Nostra Signora del Miracolo**

The cumbessias village of Miracolo is positioned at 552 metres above sea level on the granite hill of St. Michele, the symbol of the old village of Gorofaitsee (see Appendix 2b). Already by the end of the fifteenth century, the inventory of the patrimony belonging to the Bishop’s stipend of the Diocese of Galtellì refers to the presence within the site of the old parish church of St. Michele which will be subsequently demolished in 1933 by the will of Bishop Giuseppe Cogoni who thought to substitute the old sacred edifice with the construction of a brand new orphanage. It is in 1587 that a group of people from Gorofaitsee formally asked the Archbishop of Cagliari permission to build the second church, dedicated to St. Antioco whose altar was already present within the church of St. Michele (Bussu 1986: 34–35, 44). A first mention of the Virgin of Miracolo can be found within the deads’ register of the church of St. Michele, dating back to 1757; the title of the ‘Virgen del Milagro’ appears again within the deads’ register of St. Michele in 1767. Devotees left many legacies to the Virgin (Bussu 1986: 3637). Within the report written by the priest Michele Fadda to be sent to the Archbishop of Cagliari in 1771, the Virgin of Miracolo is also described as possessing an altar within the fore mentioned church. In 1803 a group of three priests and almost twenty laymen formally requested of the Bishop of Nuoro, A. M. Solinas, permission to refurbish the old church dedicated to the martyr St. Antioco and to dedicate it to the Virgin of Miracolo. The church has been restored and widened since 1865.

A first mention of the cumbessias for pilgrims built beside this church can be found within a letter written by the priest Marras to the Bishop of Nuoro, dated August 1882. At the end of the 1800s new cumbessias were built together with the pre-existing old ones, and the old path leading from Bitti to the sanctuary was widened and settled and the internal cortè was planted with trees. In the early 1960s, almost three decades after the demolition of the old church of St. Michele and the
construction of the new orphanage, the administration of the church of the Virgin of Miracolo decided to rebuild this church, in order to provide the pilgrims with a newer and wider sacred space to practice the novena (see Appendix 4.b).

**SS. Cosma e Damiano**
The cumbessias village is located on a vast granite plateau at 882 metres above sea level, about seven kilometres from the village of Mamoiada (see Appendix 4.f).
The origin of the church is hypothetical: oral tradition tells about the presence in the area of a monastery since the sixteenth century. The unique available reference is the date 1666 carved on the old bell of the church. In a way, recent excavations carried out in 2001 within the pavement of the church have revealed the skeleton of a monk bearing two medals, one of which has the date 1600. These findings have probably confirmed the foregoing hypothesis. Other interpretations describe the church as showing Byzantine or Romanesque influences, particularly, on the basis of the frescos present beside the altar or behind it. Behind the altar, in fact, is another little chapel, supposedly the first to have been built on the site. It probably dates back to A.D. seventh century (Carta 1997). There is no document indicating the date of construction of the first cumbessias around the church. The dedication of the church to the Greek martyrs Cosma and Damiano somewhat supports the hypothesis about the Byzantine origin of the first chapel.

**Nostra Signora del Ritemedio**
The cumbessias village, originally two kilometres from the village of Orosei, in the last decades of twentieth century has been encroached upon by the growing urbanisation that followed the 1960s (see Appendix 4.c). It is situated at thirty metres above sea level, between the headland of Cuccuru ‘e Flores (246m) west and by the small promontory of the Gallai (71 metres) northeast.
The original nucleus was basically constituted by the edifice of the church, already built in the seventeenth century, in 1640 the patronage of the sacred edifice had been put under the care of R. Ruin and his wife G. Todde both from Orosei by the Cagliari’s Archdiocese general vicar Tommaso Bachis. Already by the eighteenth century the small church of the Ritemedio was the site of pilgrimages and novenas. During this period the devotees had to eat and sleep within the church until the beginning of nineteenth century when the first cumbessias were built close to it. In 1898, a new church was built next to the old one in order to permit a larger influx of devotees to the cumbessias village.
Day, L., Villaggi abbandonati in Sardegna dal Trecento al Settecento: inventario. Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1973: 103; here the author wrongly maintains that the village of Santu Selighes (toponym deriving from the holm-oak or ilex) may be identified with that of Santu Sauches (deriving from the elder tree). Their semantic and phonetic evolution (present-day Selighes and Sauches does not in any sense allow the foregoing identification: (For a comprehensive historical treatment of Sauch see Busa, L., Il Libro dell’Opera di Santa Maria de Sauch Bolotana, Ed. Passato e Presente, 2003: 12.

Saba, A., Montecassino e la Sardegna Medioevo. Note storiche e Codice Diplomatico Sardo-Cassinese, Badia di Montecassino, Miscellanea Cassinese n.4, 1927: 1–6; Busa (2003).

Saba 1927: 52–53, 54, 155–156; Tola, D. P., Codice Diplomatico di Sardegna con altri documenti storici (tomo I, Regio Typographoe, Augustae Taurinorum, 1861-68: 204. The author inserts the date 1123 instead of 1122.

On the notion of curatoria see note 70.

Mainly land, people, cattle, and churches belonging to Greek monastic orders to which the Latin monks succeeded since the eleventh century.

Saba 1927: 196–197.

Saba (1927): 197-198; Tola (1861): 222.

Saba 1927: 211–212.


Quoted by Busa 2003: 10.


Saba 1927: 218–21

Saba 1927: 226–26. A list of these bibliographic references is also available in Terrosu-Asoie, A., L’insediamento umano medioevo e i centri abbandonati tra il secolo XIV ed il secolo XVII. Supplemento al fascicolo II dell’Atlante della Sardegna, Roma, CNR, 1974: 46.

The mountainous area at the boundary between Bolotana and Bortigali has been characterised by the richness and variety of the vegetation. Busa (2003: 19–20) refers to the wood of Sauccu Iselva di SaucciA, an area at the far end of the territory of Bolotana within which in the first half of nineteenth century various communities among which those of the fore mentioned villages could exercise their rights of access to the rich natural resources.

Iconless upright stones, menhirs, have been interpreted as sacred ceremonial monuments. A Breton word indicating ‘upright stone’ these monuments consist of rough-hewn single large slabs of stones of several meters high with their bottom ends fixed into the ground. Belonging to the so-called Megalithic architecture, menhirs present in Sardinia are generally not higher than 5 meters although singular exceptions have been registered of slabs of stones 6 meters high (Bogucki 1996: 504–506). Numerous are the menhirs distributed throughout the whole Sardinian territory especially in the area of Nuoro where there are about 300 examples almost all documented (Associazione Archeoarci Nuoro 1997).

Among the funerary monuments of the Neolithic such as barrows (tumuli) of various shapes and dimensions and wooden Totenhütten (mortuary buildings) can be included the Domus de Janas i.e., ‘fairies’ houses’, rockcut tombs or hypoge that popular culture saw as inhabited by small fairy-witches. These kinds of funerary structures are considered non-megalithic in that they are hollowed out in various kinds of rock (granite, limestone, basalt, sandstone, etc.) having a rectangular or squared plan and a small external doorway from which it is possible to have access to one or more rooms, all linked to each other through small internal doors. The first room at the entrance usually worked as ante-chamber from which it could be possible to enter into the main tomb (Bogucki 1996: 507). Generally, these burial edifices present carved naturalistic or stylised iconographic motifs usually inspired by the animal kingdom, relating to a sacred content or to the cult of the dead of various peoples and different cultures.
According to the legend of foundation, while sailing across the gulf of Orsera (eastern coast) from Palestine on his route towards Sardinia, Genario of Torres implored the Virgin to save him and his crew from the violence of the sea, promising to build a church in her honour on the first most visible point of dry land. This point was the summit of Mount Gonare. The Virgin granted him this favour. Once arrived at its slopes (it is said that mountain Gonare derives its name precisely from him), Genario encountered a woman carrying a baby in her arms and a she-mule. He offered to accompany her during their ascent to the top. At a certain point the woman disappeared. Once on the mountain top, Genario realised she was the Virgin who was ascending to take her own abode there. Along the path she stopped in various points to rest: she slept on a horizontal rock, knelt to pray, with her back leaned against a vertical rock, while on a smaller one she laid down her baby. Other places along the path are where she put her feet and hands, and where it is possible to see the hoofs of the she-mule. Zirottu (1996: 11) maintains that the legend of foundation apart from its 'documentary' value in terms of the origin of the cult to the Virgin of Gonare might be taken as historically relevant also in relation to the epoch of construction of the first religious edifice. Genario of Torres who lived in the first half of twelfth century was, in fact, profoundly devoted to the Virgin and could probably have decided to build a sanctuary in her honour on top of that mountain. On this, see Diocesi di Nuoro (1972); Melas (1948); for a more detailed analysis on historical sources dating back to the seventeenth century and relating to the cumbessias village of Gonare, see Zirottu (1996).


Da Data have been taken from the booklet distributed for the novena. Although it is not my intention to provide detailed historical reports for these cumbessias villages, it is however acknowledged a consistent lack of historical data regarding this particular village. Those available are jealously preserved and will be published by a local scholar from Orsera in the near future; therefore, they cannot be used in this thesis.
Appendix 3

Architectural Analysis
Beata Vergine Annunziata
The perception of the village’s outline is primarily enhanced by the high degree of visual contrast existing between the village and its surrounding natural context. Completely surrounded by the *cumbessias*, the outline of the church is hardly visible. The outline of the church is then limited to the sole gable of the taller façade and it is visible above the surrounding edifices.
The village is positioned in the lower part of a valley that slightly declines eastward. The complex is positioned within a wide natural landscape, surrounded by high mountains in the north, west and south directions. In the west, the village is linked to the *Diramazione Santissima Annunziata*, a small detachment of the nearby prison complex of *Mamone*. The church, perfectly oriented, occupies a central position within the village.

While very distant from the village of *Bitti*, the *Annunziata* is visually linked to the village of *Lodé* in the northeast.
Size

The mountains rising up all around the cumbessias village serve, on the one hand, as a natural backdrop allowing an easier perception of the general dimension of the village. On the other hand, the natural features of the village’s layout provide the viewer with an effective means of comparison for a better understanding of the size of the cumbessias. In this respect, the pictures confirm their reduced dimension when compared to the average height of Sardinian people, around 1.65 for men and 1.55 for women. Given its position and bigger size, the church immediately stands out especially when compared to the surrounding cumbessias.

5. The trees can be taken as a means of comparison for the cumbessia’s reduced size.

6. A devotee standing on the door of his cumbessia.

Both the village and church have a high degree of visual inertia: seen from afar the village's visual inertia is derived from its stable position within the valley while the church's and the *cumbessias'* is guaranteed by their compact geometry.
Colour

The white colour of the *cumbessias* and their simple proportions help distinguish the edifices' outline within the surrounding natural landscape.

Edges and Corners

The linear edges and simple articulation of the corners of the *cumbessias* produce a strong impact of light on the white surfaces, enhancing the contour of the wall surfaces. The form of the church is more articulated in comparison with that of the *cumbessias*, thus allowing the viewer to immediately recognise it.

10. The village of *Annunziata* from SW.

11. The old *cumbessia* of Carabinieri force, today a normal *cumbessia*.

12. A form of *cumbessia* of *Annunziata*. 
On the whole, the village presents a homogeneous textural quality, characterised by the use of white limewash plaster for both the cumbessias and church surfaces. Yet, there are a few instances of cumbessias not recently restored, showing the original texture of these edifices, originally built up using local stone. Through the years, the local stone has been progressively substituted by the use of bricks.

13. Schist and granite are the local stones used to build the village.

14. Bricks are used today for the construction of the cumbessias.

15. Limewash is also used to plaster the more recent cumbessias.

16. A row of cumbessias showing various degrees of textural qualities.
Form and Space

Base Plane

The base plane of the village changes according to the contour of the land; for this reason there is not a homogeneous internal level of the terrain. There are a few areas which represent an exception such as the church plaza, whose base plane is for the most part at the same level but depressed when compared with the main path leading to it. Originally unsurfaced, the base plane of the church has recently been paved with concrete.

17. The base plane of the village declining towards East.

18. The plaza of the Annunziata declining towards East.

19. The stairs permit a clearer measure of the declination of the base plane of the village (in this case leading towards the church).
Light, Openings and Degree of Enclosure

The presence of high mountains in three directions constitutes a first degree of enclosure of the village. Within it, this sense of closure is somehow mitigated by the small size of its edifices that allow the viewer to constantly see beyond the roofs and the visual border represented by the *cumbessias* themselves. The *cumbessias* present their openings to the south, north and east. The *cumbessias* that open toward north, in particular, seem to respond to another criteria than that of the warmth and sunlight; rather, their openings face the church, the most important building of this complex. Doors and windows are the main kinds of openings, and their dimensions are illustrated in the pictures; doors and windows also give us an immediate idea of the actual thickness of the walls of the *cumbessias*. The intensity of the sunlight is enhanced by the white colour of the edifices, colour that underlines the simplicity of forms and the strong contrast between illuminated walls and those remaining in shadow.

20. The sun light enters the *cumbessia* mainly from the door left open.

21. The white limewash plaster of the village enhances lights and shadows.

22. The small windows of the *cumbessias* back walls.
23. A door and a window are the sole openings of Annunziata’s cubicities.

24. The door facing West represents the main opening of the church.

25. The facade of the church, facing West, receives light mainly during the afternoon.
Spatial organisation

Without the presence of uniform spaces with the same function and size, the village presents a clustered organisation. The cumbessias do not present, in fact, a fixed arrangement, being sometimes in a row, sometimes isolated from each other. The close proximity is an identifiable criterion for the internal layout of the buildings.

Circulation

Approach and Entrance

The cumbessias village is only visible when situated at a short distance from it. The viewer approaches it from two ways: from Bitti in the northeast direction along the provincial road n. 50 connecting Lodé and Mamone or arriving from Lodé in the east direction. A white angel statue indicates the way into the village. The Annunziata, in fact, does not have any special gateway nor any other elements that could define or differentiate its beginnings. Its two entrances are both used for cars and pedestrians arriving there on pilgrimage.
The main entrance path. The paths of the village all lead to the most important point: the church.

28. Approaching the main entrance to the village from the provincial road n. 50.

29. The main entrance path.

30. The paths of the village all lead to the most important point: the church.

31. Entering the church.
The village presents a composite organisation of the paths with an apparent internal hierarchy: among them a path more important than the others leads from the entrance, directly to the church plaza with the interruption of one point of pause: a small altar placed in the middle of a crossing of paths, represents a place where people stop and say a prayer before going to the church.

32. The path leading towards NE from the main plaza.

33. The village also presents narrow paths.

34. The entrance path to a group of cumbessias.

35. The point of arrival from the secondary entry path from S.
36. The path leading to the priorato and public lavatories.

37. The arrival at the village from the secondary path.

38. The angel signs the main entrance to the village.

39. Paths within the village are also used for religious-ceremonial purposes.
Configuration of the Paths

40. The path from the public lavatories.

41. The stairs leading from the upper part of the village to the lower part on the E.

42. The paths lead and start from the church.

43. The path linking the cumbessias on the northern side of the village.

44. The second nodal point in the configuration of path after the church plaza: it is signed by the presence of the altar behind the pine tree.
Madonna

del

Miracolo
From the outside, the village appears to be recognisable due to the church’s clear outline. Its singular crowning, in fact, is characterised by sharp-edged lines that differ completely from the surrounding context. Moreover, once within the village, the continuity that characterises the linear outline of the *cumbessias* does not allow a simple understanding of the internal division of the edifices.

1. The church from SE.
2. The plaza of the *cumbessias* village from S.
From the outside, the village appears to be recognisable due to the church's clear outline. Its singular crowning, in fact, is characterised by sharp-edged lines that differ completely from the surrounding context. Moreover, once within the village, the continuity that characterises the linear outline of the cumbessias does not allow a simple understanding of the internal division of the edifices.
5. The village and its present relation with the near centre of Bitti.

6. The plaza of the cumbessias village from NW.
From the outside, the big size of the church is magnified by its elevated position compared to that of the viewer while, from the interior, it is emphasised when compared with the small size of the *cumbessias*. The small dimensions of the latter, in fact, are immediately perceived when looking at the openings, such as windows and doors.

Both church and village present a good degree of visual inertia. Their shapes are steadily related to the ground plane.
The village mainly presents 90 degrees angles. However, there are two different articulations of the form: on the one hand, the linear articulation of the *cumbessias'* front sides maintains a continuity between adjoining wall planes with just a few corners while, on the other, there is the complex articulation of the church surfaces whose various unadorned corners emphasise the volume of its mass.

13. The recent works of renovation have determined the present-day colour of the whole village.

14. The adjoining, linear wall surfaces of the *cumbessias*.

15. The more articulated wall surface of the new church contrasts the linear surfaces of the *cumbessias*. 
The textural quality of the church’s surfaces, built up using reinforced concrete, differs from that of the cumbessias, built using granitic local stone.

The base plane of the cumbessias village is mainly articulated on three different levels: positioned near to the entrance gateway, in fact, the cumbessias base plane is dropped below the main level of the entry path. The entryway’s base plane slowly raises when leading to the church square. The entryway’s ground surface is paved using a local stone, an articulation that differs from that of the church square’s ground surface that has been left unsurfaced. The church base plane differs greatly from that of the external road.
20. The entrance to the village immediately shows the difference in the base plane.

21. The base plane of the plaza from the entry path.

22. The base plane of the village is higher toward SE.

23. The base plane declining abruptly toward S.
Light, Openings and Degree of Enclosure

The *cumbessias* edifices present basic openings as a door and one window facing just the interior of the village being blind on their exterior back sides. The arched openings of the *logge* or open galleries exclusively face the interior of the village, particularly the main square.

24. The secondary doorway of the church facing the plaza.

25. The plaza of the village.
26. Cumbessias' basic openings are a door and a window on the front walls.

27. Cumbessias and logge: both their openings face the main plaza of the village.

28. The typical logge's basic openings differ from those of the cumbessias.

29. Looking the plaza from the interior of a cumbessia.

30. The door of a cumbessia.
The village is a linear organisation mainly developed around two internal courtyards: a small one at the entrance and a bigger one, the church square, whose main border is represented by the open galleries and *cumbessias* themselves.

The main entrance to the village is signed by a big gateway on the west side. The path leading to the village of *Miracolo* winds along the urban context of *Bitti* and the approach is emphasised by the presence of various street vendors positioned along the western exterior wall. In the south, a big staircase represents another entrance to the village and is mainly used by pedestrians.
Circulation

Approach and Entrance

33. Approaching the Miracolo’s gateway at SW.

34. The entrance to the village.
35. The passage signing the entrance to the main plaza.

36. The gateway seen from inside.
This village presents two main interior paths: one leading from the main entrance to the church plaza, placed alongside another small path running in front of the *cumbessias* on a depressed base plane. The other is the church plaza.

37. The stairs leading to the public lavatories and the first *cumbessias* on the first courtyard.

38. The passage leading to the lavatories.

39. The pedestrian path linking the village of *Bitti* to the *cumbessias* village.
Circulation

Configuration of the Paths

40. The path linking the first courtyard and the main plaza.
41. The plaza of the *cumbessias* village from SW.
Nostra Signora del Rimedio
What the village presents through its outline is the line of the wall enclosure and part of the church. Seen from the interior of the village, the shape of the latter is well defined since the area immediately close to it has been kept clear from trees.

1. The outline of the new church is visible from outside of the village.

2. The new church seen from south within the village.
Shape

The recognition of the church through its outline is made easier by the evident difference with the outline of the surrounding *cumbessias*. On the contrary, the perception of the shape of the *cumbessias* is disturbed by the presence of various trees planted in front of them. The homogeneous configuration of the *cumbessias* does not allow a clear-cut distinction of the singular edifices.

3. The outline of the old church from E.

4. The outline of the *cumbessias* from NE.
Position and Orientation

The village is positioned on the top of a slope that very slightly declines eastward reaching the gulf of Orosei. To the west, the village is surrounded by Mount Tuttavista and in the northwest by a hill. It is quite close to the village of Orosei.

5. The cumbessias village of Rimedio from NW.

6. The outline of the cumbessias village from the top of the north-western hill.
To the west, the village of Rimedio is linked to the Madonna of Loddusio, an old church positioned on the top of a hill from which the sanctuary is partially visible. On the north side, the village is linked to the state road n. 129 connecting Orosei to the surrounding villages of Onifai, Irgoli, and Galtelli. Towards the south there are new Orosei’s spreading quarters. Within the cumbessias village the church is surrounded by a garden.
The different dimensions of the church compared to that of the *cumbessias* allow the viewer to immediately distinguish between the religious buildings and the edifices for the pilgrims. The old and the new churches, one built beside the other, differ in size. The volume of the new edifice is bigger than that of the old one. The overall size of the village is represented by the size of the *cumbessias*. Among them there is little or no difference in the dimension of the interiors, each presenting just a small room. Only recent works of restoration have produced some changes in the interior spaces of a few of these edifices with the addition of a bathroom and a small corner for the kitchen.
The degree of visual inertia of the church is increased by the presence of the lateral buttresses.

11. The size of the cumbessias compared to that of two devotees.

12. The apse of the new church seen from E.
Visual Inertia

The degree of visual inertia of the church is increased by the presence of the lateral buttresses.

Colour

The whiteness of the *cumbeñas* represents the main colour of the village reproduced also in the old church, with the colour contrasting with the green hue of the plants and grass present within the hamlet.

13. The buttresses of the new church from N.

14. The white limewash plastered walls of the old church differ from the pink plaster of the new church's walls.
Colour

Pink for the new church and white for the old one allow the viewer to distinguish between the two adjoining edifices belonging to diverse epochs.

15. The white front walls of the cumbessias from E.
16. The pink walls of the new church seen from within the village.
17. The colour of the Western facade of the cumbessias village of Rimedio.
The configuration of the internal surfaces of the village, together with its character of continuity, and the homogeneity of colour and lack of corners heighten the sense of enclosure that the viewer feels once within it. Nothing interrupts the surface except for the entrances to the public toilets, a recent addition to the structure of the village.
Edges and Corners

This exterior wall surfaces confirm the continuity of the internal surfaces. The main edge of the village is, in fact, constituted by the wall enclosure, itself represented by the back side of the *cumbessias*.

Texture

20. The *cumbessias' back* walls on the Eastern side. They represent the village's enclosure.

21. Basalt represents together with marble the local stone. The external Southern wall still shows the use of this material for the construction of the village.

The white limewashed plaster of the exterior surfaces of the *cumbessias* keenly represents the overall textural quality of the village. However, outside of the hamlet, the *cumbessias' backside* surfaces still show the old material of construction of these edifices, a local basaltic stone.
Both the visual and tactile qualities of the surfaces show their irregular articulation due to the inhomogeneous distribution of plaster on already irregular stone-wall surfaces. The result is a course and inhomogeneous texture.

22. The *cumbessias*’ backside and the church’s different textural qualities.

23. The limewashed plastered wall of the old church.
24. The reeds represent the material used for the building of the roofs. Plastic sheet avoids the falling of dust and water.

25. The white limewash plastered walls of the *cumbessias*.
Within the base plane of the village we can read a differentiation of its surface articulation: a gravel and earth flooring occupying the ring of path within the village and the square on the west, southwest sides; a stone floor where the base plane slightly declines toward the north with direction corresponding to the main entrance, and a garden, occupying the rest of the interior surface. The stone floor of the main entrance path is made with a local schist.

26. The stone floor on the Northern side signs the new church's perimeter.

27. The stone floor becomes a path.
Part of the base plane with the garden has been elevated to create an altar dedicated to the Virgin. The base plane in front of it has been paved with local basalt flagstone with the intent to separate this specific domain of space used for the festivity masses from the surroundings. On the west side, just in front of the *cumbessias*, a 10 to 20 cm elevation of the base plane is marked by flower beds.

28. The statue of the Virgin and the altar on a different base plane.

29. A different floor paved with local basalt marks the area of the altar.
Form and Space

30. The elevated base plane in front of the cumbessias positioned on the southern side of the village.

31. The area of the garden from SE.

32. The base plane of the cumbessias on the southern side is visible when arriving from N.
The specific function of the surroundings within the village is somehow underlined by the sunlight. The trees, numerous within the garden and along the internal path, offer shade. The wooden and ditch reeds' arbours measure out and screen the sunlight, mixing it with the darker surroundings of the *cumbessias*. The principal *cumbessias* openings are small doors, usually around 180 cm, while some of them are even smaller, under 170 cm.
35. The door is the sole opening of the cumbessia.

36. Recently renovated cumbessias have been added a small window on the back wall.

37. The small opening of the cumbessia.
Organisation

Spatial Organisation

The village presents a linear organisation developed around the churches. The *cumbessias* present the same type of internal organisation and are disposed to form a ring around the churches.

38. Two devotees and the small door of the *cumbessia* in the back.

39. The linear line of the enclosure.

40. The church represents the focal point around with the village has developed.
Spatial Organisation

41. The interior of the old church.

42. The *cumbessias* in the back encircling the garden.
Circulation

Approach and Entrance

The state road n. 129 (connecting Orosei, on the east coast with Bosa, the west coast) represents the main approach to the village. Following this path the village’s outline is clearly distinguished from that of Orosei, presenting its high wall enclosure with a gateway at the centre of the northern side, directly facing the state road. This way offers a frontal approach to the newer church side entrance, the more important, while an oblique approach is the one leading to the church front doorway. A beautiful tree-lined path characterises the village’s entrance path.

43. Approaching the umbrellas village from the provincial road n. 129.

44. The entrance of the village and the road in front of it.
Circulation

Approach and Entrance

413

45. The village’s sole gateway on the North-Western side.

46. The interior of the village from the entry path.

47. The entrance to the cumbessia.
Two paths enter the main gateway: a linear path connects the gateway to the church side entrance and the other, curvilinear, winds around the village. The annular interior path runs alongside the *cumbessias,* sometimes on a different ground level.

48. The entry path leads directly to the secondary entrance of the church.

49. The internal path under the porches used by the devotees to move from one *cumbessia* to the other.

50. The path alongside the new church's secondary entrance.
Circulation

Configuration of the Paths

51. The path that winds along the whole village.

52. The nodal point represented by the altar.

53. The entry path as seen from the church.
Nostra Signora di Gonare
The singular outline of Mount Gonare is easily recognisable from far away and from different points of observation in the territory. The simple proportions of the church and its position on the top of the mountain allow the viewer to perceive its shape.
Position and Orientation

The *cumbessias village* is positioned on the slopes of Mount *Gonare* within a natural point of conjunction between the mountain itself in the east and the close and smaller Mount *Gonareddu* in the northwest. In the southwest, the panorama from the village opens onto a wide valley while in the northeast the village is visually linked to the villages of *Orani, Nuoro*, etc., throughout a succession of hillsides and small valleys. The church is perfectly oriented. It is not visible from within the village while its position is clearer when seen in the distance. On the top of the mountain, in fact, the portion of the ground around the edifice is so reduced that, paradoxically, the viewer has a clear image of the position of the church once inside it.
Looking outside through the open doors, we have the sensation that the church is suspended in space. The external ground floor is not visible from the interior of the church.
Form.
Visual Properties
of the Form

8. The church seen from Mount Gonareddu at SW.

9. A new cumbessia seen from within the village.
The slopes of Mount *Gonare* act as a natural backdrop allowing the viewer to easily perceive the general dimensions of the village. In the instance of the church, the forced close proximity to the edifice does not allow the viewer to have a complete understanding of its size. In fact, its size and proportions clearly result from the interior.

Despite its massive volume and the presence of buttresses on the southern side of the edifice, the peculiar position of the church works to diminish the degree of stability given to its form. On the contrary, the village presents a high degree of visual inertia, given by the form of the edifices and by the leaning of these against the rocky walls of the mountain.

10. The size of the *cumbessias*.
11. Renovated *cumbessias* and their taller size.
12. The massive volume of the church from NW.
13. The stable geometry of the *cumbessias*. 
The colours of this village are enhanced by its internal articulation and orientation: the disposition of the edifices, in fact, allows for a continual exposition of their surfaces to sunlight so that the two bright colours of the *cumbessias*, white and grey, result in an even brighter appearance.

14. The colour of the church is uniformed to that of the rock.

15. The typical colour of the *cumbessias* village.

16. The brightness of the floor of the plaza.
Edges and Corners

The *cumbessias* generally present linear and unadorned corners.

Texture

17. The linear corner of a *cumbessia*.
18. Granite is the local stone used to build the religious complex.
19. The granite is still visible on this abandoned *cumbessia*.
20. The original textural quality of the complex is still visible on these old *cumbessias* not yet renovated.

The textural quality of the entire village, whose edifices have been only partially restored, shows an essential continuity between *cumbessias* and the surrounding environment. These buildings, in fact, have been built using the local granitic stone. Moreover, the church is well integrated within the surrounding ground.
The base plane of the *cumbessias* village is essentially uniform, unsurfaced and slightly declining from southeast to north. Within the main plaza one section of the ground, particularly that of *Orani*, is depressed while another one, that of *Sarule*, is elevated. The base plane of the *cumbessias* themselves is generally elevated from the ground level, sometimes by more than one meter. The base plane of the church on the top of the mountain is extremely irregular being unsurfaced with rocks rising out of the ground.
23. The base plane slightly declines towards SE.

24. and 25. The old cumbessias of Orani, on the Southern side, maintain a higher base plane compared to that of the plaza.
Light, Openings and Degree of Enclosure

The cumbessias are open exclusively on their long sides: a door and a window are the basic kind of openings. The portico, recently becoming an essential architectural element of the cumbessias, mediates the degree of enclosure of the edifices and constitutes a sort of second opening. The sunlight is mainly distributed within the central plaza but it does not reach the cumbessias’ front side surfaces, which are protected by the porticos.

26. The basic opening of the cumbessias.

27. The built-up porches prevent the strong sunlight to enter directly the cumbessias.

28. The open plaza seen from the shadowy porches.

29. A view of the cumbessias protected by the porches.
30. The door represents the main opening of a *cumbessia*, and looks directly the main plaza.

31. The dark interior of a *cumbessia*.
Gonare is a linear organisation with the cumbessias arranged in rows.

32. Within a cumbessia. The size of the openings is now standardised to that of the civil planning.

33. The spatial organisation of the village. All the cumbessias face the central plaza.
The village and church are not visible along the path leading to the site. The approach is from the front. The entrance to the complex is somehow signed by crossing a thick wood representing a sort of visual and concrete threshold at the end of which is the village. The church is approached obliquely in the same way; the visitor walks along a steep descent with no perception of the edifice until he arrives at the top of the mountain.
Circulation Configuration of the Paths

Gonare presents a composite organisation of its internal paths. The movement of people, in fact, is free within the main plaza of the village. However, porticos constitute a sort of privileged and more private paths being used almost exclusively by the people living there or by their parents while other people arriving at the village for the mass or to visit simply remain in the plaza or go into the church.

37. The plaza as a major path.
38. The village also contains a few narrow paths.
39. The stairs sign the beginning of the step leading to the church on the top of the mountain.
Circulation

Configuration of the Paths

40. A path leading to the cumbessias of Sarule on the western side of the village.

41. The porches represent sort of internal paths.
Santa Maria de Sauccu
Shape

Despite the low degree of visual contrast through which we look at it, the outline of the village is clearly visible. Beside it, the outline of the trees within the village have become an integral part of the entire village’s shape. The outline of the church is not perceivable to the viewer arriving at the village from the two specific paths, while it is visible to those accessing it from the west side of the Rio Marabiga. Only after the viewer is within the village does the shape of the church become visible and more defined. It is particularly the bell tower that first allows it to be identified.

1. The cumbessias village of Sauceu from NE.
2. The cumbessias village from N.
Form.
Visual Properties of Form

Shape

3. The shape of a cumbessia in Sauccu.
4. The village from NE.
Form. Visual Properties of Form

Shape

5. The shape of an old roundish *cumbessia*.

6. The outline of the roof of a roundish *cumbessia*.
The village of Sauccu is positioned on a slope of a hill slowly declining westward. Surrounded by a succession of hillsides, small valleys, and level grounds on the northern, eastern, and southern sides, the ground on which Sauccu is positioned abruptly declines on the west side toward Rio Marabiga. On the other side of the brook, the complex faces another hill, whose slopes decline northeast following the course of the water. On the northeastern side, the village is connected with the provincial road n.17 leading to the village of Bolotana and with the state road n.131, 'Carlo Felice'. The church, perfectly oriented, occupies a central position.
Form.
Visual Properties of Form

Position and Orientation

9. The front of the church from S.

10. The village from SE. Its outline is represented by the trees.
Regarding the size and typology of the edifices, the village does not seem to present any character of homogeneity. While there can be found a good number of two-storey *cumbessias*, corresponding to two main rooms, many others are just one-floor buildings, and just a few *cumbessias* present a major number of rooms. The picture below provides us with an example of the small dimensions of these edifices when compared to the human scale. The general small dimensions of width and depth of the entire complex are confirmed by the church’s size.
As shown by the pictures, the cumbessias present a high degree of stability particularly given by their geometry.
It is the chromatic quality of the entire village that does not facilitate the viewer to clearly distinguish the hamlet from its surrounding environment. It is the white colour of the church that allows for its recognition among the other edifices within the village.

15. Two of the different chromatic qualities of the *cumbessias*.

16. The white colour of the church.
Edges and Corners

Regarding edges and corners there is an essential difference between the articulation of the forms of old and new *cumbessias*. The surfaces’ articulation of the oldest ones, in fact, does not present any kind of corners, being simply circular edifices, while newer *cumbessias* present simple and unadorned corners that emphasise their volumes.

17. On the left, the roundish form of an old *cumbessia*.
18. The simple corners of a more recent type of *cumbessia*. 
There seems to be a sort of overall textural quality identifiable in the use of what is locally know as ‘sa preda frumigalza’, i.e., ants’ stone, a basaltic local stone riddled with holes that derives its name from its resemblance to an ants’ nest. The texture of the edifices built up with this kind of stone lets the village merge with the local natural environment. However, there can be found some edifices presenting a different kind of texture as in the case of the church, whose surfaces are treated with white limestone plaster. The different textural quality has relevant consequences on the major or minor absorption of light by the surfaces so that, in this case, within Sauccu, the surface of the church reflects the most sunlight compared to the surrounding cumbessias.

19. The white limestone used to plaster the walls of the church.

20. The textural quality of the walls of this cumbessia are representative of the textural quality of the all village.

Starting from its northeastern entrance, the village of Sauccu presents a continuous change in level following the natural inclination of the ground on which it is positioned. This fact produces a sort of small level ground terraces on the declining base plane, on which the cumbessias have been built up. The base plane of the church is the same as the small square on which it is positioned. There is no difference between its own and the base plane of the village.

22. The base plane of the village declines towards the church.

23. The base plane of the village is not uniform.
The majority of the *cumbe**s**sias* present their openings in the south, southwest direction while they are closed on the north, northeast sides. One first degree of enclosure of the village is given by the presence of various tall trees. Indeed, it can be described as a wooded village. The sunlight is first filtered by their crowns. This fact influences both the quantity and quality of light that is received by the village.

Within *Sauccu*, in fact, there are just a few spots completely clear from trees. Moreover, the degree of enclosure of the singular *cumbe**s**sia*s is, in the majority of the instances, increased by the presence of two basic openings such as the door and a small window on the front façade of the edifice. The door itself presents another small opening on its upper part. This device allows the door to be kept close while this small window lets the light get into the room. In the instance of the oldest *cumbe**s**sias* the door remains the sole opening. The massiveness of the walls of these edifices makes the sunlight coming from the door 'appear as a bright spot of light on a darker surface' (Ching 1996: 173). The church presents no openings apart from the two entry doors, one on the west and the other on the south façades. The latter receives more direct sunlight while the west façade receives the sunlight filtered through the trees' crowns.

24. The sole opening of a roundish *muristene*.

25. The small window of a *muristene*. 
Sauccu presents a clustered organisation without a fixed structure, where the cumbessias are disposed in close proximity to each other, sometimes in a row, sometimes isolated from the others. The church represents the more important point from which the village has developed.

Sauccu is contained within a space defined by the wall enclosure of the village.

26. The village from NW.
27. The partition wall of the village.
The village can be approached from two paths: from the east and southeastern sides. The northeastern corresponds to an oblique approach, while the southeastern way corresponds to a frontal approach. Both entrances to the village are recognisable by the presence of a gateway.

28. The path leading to the southeastern entrance to the village.

29. The northeastern entrance.
Circulation

Approach and Entrance

31. The south-eastern entry way.

32. Religious processions generally arrive from the south-eastern entrance.
33. Approaching the entrance to the church.

34. Pilgrims arriving from the south-eastern entry way.
Circulation

Configuration of Paths

There are two external paths: easily accessible by car, the northeastern way links the village to the provincial road while the southeastern one is the privileged access for pilgrims arriving to the village on foot. Within the village there is not a predefined pattern for the configuration of the paths, which are numerous and distributed in various directions. However, the church, being a focal point for the life of the beholders, is the point of convergence for both the people living within the village and the daily visitors. An important path for the beholders living in the village is represented by the small country lane leading to the spring situated down a steep slope and descending from the west side of the village.
Configuration of Paths

37. and 38. Narrow paths within the village leading to the church plaza.
Configuration of Paths

39. and 40. Narrow paths within the village.
Cosma e Damiano
The linear outline, defined by the walls enclosing the sanctuary of SS. Cosma e Damiano and heightened by the contrasting background, allows the viewer to immediately identify the complex of the village. The belltower is the most easily recognisable element in the church’s sharp contour.

1. The outline of the village from N.
2. The village’s outline from SW.
3. The church from W.
Position and Orientation

The *cumbessias village* is positioned within a wide natural landscape. Open in the south and west sides from where it is visually linked to the nearby sanctuary dedicated to *Nostra Signora d'Itria*, the complex is situated on a slight slope; itself close to hills, to the north and east. *S. Cosimo* is linked to the provincial road n.30 leading to the village of *Mamoïada* and other centres. The church occupies the central position within the village. The ground plane of the village slowly declines following that of the ground on which it is positioned; this is clearly perceivable by the viewer standing in any of the sides of the *cumbessias village.*

4. The *cumbessias* village from E.

5. The church in the middle of the plaza.
Following a general horizontal development, the village adopts a homogeneous width and depth for the *cumbessias*. Exceptions can be found in the exterior walls, the two entry doorways, and three, two-storey *cumbessias* that exceed the average width of the other edifices. The picture below shows the small size of the *cumbessias*, clearly visible when compared to the height of the people standing at one of the doors. Moreover, the presence of the beholders standing within the church plaza underlines the aforementioned reduced dimension of both *cumbessias* and church while revealing the dimensional relationship existing between church and the rest of the village.

6. The church (on the left) and the *cumbessias* villages in the back. They are both small in size.

7. A row of *cumbessias*.

8. The small size of a *cumbessia* compared to the human scale.
Visual Inertia

The orientation and position of the village as perceived through its exterior walls confer a great degree of stability to its form, which is also emphasised by the arriving viewer’s line of sight. The visual inertia of the church is primarily enhanced by its geometry.

9. The linear angle of the village’s external walls.

10. The stable geometry of the church.
The picture below shows how the external village’s hue allows its form to clearly stand out from the bright green of the surrounding ground and the grey-blue of the sky. Within the village, the two light yellow tonal values present on the church’s façade enhance its form and volume, which differentiates it from the surrounding cumbessias’ white edifices.

11. The church has a different colour from the rest of the village.

12. The white colour of the village emerges from the surrounding context.

13. White is the basic colour of the cumbessias.
The church presents a different articulation of its surfaces and a different colour, material, and texture. The southwestern corner is emphasised by the change in texture and colour, somehow confirming a change also in the use of that southern surface now consigned to the merchants. The wall enclosure constituted by the exterior back side of the *cumbessias* represents the main edge of the *cumbessias village*. The pictures show how the internal space of the village is profoundly affected by the continuity of the inner surfaces. Visible from the outside, this element increases the sense of closure and protection.

14. The Southern edge of the church is constituted by the merchants *lozzas*.

15. The *lozzas* from SW.

16. The corner of the *lozzas* emphasised by the use of granite.

17. The corners of the church emphasise its volume.

18. The sense of enclosure is affected by the continuity of the line of walls.
19. The external edge of the village and its linear corners.

20. The corners of the church.

21. The local grey granite still visible on the gateway's walls.

**Texture**

The articulation of the surfaces of the front and back gateways in local grey granite allows these two important elements to stand out against the surrounding textural context represented by the white plaster of the *cumbersias* and external wall enclosure.
Within the *cumbessias village* the slight level change of the base plane slowly sloping down from east to west allows for a spatial and visual continuity that is also also supported by the unchanged colour and texture of its surface. This continuity is interrupted only with the church’s base plane elevation in correspondence with the main entrance, reinforced by a change in texture and colour of the ground surface. The elevation of the church base plane defines a specific spatial field.
The church is perfectly oriented. The east façade presents only a small window while the portal, in the west side, corresponds to the church's main entrance. Differently articulated, with the presence of porticos and other openings, the north and south façades both present an entrance to the church.

Form, texture and colour of the curved surface of the exterior white wall enclosure are enhanced by the incidence of the sunlight. The sunlight of the late afternoon on the western façade of the church enhances the colour and articulation of its form. Generally provided with two main openings, a door and a window, the internal spaces of the cumbessias receive enough light during the day. Moreover, the white surfaces of the cumbessias create a strong reverberation within the village so that it might be said it has "its own illumination". A strong degree of enclosure of the whole village is then assured by the cumbessias, themselves constituting its border.
Light, Openings and Degree of Enclosure

28. The church and its blind walls.

29. The northern side of the church and its porch. In front, the opening to the kitchens of the priorato.

30. Seen from the outside the village is completely blind without openings.

31. The degree of enclosure of a cumbessia is mitigated by the light filtering from outside.

32. A door and a window are the two basic openings of a cumbessia in S. Cosimo.
The village presents a curvilinear organisation with the disposition of the *cumbessias* in a row, almost creating an elliptic form. The frontal facades of the *cumbessias* are situated on the concave side while the blind convex external surface almost excludes and protects the internal space from the surrounding natural environment and northwestern wind.

33. The curvilinear organisation of the *cumbessias* from SW.

34. The spatial organisation is also visible from the exterior.

35. The line of *cumbessias* (In the back) creates an open space within the village.
Circulation

Approach and Entrance

We approach the village frontally following the straight paths leading to the village and to its two entrances. The village can be reached from the provincial road n.30 linking the village of Mamoiada to those of Lodine and Gavoi. The entrance to the village is clearly defined by the passage of the vertical plane represented by the ample doorway separating the exterior from the internal space. Part of the external space has been provided with some tables for picnics, with the intent of 'enlarging' the area of the village.

The approach to the church is frontal when the edifice is reached from the western doorway and oblique when reached from the eastern one.

36. Approaching the main entrance path from the provincial road n. 30.

37. The signal indicating the entry path to the village.
Approach and Entrance

38. The western secondary entry path from the village.

39. The entrance to the western path.

40. The western gateway from SW.
41. The eastern gateway.
42. Leaving the village from the eastern gateway.
43. The western gateway.
44. The southern entrance to the church.
45. The church’s main entrance (in the back).
The configuration of the paths is influenced by the organisation of the spaces of the *cumbessias* and the church. The internal path is linear and open in every direction. The main external path, apart from those leading to the village, is the one leading to the fountain, down and to the west.

46. An external path on the northern side of the village.

47. The external entry path from NW.
48. One of the major paths in the village is the eastern entrance.

49. The plaza becomes either a point of convergence or a path linking the various parts of the village.

50. The southern side of the village and the path connecting the western and eastern entrances.
51. The western entry path connects the village to the historical fountain of S. Cosimo.

52. The entrance to the western path.
A Comparative Analysis
Shape

Recognition of shape is an extremely important element for all the villages. If we assume each sanctuary to be a complex, made up essentially of a church and a few minor buildings linked to it, immersed in a natural context, we note that the recognition of each village may be left up to even just one of its constitutive elements.

At the Miracolo in Bitti the particular structure of the church is most evident, whilst in Gonare, despite the visibility of the church, the formation of the sanctuary is overshadowed by the mountains, and therefore the surrounding territory of the sanctuary. In Sauccu the recognition of the shape is evident in the ancient, circular-shaped cumbessias.

In San Cosimo and the Rimedio we have the enclosure as the recognisable formation element. For the Annunziata the definition of its context is made evident above all due to the absence of other buildings.

The structure of the villages, the element, that is, that by separating the buildings from the visual context, is capable of attributing a recognisable characteristic, is generally determined, apart from by the church, by the presence of the cumbessias: small buildings with a simple geometric shape, sometimes built in a linear manner (Bitti and Gonare in particular). In some cases (Rimedio and S. Cosimo) a wall enclosing the cumbessias within it, acts as a sort of visual base, a support line starting from which it is possible to recognise the pitch roofs of the cumbessias and above all, the different formation of the church, which emerges clearly from its visual context thanks to its dimension and position. Gonare, Miracolo and Sauccu are three particular cases. In the first case we have a clear distinction between the village and the religious building which is linked in a particular way with the same Mount Gonare, which would appear to amplify the geometric nature of the pitch roof within the surrounding territory. As far as Miracolo is concerned, the fact that the village is very near the town, if we consider the absence of a particularly defined wall as is the case both for Rimedio and San Cosimo, the village can not be singled out, at a distance, from the rest of the town. The only element (which is clearly evident) appears to be the church, which, having been built recently, has ended up characterising the village skyline. In Sauccu, it is currently impossible to consider an image of the complex that might be recognisable, given that, half-hidden by trees and in the absence of a defined wall in this case also, the village is not separated, morphologically speaking, from any other kind of settlement area. The church, the only element that could have given this settlement area some sort of special recognisable character due to its shape and dimension, is hidden by the trees growing in the area that were not there at the time the initial nucleus of the village was built. Apart from the elements outlined here, we must also not fail to consider the particular orographic trend that makes a unitary vision of the entire matter more difficult.
Position
As far as position is concerned, we can say that in general the villages are distinct from the urban centres and are positioned within natural contexts of a certain importance. In cases where the villages are near to urban centres, as is the case for Rimedio and Miracolo, we believe that at the time they were built, they were completely separate from the village. At present, those villages that still maintain an image that reflects their original state (as far as position is concerned) are Saucco, San Cosimo, Annunziata and Gonare.

Orientation
Substantially the orientation of the villages descends from that of the church, which is facing with the apse towards the east to get light on the altar in the morning. Although the overall shape is not always clear, the rest of the village has the main entrance facing towards the entrance of the church, and therefore in a westerly direction. Starting from these elements, the cumbessias are arranged according to the orography in one case, according to the position of the church, the internal route system or according to heliometric considerations.

Size
As far as the size of the villages and their elements is concerned, we can state that these organisms usually total a few hectares. The buildings that make up the villages and that is, the cumbessias and the church, are usually fairly small. The cumbessias, which are generally built on just one floor, are rarely any higher than 4 metres at the highest point of the roof, and the lowest point may be less than 2 metres in certain cases. From a comparison between the novena devotees and the cumbessias themselves, we can see that, quite often, the devotees were actually taller than the height of the entrance door. This datum begin to become less valid with the newer buildings, where dimensions correspond to those foreseen by the applicable building regulations. In these cases, it is not particularly rare to find buildings with more than one floor (note the new buildings in Saucco with respect to the older ones).

Visual Inertia
As far as the visual inertia, and therefore the perceptive stability of the shape of the buildings, is concerned, we are dealing with stereo metric volumes, which are well anchored to the earth.

Colour
As far as the use of colour is concerned, we can state that, for all of the cumbessias villages, whitewash was most commonly used, occasionally replaced by dyed pinks or very light yellows. The use of whitewash clearly derives from a building custom that was already a consolidated practice for residential building. It is, in any case, indicative to note that
even in ordinary maintenance interventions today, homogeneity is sought along with colour coherence, perhaps with the exception of the Miracolo, where the new church does not appear to be in harmony with its context. The colour, or in any case the material used to finish the façade of the individual buildings, is considered to be a unifying element, to the extent that it assigns a sense of quality and value to the entire village.

Edges and corners
The way the edges are worked is different in the villages that have a spatial organisation with an enclosed area (Rimedio and San Cosimo). In cases such as these we find a formation that describes an internal concave shape and an external convex shape. If we exclude the fact that each of them has a door and a window, there is nothing to differentiate the individual units. As far as the individual buildings are concerned, the edges are never the cause of a sense of 'weakening' of the volume in a neo-plastic sense.

Texture
The texture of the various cumbessias often depends on the use of local stone (granite, basalt, schist). Plastered surfaces are an exception, which attenuate the material property of the walls by being applied over the stony face, whilst allowing for the light of their surfaces to vibrate in the light with their non-homogeneity. Rimedio, S. Cosimo and Annunziata are probably most similar, due to the type of building texture, attributing the lime plaster the duty of finishing the surfaces of the new cumbessias and of those that are subject to maintenance interventions. In the case of the Miracolo in Bitti, the new buildings are made of stone facing, but with square shaped ashlars and coarse masonry with cement mortar.

Base plan.
The base plan of the cumbessias villages generally depends on the particular orography of the sites. Adapting itself to this, it is often considered as a uniform plan that changes locally where particular situations make it necessary to adopt a different design. Near the church, where the outline of a parvis can be identified, the base plan reaches a certain uniformity of height, distinguishing itself from the overall design of the land. In the case of villages defined by an enclosed area, such as Rimedio and S. Cosimo, the base plan is more defined and organised for the entire internal surface area of the village.

Light
As concerns the degree to which the cumbessias are closed, we can state that in the majority of cases there are small, south-facing, openings, or in any case openings facing inwards, towards the inside of the village (enclosed cumbessias), while the posterior side, to the north, is closed, or has small openings that are difficult to access and used.
mainly to provide air circulation.

Spatial Organisation
The spatial organisation of the cumbessias villages is perhaps the most important element in their morphological and typological identification. In all cases there is a series of buildings arranged in a linear manner in order to define spaces characterised by greater definition (as a sense of closure and fullness), as you approach the church. The church, which is always in a dominant position with respect to the entire complex has an open space in front of it, generally defined by the articulation of its base plan and also used during the celebrations. It is a parvis that also invades the areas around it, becoming a sort of ‘intermediary’ zone between the sacred area of the church and the more private area of the cumbessias. In some cases the cumbessias clearly surround a space, forming a ring where the openings, generally situated along the main axis of the church, provide access to the sanctuary.

In this case San Cosimo and Rimedià there is a type of wall surround that describes an elliptical shape. The villages of Sauccu and Gonare remain partially untouched by these considerations. In the case of Sauccu, part of the spatial definition is assigned to the particular orography and is, in any case, unitary, concluding around the religious building. In the case of Gonare, the church is, instead, situated outside the village on a mountain top. Conquering, as it does, a very limited space on the top of the mountain, the church has a small open area for celebrations while the village, which is located down in the valley, is organised around a central space, a meeting place for the faithful.

A place that includes a church and some minor open areas destined for open air celebrations and social and community functions inside a wall of buildings (the cumbessias) may be considered as a rule, and this rule is certainly applicable to the sites analysed. In the cases where it is not verified in a coherent manner, we find ourselves in a particular territorial context that makes such an organisation difficult. This is the case in Sauccu, where the organisation is in accordance with sloping orographic lines and where there is the greatest temporal lapse between the building of the original nucleus and that of the new buildings, making it difficult both to study and to date them. It is also true in the case of Gonare, where we are in the presence of a mountain that separates the church from the rest of the village situated in the valley, bringing it up to the summit. In Gonare it is, however, important to note that the remainder of the village,
although not all of the buildings are joined together, is built around a central space. In the case of the *Miracolo* in Bitti that is now quite changed with respect to its original state, we can state that in ancient times it had been conceived in exactly the same manner as the other cases, as a ring of small buildings (cumbessias), within which the two churches co-existed.

**Approach and entrance**

In all of the villages described, approach is an element of extreme importance. As is the case for other categories, the main differences can be noted between the villages with an enclosed area (*San Cosimo* and *Rimedio*), as compared to the others. In these examples the entrance is more defined. Some considerations should be made regarding the villages near urban centres, in this case there is no ‘preparation for the event’ that should be part of an approach designed in this sense. In the case in question (*Miracolo* in Bitti and Rimedio in Orosei) we have an attempt to recover such preparation during the last part of the approach, from the entrance door to the sanctuary, to the church, or, in any case, to the centre of the village. The secondary routes, which are within the villages, are traced out according to their specific function within the village and are arranged differently, according to whether or not they lead directly to the church or, in some cases, such as for the *Annunziata*, there are interruptions and changes to their original linearity. In these points, which were designed as resting areas, the faithful can recite prayers around an altar before entering the church.
Appendix 4

Architectural Evolution
Ordinary upkeep
Paintings and simple repairs take place weekly during the year (September—March).

Special Upkeep
The priorato is in charge of the special and ordinary upkeep within the cumbessias village. Many of the works of restoration, internal and external, are carried out by private owners at their own expense.

Refurbishments
Since the 1940s, the village has undergone numerous transformations. The original nucleus at the end of the nineteenth century included the sole church and the cumbessias contiguous to the sacred edifice. Only a few of the first cumbessias separated from the church in 1872–74. The first decades of the 1900s have seen the spreading of other cumbessias and the enlargement of the settlement (Fig. 1, 2). The cumbessias were built by the priori and given to the pilgrims who over time through a sort of common law took possession of them. A definitive transition toward the present-day structure of the village occurred in the 1970s. The church plaza, originally disposed on two different base planes, has been levelled and subsequently enlarged through the demolition of some cumbessias and the opening of a new path linking the centre of the village and the new peripheral constructions. In the last two decades we can reckon the building of other cumbessias. The more external row of cumbessias on the southeast side have been built in the mid-1980s. Others have been radically transformed. Fig. 3, 4 and, 8, 9 show the plan of the church with the enlargement of the first floor and ground floor cumbessias and construction of a bigger balcony (sa passizzera) by the 1940s. The first floor large cumbessia was originally destined to the priori. A small part of it was enclosed and known as 'sa selleria', i.e., the harness-room, a repository for the priori’s saddles. The ground floor was originally open and designated to some retailers during the novena. It also contained the ‘greppie’, a kind of manger for the horses. During the first decades of the 1900s the ground floor was closed to gain some more rooms. It has been restored again in the 1980s: this building has opened the ground floor as it was in the early part of the century. The church façade showed a fresco representing the 12 apostles; it was subsequently covered over the years by various layers of plaster.

Fig. 1 1930-40. The plan of the village. (Original scale) 1:500

Fig. 2 1940-50. (Original scale 1:200) Plan of village’s initial development indicating the entrance and internal paths. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu

Fig. 3 Ante 1950. Church’s first floor plan

Fig. 4 2001. Church’s first floor plan
Fig. 5 Ante 1950. Church's first floor plan. Small balcony visible on the left, above. Photo credit Modesto Bitti.

Fig. 6 Church's first floor plan. Together with the new and larger balcony (sa passizzera) the two doors and the window witness of the internal partition of the previous bigger single room into three smaller cumbessias. Photo credit Caredda 1993: 85.

Fig. 7 Ante 1970. Church's ground floor plan. Plan (original scale) 1:200.

Fig. 8 2001. Church's ground floor plan. Plan (original scale) 1:200.

Fig. 9 1989. Plan of the village. Plan (original scale) 1:200.

Fig. 10 2001. Plan of the village and configuration of paths. Plan (original scale) 1:200. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu
BELOW

Fig. 12 Plan (original scale) 1:25.000. Annunziata in more detail. Source IGM 1994.

Fig. 11 Plan (original scale) 1:200.000. Central-Eastern Sardinia. Location of the site.
Ordinary Upkeep
Special and ordinary upkeep works are decided by the priest who is the legal representative of the cumbessias village of Miracolo. The priest may be supported by the permanent committee of the Miracolo.

Special Upkeep
— Between the 1960s and the 1970s, in conjunction with the rebuilding of the corte, old elms have been uprooted.

During the same time frame, the village was endowed with electrical installation and running water (for the edifice of the committee in charge for the festival).

— In 2002–03 the works of restoration of the old Orphanage were almost completed. The edifice will be converted to become a home for the aged.

The management of this work has been assigned to a committee of priests and lay people of Bitti.

— In 2003 the rebuilding of the corte of Miracolo was proposed.

Refurbishments
— The old church of S. Michele has been demolished in 1933 in order to build the Educative Institute of Miracolo or Orphanage as decided by the Bishop Cogoni.

— In 1964, construction of the present church of Miracolo began.

— Between the 1960s and the 1970s all the cumbessias have been rebuilt and public lavatories constructed.

— In the 1970s, during the demolition and subsequent construction of the present-day church, the old fountain and part of the village’s wall were covered with earth. During these works, the entrance footpath on the SW side of the village used by the beggars until the 1950s was demolished. The gateway’s arch has been made higher in order to allow the means of transportation to pass.

Ordinary Upkeep

Fig. 1 1910-1920. Plan (original scale) 1:1000 of the village in its original state.

Fig. 2 Early 1920s. The main part of the village. There are clearly visible the two churches: that of Miracolo and, in the back, that of S. Michele. Photo credit Bussu 1986: 34.

Fig. 3 The church of the Miracolo. Behind it the Orphanage built in 1934 after the demolition of the church of S. Michele. In front of it, the well-known ‘Funtana ‘e su Meraculu (Fountain of the Miracle). Photo credit Bussu 1986: 241.
Fig. 4 1970s. The *cumbessias* before restoration.
Photo credit Caredda 1993: 84

Fig. 5 2001. The front of the *cumbessias* as seen today.
The old wooden doorway (at the right side of Fig.4) has been substituted by a new wooden door and a window.
Photo credit E. Moreddu.

Fig. 6 The *logge* and *cumbessias* front walls at the end of the 1970s. Photo credit Caredda 1993: 84.

Fig. 7 A *cumbessia's* walled door witnessing of the works of enlargement of previous small single-room *cumbessias*.
Photo credit E. Moreddu

Fig. 8 The new church (on the left) and the old orphanage (on the right) stand as the symbols of the present *cumbessias* village. Photo credit E. Moreddu.

Fig. 9 Plan (original scale 1:500) of the village at the end of the 1960s soon after the construction of the new church.
Photo credit Bussu 1986: 161.
Fig. 10 Map (original scale) 1:25,000 of the territory surrounding the village of Bitti. Source: IGM 1994

Fig. 11 Map (original scale) 1:25,000 indicating the location of Miracolo in relation to the village of Bitti. Source IGM 1994.
Ordinary Upkeep
The works are carried out by the members of the priorato weekly throughout the year, from the autumn until the beginning of the summer. They and the priest decide special and ordinary upkeep.

Special Upkeep
— Electricity dates back to 1966-67 while the waterworks, electrical installation and sewer date back to the 1980s, due to an unique intervention financed by the Sardinian Region.
— Until the 1960s the corte of Rimedio, devoid of trees, was used for the cultivation of peas, broad beans, and other legumes.
— Since 1971, in conjunction with the institution of a committee for the civil celebration at Rimedio, the corte was rebuilt: many people of Orosei donated small plants to be planted within the village. Every year something was added. The old elms and eucalyptus positioned in front of the cumbessias have been substituted by palms, carob trees, ilexes and oleasters. By the end of the 1980s, the cumbessias’ front-yards have been paved and separated from the corte by flowerbeds.
— In 1977-78 two cumbessias have been converted into public lavatories.
— In 1997 a fixed altar was positioned in the NE side of the corte. The altar was carved from a basalt rock by an old artisan.
— In 2003 a cumbessia has been used to open a passage from the parking (outside the cumbessias village on the NW) and the corte.

Refurbishments
— The most important works have been carried out in 1977-1978, financed by the Sardinian Region.
— The cumbessias on the northern side have been demolished and rebuilt with interior bathrooms and a small window on the external side of the street. The people and the priest expressed their disappointment by asking for the work to be stopped, but their voices remained unheard. The Fine Arts Commission finally stopped the works.
— In 2001, five cumbessias on the SW side have been rebuilt, including a small, separate kitchen and a bathroom. On the exterior, new, more stable porches have replaced the temporary, reed porches. The works have been financed by private donors.
— In 2003 approval was given to restore all 83 cumbessias, which will have private bathrooms. The work has been assigned to an architect of the Fine Arts Commission.

Church: until the beginning of last century the old church presented several internal partitions. Within it there were two small rooms used as cumbessias by the pilgrims and the priest during the novena. Through a project dating back to 1970, realised only 10 years later with the approval of the Fine Arts Commission, the roof has been restored, the internal partitions have been demolished and the church has gained its present figure becoming a unique room. Nowadays, the old edifice is used as a reception room for guests of the priorato. It presents also a larder and a well-equipped kitchen.
Fig. 3 2003. Present-day plan of the churches and dates of their construction. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.

Fig. 4 2003. Plan of the present-day village. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.
Fig. 5 The gulf of Orosei and the position of the village in relation to the territory. Elaboration Arch. G. Pigozzi.

Fig. 6 Map (original scale) 1:25,000. The cumbessias village and its present day position in relation to the urban context of Orosei. Source: IGM 1994

Fig. 7 The particular of the village. Map (original scale) 1:2000. Air-photogrammetric. Source: IGM 1994

Fig. 8 Rimedio in an aerial perspective from North-East. Photo credit Nur on line htm, 2003.
gonare
Ordinary Upkeep

The two committees of Orani and Sarule for the civil celebrations have an operative, rather than a representative function. Special and ordinary upkeep works are decided by the priests of Orani and Sarule in alternate years following a disposition of the Bishop of Alghero.

In 2003, the roof of the church has been restored, the external part of the church's main entrance has been plastered, and an iron gate has been positioned to close the narthex and protect it from the passage of sheep.

Special Upkeep

— In 1970s the cumbessias were furnished with internal bathrooms. At the same time the village and the cumbessias were provided with the electrical installation, which was subsequently renovated in 1997 to comply with the law.

— In the 1980s, a well was excavated to provide for a few water-tanks of 40,000 litres. In the same year the village was endowed with sewer.

— In 1997 the committee of Orani paved the road of access to the village, previously enlarged by the committee of Sarule in 1994.

Church: between 1985–90 the church was paved, the roof was completely restored, internal walls were plastered while the external walls' surfaces were restored, the doors of the church were changed, and the cumbessias of the church were restored. All these works were approved by the Fine Arts Commission.

Refurbishments

The most important works of refurbishment within the complex of Gonare have been carried out between the 1978 and 1985. They included:

— enlarging cumbessias and opening new rooms; openings, such as windows and doors were enlarged, as was the corte.

— building porches in front of the cumbessias of Sarule.

— replacing in 1980 two old cumbessias with a new, two-storey: the first floor of the building is used as a cumbessa, while the ground floor is used as parish meeting room, kitchen, and dining room. Today, the village reckons 21 cumbessias.

A document dating back to 1925 and compiled by the priest Michele Filia vicar of Gonare describes the presence of two cumbessias detached from the church, positioned just in front of it on the west. Nowadays, there is no evidence of their presence.
Fig. 3 A drawing depicting the village of Gonare in the early 1940s. Mossa 1953.
Fig. 4 Post 1975. Village’s present-day plan. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.

Fig. 5 The front of the church from West.

Fig. 6 Old cumbessias of Orani which have not yet been restored. Photo credit E. Moreddu.

Fig. 7 2001. Compare old and new cumbessias: the 1970s process of restoration has introduced the portico, changed external original texture of the cumbessias’ walls, and colour of the village. Photo credit E. Moreddu.
Fig. 8 Gonare and its location in the territory between the villages of Sarule and Orani.
Source: IGM (original scale 1:25,000). Elaboration Town Council of Sarule.
Fig. 9 Particular of Gonare (original scale 1:4000) and the path from the village to the church. Source: IGM.
SAUCCU
Fig. 1 1960s. Plan Original scale 1:4000) of the village. Photo credit Gaias 1997.

Fig. 2 1990s. Plan of the village indicating the first nucleus which included the church (yellow) and oldest roundish cumbessias (pale blue).

Fig. 3 2000. Plan of the village indicating the sole oldest roundish cumbessias still in use today.

Fig. 4 Roundish old muristene within the village. It represents the first typology of built edifice for pilgrims in this area. Photo credit Caredda 1989.

Ordinary Upkeep
It should be pointed out that all the muristenes are private: each landlord carries out the upkeep works on his own account.

Special Upkeep
In 1967 many pine trees have been planted within the village. Other trees have been privately planted in front of the muristenes by the respective landlords. In 1979, the Major of Bortigali introduced three fountains within the sanctuary and has provided the edifice of obriere with running water. From 1968 to 1970, the church’s plaza was paved. In 2003 electricity was installed in the church, the house of obriere, and the Proloco at the disposition of the Town Council. The whole village was provided with sewers.

Refurbishments
From the 1940s hamlet reckoning numerous circular stone-wall muristenes positioned next to the church, the settlement has rapidly spread transforming Sauccu into a real village. Today, the village reckons 47 muristenes. The old circular typology of construction has been superseded by a newer one, certainly more residential in functional terms. Nowadays, four roundish muristenes are still in use. Informants talk about the demolition of the other five roundish muristenes positioned close to the church in the NE where there is the so called domo de su pappu, i.e., the house of food.
— In the 1980s many of the landlords have proceeded to the walling of part of muristenes’ front yards in order to preserve their properties from the sheep. Sauccu, in fact, included within the territory of Bolotana, was let in concession as pasture to a shepherd of this village. In 1985 the village walls, already present since the 1950s, were restored.
— In 2003 the church roof was restored. In the same year, an old veranda used by the obrieri was demolished and a new reception room, a kitchen and bathrooms were built. Works of refurbishment and restoration of the church are waiting for the approval by the Fine Arts Commission.
Fig. 5 1981. *Sauccu* from the hill facing the village. Photo credit A. Mura.

Fig. 7 1934. *Sauccu* in its early evolution. Photo credit

Fig. 8 1985. The village from the hill facing it. Photo credit A. Mura.
Fig. 10 Map (original scale) 1:25.000 Sauceu within the territory. Source: IGM 1994
s. cosimo
Ordinary Upkeep
The works are carried out weekly during the year starting from February until July. Every weekend the priore and the committee carry out some simple projects within the village either of the church or for the cumbessias (repairing windows and doors frames, pruning trees, plastering of walls). They themselves usually carry out these works.

Special Upkeep
These works are generally self-financed by the committee of the priorato and subsequently supported by the Mamoiada Town Council, and from fund raising by the priorato, by eventual sponsors, and by money collected by the people of Mamoiada in conjunction with special shows.

History of works:
— The bathrooms has been built between 1970 and 1972 reconvert two existing cumbessias.
— In 1971 the cumbessias village (yet not the cumbessias), particularly the edifice of the priorato, were provided with running water.
— In 1970, the traditional carbide lanterns of the cumbessias were substituted with light from a generator and in 1992, with the priore Corbula, the whole village was enhanced with electrical installation.
— In 1966 various trees were planted within the village, while in 1985 the Town Council planted the external area around the village. In the same year the exterior of the village were endowed with some lights.
— In 2002 the priorato of Giannino Gaia has inserted some granite tables outside, scattered around of the village, in order to provide picnic areas for the pilgrims arriving for the festival. Some trees were substituted with others (Ilexes) with less harmful roots. The SE access road has been settled.

Refurbishments
These works are generally financed by the Sardinian Region and approved by the Fine Arts Commission.

First works of refurbishment have been carried out soon after the Second World War with the building new cumbessias and restoring the old ones. Today, the village reckons 55 cumbessias.
— From 1959 to 1960 where there was the old edifice of priorato, the priore Raffaele Melis started the building of the first floor of the new edifice for the priorato. Another storey was added to it in 1978 at the request of priore Giuseppe Costa. The edifice of the priorato, contiguous to the church on its NE side, contains two reception rooms used for various occasions (feasts, reception of guests, conferences, exhibitions, etc.), various rooms, some of them used as larders and for the lodgings of priorato (Unpublished document: Corbula 1993).
— In 1976–77 the lozzas facing the SE side of the church were demolished to build other cumbessias (Fig. 3); the inner corte, already developed on two different base planes, was levelled and paved, as was part of the cumbessias whose internal base plane was 1 metre lower than that of the corte.
— In 2002–03 the church was completely refurbished either internally (new flooring, roof, plaster, altar, lighting) or externally (roof, facade prospect with the elimination of lateral flower beds and trees; the external walls' plaster is now light yellow instead of white) (Fig. 5, Fig. 6).
Fig. 4 Early 1980s. External view of the village from NE. Photo credit Mossa 1987.

Fig. 5 Front of church post 1970s and ante 2001. (see also Fig. 2). Photo credit Bonfante, Carta 1989.

Fig. 6 Post 2002. Front of the church from SW. Photo credit E. Moreddu 2002.

Fig. 7 Plan of the main church entrance on the SW side. Ante 2001. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.

Fig. 8 (Left) Post 2002. Plan of the church entrance on the SW side. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu. Fig. 9 (Right) Plan of a cumbessia before and after its conversion into public bathroom within the village. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.
Fig. 10 Map (original scale) 1:200,000. S. Cosimo (pale pink) and its location in the territory. Source IGM 1994

Fig. 11 S. Cosimo and its location in relation to the village of Mamoiada. Sketch map (original scale) 1:200,000. Elaboration Arch. G. Pigozzi.

Fig. 12 2001-2003. Plan of the present-day village. Sketch plan by Arch. G. Filindeu.

Fig. 13 1990s. An aerial perspective of S. Cosimo from South-west. Photo credit Nur Online htm, 2003.
GLOSSARY

**Ordinary Upkeep** includes painting internal and external walls, upgrading door and window frames, making small repairs, and similar tasks. This level of work employs only a few people and uses a small amount of materials.

**Special Upkeep** refers to work such as structural and functional alterations and alterations to the physical plant, such as adding or renovating bathrooms and installing electricity. They also include creating new rooms from already existing partitions, creating of new openings, laying pavements, planting trees and establishing gardens, repairing roofs, and similar construction.

**Refurbishments** refer to those works entailing substantial alterations to the architectural configuration of an edifice such as new constructions, enlargements, construction of town walls, changes in the layout of an edifice through the addition of porches, etc. These works, which require a considerable employment of people and materials, are generally financed, regulated and supervised by the local and regional administrations and fine arts commissions.
SACRED PLACES IN SARDINIA
Cumbeßias villages, sacredness, and the dialectic of the work of art

ILLUSTRATIONS

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PhD
Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 Annunziata. Two of the oldest cumbessias of Beata Vergine Annunziata village with the dates of construction signed on the architrave’s doors.
Fig. 3 Map of Sardinia. 1:1,000,000, *cumbessias* villages underlined (see also particular below). Photo credit Pracchi, Terrosu-Asole 1990.
Fig. 4 A cumbessia.

Fig. 5 The isolate world of the Beata Vergine Annunziata cumbessias village.
Fig. 6 S. Cosimo. Feeling encircled in the village.

Fig. 7 S. Cosimo. The two storey cumbessa generally used by the priest seen from outside of the village of SS. Cosma e Damiano.
Fig. 8 S. Cosimo. The first floor interior of a two storey cumbessia

Fig. 9 S. Cosimo. The booth of the privy on the corner.
Fig. 10 S. Cosimo. The entrance to priorato building in S. Cosimo cumbessias village.

Fig. 11 S. Cosimo. The private privy.
Fig. 12 Gonare. The visual field from the cumbessia.

Fig. 13 Annunziata. The cumbessia’s threshold (limenarju).
Fig. 14 Rimedio. Looking outside of the village of Rimedio from above the rooftops.

Fig. 15 Annunziata. The visual field from within the cumbessias village of Annunziata.
Fig. 16 S. Cosimo. The sunlight breaks the dark narrowness of the *cumbessia*. 
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Fig. 17 S. Cosimo. A view of the line of enclosure represented by the row of cumbessias.

Fig. 18 Rimedio. The enclosure wall does not allow a view of the interior of the village of Rimedio.

Fig. 19 S. Cosimo. The white line of the external walls of S. Cosimo shields a vista of the interior.

ABOVE

Fig. 20 People come to know the village mainly through their bodily presences.
Fig. 21 *Annunziata. Alongside the church.*
Fig. 22 Annunziata.
Moving *in* the church plaza.

Fig. 23 Annunziata.
Moving *in* the alley.
Fig. 24 Annunziata. On

Fig. 25 Annunziata. With
Fig. 26 Annunziata. From

Fig. 27 Annunziata. Between
Fig. 28 Gonare. Towards

Fig. 29 Gonare. In
Fig. 30 Annunziata. Steps leading to the public garden within the village.
Fig. 31 and Fig. 32 *Annunziata*. Trees offer a perfect shelter from the strong sunlight.
Fig. 33 *Annunziata*. An old woman sitting under the tree in front of her *cumbessia*. 
Fig. 34 and Fig. 35 Annunziata. Stone benches are generally positioned on the cumbessias' external frontwalls.
Fig. 36 S. Cosimo. A barracca.

Fig. 37 S. Cosimo. Dismantling the barracca.
Fig. 38 and Fig. 39 Annunziata. Assembling the barracca.
Fig. 40 Sauccu. A barracca.
Fig. 41 Miracolo. Thresholds are frequently used to sit.

Fig. 42 S. Cosimo. Free standing wall.
Fig. 43 Annunziata. Rocks
Fig. 44 S. Cosimo. A woman looks around the plaza from her corner.

Fig. 45 S. Cosimo. Curtains represent sorts of doors. They protect the interior from the exterior while not excluding the outside world completely.
Fig. 46, Fig. 47, *Annunziata*. Curtains.

Fig. 48 *Annunziata*. Looking outside of the *cumbessia* through a curtain.
Fig. 49 and Fig. 50 Rimedio and Annunziata. Curtains.
Fig. 51 S. Cosimo. Old doors are generally provided with a sportellittu (small door) which either has a practical function or allows the dwellers to maintain a visual contact with the exterior.

Fig. 52 Annunziata. Pending between inside and outside of the cumbessia.
Fig. 53 and Fig. 54 Rimedio. Tables, dishes, chairs, vegetables, bathtubs: the interior of the cumhessias leans forward. The exterior becomes part of the interior.
Fig. 55 and Fig. 56 Rimedio. Dwelling underneath the porches.
Fig. 57 and Fig. 58
Rimedio. The inner shadowy life of the wooden porches contrasts with the brightness of the external plaza.
Fig. 59 and Fig. 60 Rimedio. Dismantling porches. Porches are not fix structures. Once a year the cumbessias frontwalls change their appearances.
Fig. 61 *Rimedio*. To walk around in the village means to be between the private world of *cumbessias* and the public world of the church.

Fig. 62 *S. Cosimo*. Walking between two rows of *cumbessias*. 
Fig. 63 S. Cosimo. Looking outside from within the church.
Fig. 64 and Fig. 65 Rimedio. Table next to the church side entrance and priorato offering sweets and coffee to devotees arrived for the novena mass.
Fig. 66 *S. Cosimo*. Merchant preparing the stalls for the afternoon selling.

Fig. 67 *S. Cosimo*. Merchand's stalls are positioned alongside the southern side of the church.
Fig. 68 and Fig. 69 S. Cosimo. Selling *torrone*. 
Fig. 70 and Fig. 71 S. Cosimo. Merchant’s stalls are positioned also outside of the village, next to the main eastern entrance.
Fig. 72 S. Cosimo. Pictures on show within a lozza.

Fig. 73 Miracolo. Religious objects.
Fig. 74 *Miracolo.* Merchants' stalls of religious objects outside of the village.
Fig. 75 *Rimedio*. Stalls next to the village’s gateway.

Fig. 76 *Gonare*. Merchands within the village.
Fig. 77 *Annunziata*. A stall within the village.

Fig. 78 *Annunziata*. Flags announcing the final days of novena.
Fig. 79 and Fig. 80. Annunziata. The decoration of the village.
Fig. 81 S. Cosimo. A communal moment. The feast organised by the *priorato* for the last day of the novena.
Fig. 82 S. Cosimo. Priorato helpers preparing the box that will be used for the celebration of the mass and night concerts.

Fig. 83 Rimedio. Men of priorato carrying a wooden bench.
Fig. 84 Miracolo. Among the duties of priorato there is a specific involvement in to religious processions. In the picture two guys of the comitato of Miracolo accompanying the Virgin.

Fig. 85 Miracolo. At the end of the novena devotees “finance” the priorato buying some religious objects from the small shop within a cumbessia.
Fig. 86 Miracolo. Man of priorato selling a ticket of lottery to a devotee.

Fig. 87 S. Cosimo. The small box containing the Greek Saints Cosma and Damiano stands within the priorato main room waiting for the devotees to make an offering for the civil organisation of the novena.
Fig. 88 and Fig. 89 Annunziata. Women working at the setting of the room for the lottery (pesca).
Fig. 90 Annunziata. Lottery sign.

Fig. 91 Annunziata. Men of priorato cooking meat.
Fig. 92 *Sauccu*. The men employed as cooks by the *obrieri*.

Fig. 93 *Rimedio*. The kitchen used by *priorato*. 
Fig. 94 and Fig. 95 S. Cosimo. The priore and others men of the committee preparing meat.
Fig. 96 and Fig. 97 *S. Cosimo*. The external fireplace for the roasting of meat.
Fig. 98 *S. Cosimo*. On the right the huge pots used to cook meat, pasta and potatoes.

Fig. 99 *S. Cosimo*. Men of committee roasting meat in the external fireplace.
Fig. 100 and Fig. 101 S. Cosimo. Women helpers preparing traditional S. Cosimo's sweets, guelfi.
Fig. 102 S. Cosimo. Woman helper arranging a basket with the colourful guelfi.

Fig. 103 S. Cosimo. Prioressa and helpers washing the huge pots before the departure from the village.
Fig. 104 *Miracolo.* Women of priorato preparing fresh pasta.
Fig. 105 *Rimedio*. Women of priorato in the kitchen.

Fig. 106 *Rimedio*. Women of priorato sweeping the entry path.
Fig. 107 Sauccu. Helpers of *obrieri* having a rest.

Fig. 108 Annunziata. The back entrance to the priorato kitchen.
Fig. 109 S. Cosimo. Family group. A grandmother with her four nephews.

Fig. 110 Annunziata. Family group. An old mother with her two daughters.
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Fig. 111 Annunziata. A cumbessia occupied by a group of friends.

Fig. 112 and Fig. 113 S. Cosimo. A cumbessia rented by few friends.

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Fig. 114 S. Cosimo. Women belonging to the same neighbourhood playing cards.

Fig. 114a S. Cosimo. 1950s. A group of women from Ollolai attending the novena at the village. Photo Credit Corbula.
Fig. 115 Rimedio. The roof of this kitchen is made using cagnone

Fig. 116 Anunnziata. Interior of a cumbessia.
Fig. 117 *Annunciata*. Interior.

Fig. 117a *Rimedio*. Interior.
Fig. 118 Sauccu. The interior of an old roundish muristene.

Fig. 119 S. Cosimo. Interior of a cumbessia.
Fig. 120 S. Cosimo. Taula is still used today as a fundamental part of furniture within a cumbessia.

Fig. 121 Annunziata. A cumbessia transformed into a sleeping alcove, as it could be 50 years ago.
Fig. 122. Rimedio. Ready to go back home. Loading furniture on a van at the end of novena.

Fig. 123 Rimedio. Bringing furniture home.
Fig. 124 and Fig. 125. S. Cosimo. Loading an open lorry with furniture at the end of the novena.
Fig. 126 and Fig. 127. *S. Cosimo*. Loading the lorry.
Fig. 128. *S. Cosimo*. Loading the lorry.

Fig. 129. *S. Cosimo*. Stacking furniture for loading before departing from the village.
Fig. 130  *S. Cosimo.* Rolling the curtain.

Fig. 131  *Rimedio.* Bringing the mattresses into a *cumbessia.*
Fig. 132 *S. Cosimo.* A caravan of farm tractors, vans, and open lorries loaded with furniture leaving the *cumberias* village and directed to the near town of *Mamoiada.*

Fig. 133 *Annunziata.* Single bed waiting to be put back.
Fig. 134 and Fig. 135 S.
Cosimo. Chairs.
Fig. 136 Rimedio.

Fig. 137 Rimedio. A small kitchen within the cumbessia.
Fig. 138 Rimedio. Kitchen.

Fig. 139 S. Cosimo. A well equipped kitchen.
Fig. 140  Rimedio. A modern refrigerator within the cumbessia.

Fig. 141  S. Cosimo. A built-in pantry.
Fig. 142 and Fig. 143 S. Cosimo. An old built-in pantry empty and full.
Fig. 144 Annunziata. An old widow in her cumbessia.

Fig. 145 Rimedio. A middle-aged woman staying by herself in the cumbessia.
Fig. 146 and Fig. 147 Rimedio. The interior of a cumbessia. Entering the room, a visitor is allowed to see the public area represented by the kitchen. The curtain, on the right, creates two separate rooms, the private area or the sleeping room and the public area or the kitchen.
Fig. 148 Rimedio. Pulling back the curtain which acts as a movable partition wall the private area is easily visible.

Fig. 149 S. Cosimo. The public, social room; the curtain hides the private area of the cumbessia.
Fig. 150 and Fig. 151. S. Cosimo. A sort of section of the internal partition of the cumbessia. On the right the bedroom and changing room while on the left the social area. Behind the door the varnished wash-basin.
Fig. 152 Annunziata. In the village there is applied the same internal partition of rooms: in this picture we are welcomed in to a public space. In the back there is the kitchen area.

Fig. 153 Rimedio. In this cumbessia no internal partition is used mainly because of the very small ambient.
Fig. 154 *Annunziata.* The public space.

Fig. 155 *Rimedio.* The internal space of a narrow *cumbessia.*
Fig. 156 and Fig. 157 Rimedio. Two different interiors with no internal partitions.
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Fig. 160 *S. Cosimo*. Bringing furniture back inside the *cumhessia*.

Fig. 161 *Annunziata*. Chairs outside.

Fig. 162 *Annunziata*. Chairs are usually left outside.
Fig. 163 and Fig. 164 Annunziata.
Fig. 165 *Annunziata.* Talking with a friend.

Fig. 166 *Gonare.* Going to ask a neighbour about something.
Fig. 167 Annunziata.
Dialogue between neighbours.

Fig. 168 Sauccu.
Fig. 169 Gonare. Lingering outside.

Fig. 170 Annunziata.
Fig. 171 S. Cosimo. Chatting with a friend soon after the afternoon mass.
Chatting about politics just outside the gateway.

Fig. 173 S. Cosimo. Sitting and watching around.
Fig. 174 Annunziata. Three *cumbessias* and three neighbours chatting together.

Fig. 175 Rimedio. A lady in front of her *cumbessia* uses the porch as a kitchen.
Fig. 175a Rimedio. Under the porch as in a kitchen

Fig. 176 Rimedio. Cleaning under the porch.

Fig. 177 Rimedio. An encounter.
Fig. 178 Rimedio. Preparing food.

Fig. 179 Rimedio. A lady and her neighbours (in the back) in front of her cumbessia.
Fig. 180 and Fig. 181

Rimedio. Porch as a place for leisure.
Fig. 182 and Fig. 183 Rimedio. Lingering and working after lunch.
Fig. 184. *Gonare*. Lingering under the porch.

Fig. 185 *Rimedio*. A *calciobalilla* outside of a *cumbessia*.
Fig. 186 Rimedio. Porches are at the same time corridors and rooms.

Fig. 187 Rimedio. Porches are privileged points of observation within the village. Underneath them daily life unfolds as if it was within a living room.
Fig. 188 Rimedio. A daily sweeping of cumbessia's front-yard.
Fig. 189  *S. Cosimo.* Sweeping outside the *cumbessia*.

Fig. 190  *S. Cosimo.* Women gather every afternoon in front of a neighbour’s *cumbessia*. They sit and linger for hours before the mass.
Fig. 191, Fig. 192, and Fig. 193 S. Cosimo. Women daily task include dish washing at the public fountain within the village.
Fig. 194 and Fig. 195. S. Cosimo. Hanging out the washing.
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Fig. 198 and Fig. 199 S. Cosimo. Snapping beans for lunch.
Fig. 200 *Annunziata.*
Tools.

Fig. 201 *Annunziata.*
Carpets hanging out from the *passizzera.*
Fig. 202 Gonare. Lingering under the porches.

Fig. 203 Gonare. Daily leisure.
Fig. 204 *Annunziata*. At the lottery.

Fig. 205 *Annunziata*. Lingering in the plaza.
Fig. 206 Annunziata.

Fig. 207 S. Cosimo. Sitting outside
Fig. 208 and Fig. 209 S. Cosimo. Playing tombola.
Fig. 210 S. Cosimo. Playing tombola.

Fig. 211 S. Cosimo. Neighbours Playing cards.
Fig. 212 S. Cosimo. Neighbours lingering outside.

Fig. 213 S. Cosimo. Offering something to drink to newcomers.
Fig. 214  *Rimedio.* Offering wine after the mass to celebrate the anniversary of the death of a relative.

Fig. 215  *Rimedio.* Within the *cumbessia,* offering sweets to visitors.
Fig. 216, Fig. 217 and Fig. 218 Sauccu. Men spend part of the day sitting with friends at bars.

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Fig. 219 S. Cosimo. Two old men sittin under the shadow of a tree.

Fig. 220 Amunziata. An old image of the 1950s showing a communal moment of leisure. Men and women are dancing the traditional dance in this part of the plaza. In the back, on the right side, are visible the old barraccas selling beverages. Photo credit. Modesto Bitti.
Fig. 221 Annunziata. A crowded barracca.

Fig. 222 Annunziata. A group of men lingering in the plaza.
Fig. 223 S. Cosimo. A man and his friend standing in front of his *cumbessia*, looking around.

Fig. 224 Annunziata. Men gathered round.

Fig. 225 S. Cosimo. Men are used to walk all around the village sometimes gathering in small groups.
Fig. 226 and Fig. 227
*S.Cosimo.* Men can drink also outside of the *barracas.* In this case, a group of friends is gathered near the car of one of them. The car’s boot contains a few bottles of home made wine.
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Fig. 228 and Fig. 229 S. Cosimo. Lingering at barraccas.
Fig. 230 S. Cosimo. Within the barracca with his family.

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Fig. 231 Gonare. Lingering in the plaza.
Fig. 232 Sauccu. A man goes down daily to the spring to provide the obrierato with water.
Fig. 233, Fig. 234 Sauccu. Filling up the plastic cans and going up back to the village.
Fig. 235 *S. Cosimo.* One of the new tasks for young men arrived in groups at the village.

Fig. 236 *S. Cosimo.* Loading the van before the departure from the village.
Fig. 237 S. Cosimo. Playing *morra*.

Fig. 238 S. Cosimo. Men and women joking together.
Fig. 239 S. Cosimo. Joking.

Fig. 240 Sauccu. Hanging outside of the muristene.
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Fig. 241, Fig. 242, Fig. 243 S. Cosimo. Children use all the spaces within the village.

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Fig. 244 Annunziata. Trees are one of the preferred dwelling places for children to play.

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Fig. 246 Saucu.
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Fig. 248 S. Cosimo.

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Fig. 249 Annunziata.
Fig. 250 S. Cosimo.
Fig. 251 Gonare.
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Fig. 253, Fig. 254, Fig. 255 Sauccu. Children and adults in socialised activities.

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Fig. 256 S. Cosimo. Women dancing while waiting before the departure from the village.

Fig. 257 S. Cosimo. Night dances.
Fig. 258 and Fig. 259 Anunziata. 1950s. Dances were moments of socialisation among villagers. Photo credits Modesto Bitti.
Fig. 260 *Annunziata.* 1950s. The traditional dance in the church plaza. Photo credits, Modesto Bitti.

Fig. 260a. S. Cosimo. 1970s. Dancing in the plaza. Author unknown.
Fig. 261 *Annunziata.* An old widow saying one’s prayers to the Virgin of *Annunziata.*

Fig. 262 *Rimedio.*

Fig. 263 *Annunziata.* A moment of profound commotion in front of the flag with the image of the Virgin of *Annunziata.*
Fig. 264 Annunziata. The cross signing the pilgrimage route to the Cumbessias village of Annunziata.

Fig. 265 Annunziata. The pilgrimage path.
Fig. 266 Annunziata. This bell is rang to signal the arrival of pilgrims at Craru Mannu.

Fig. 267 Annunziata. Part of the pilgrimage route to the village of Annunziata still displays the old paving stones.

Fig. 268 Annunziata.
Fig. 269, Fig. 270 Gonare.
Leaving the village of Orani along the steep route directed towards the cumbessias village of Gonare on pilgrimage.
The route to Gonare passes through a thick wood now destroyed by a recent arson.

A small shrine dedicated to the Virgin along the pilgrimage route.
Fig. 274 Sauccu. Leaving the church in Bortigali after the mass directed to Sauccu. The obriera carries the Virgin, her daughter and another relative the two angels.

Fig. 275 Sauccu. Leaving the village.
Fig. 276, Fig. 277 Sauccu. People on foot and children riding small Giara horses and donkeys.
Fig. 278 *Sauccu.* A man carrying one of the two angels (on the right) accompanying the Virgin. To carry an angel on pilgrimage is done as an act of penance or to ask for a favour to the Virgin.

Fig. 279 *Sauccu.* Half of the participants to the pilgrimage were young people and children.
The first stop along the journey is known as 'su pasadorzu' (the resting place) which is now within the property of a sheepfold. The pilgrims rest for about 30 minutes. Some of the obrieri's helpers now offer hot coffee and sweets. In the meanwhile, the Virgin and the angels are positioned on a flat rock while devotees gather round them and say the litanies.
Fig. 282 Sauccu. Women praying the Virgin at su pasadorzu.

Fig. 283 Sauccu. Saying the litanies.
Fig. 284 and Fig. 285 Sauceu.
Fig. 286 Sauccu. The entrance to the village.

Fig. 287 Sauccu. The entrance to the church with the small statue of the Virgin (known as Marieddha).
Fig. 288 Sauccu. Having a rest after the pilgrimage.

Fig. 289 Sauccu. The arrival of the big statue of the Virgin with the parade making three circuits around the church before entering.
Fig. 290 Sauccu. The departure from the village on pilgrimage at the end of the novena.

Fig. 291 Sauccu. A devotee carrying one of the two angels.
Fig. 292 Rimedio. Going back home after the mass.

Fig. 293 Rimedio. Arriving at the village for the afternoon mass.

Fig. 294 S. Cosimo. Going back home after the mass.

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Fig. 295, Fig. 296 S. Cosimo. Attending the mass.
Fig. 297 Annunziata. A woman attending the mass from her cumbessia.
Fig. 298 *Rimedio.* Attending a crowded mass of novena outside the church.

Fig. 299 *Rimedio.* At the end of the mass of the novena.

Fig. 300 *S. Cosimo.* A crowded mass of novena.
Fig. 301 Rimedio. Positioning pews outside for the mass of novena.

Fig. 302 Gonare. Waiting for the beginning of the mass.

Fig. 303 Rimedio. Encountering the Virgin.
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Fig. 305 Annunziata. Praying in front of the angel.
Fig. 306 and Fig. 307 S. Cosimo. The two saints: Cosma and Damiano.
Fig. 308 *S. Cosimo.*

Fig. 309 *Rimedio.* Bringing her own chairs to the church.
Fig. 310 S. Cosimo. Entering the church with the chair.

Fig. 311 Annunziata.

Fig. 312 Rimedio.
Fig. 313 and Fig. 314 S. Cosimo. The plaza as a church.
Fig. 315 and Fig. 316 Annunziata. The village as a church.
Fig. 317 and Fig. 318 *Anmuniata*. Devotees who live in the village attend the mass of novena apart from the rest of the devotees arrived from outside of the village just for the celebration.
Fig. 319 and Fig. 320
Rimedio. The statue of the Virgin and the altar built in the garden of the village for external celebrations.
Fig. 321, Fig. 322, Fig. 323 Rimedio. The village as a church.

Fig. 324, 324a Rimedio. Attending the mass outside.
Fig. 325 *Annunziata.* The altar with the archangel positioned in one of the nodal points of the village.

Fig. 325a *Annunziata.* Celebrating the mass at the altar.
Fig. 326 and Fig. 327 Annunziata. Attending the mass at the outside altar.
Fig. 328 *Annunziata.* Attending the mass at the external altar.

Fig. 329 *Annunziata.* The white angel positioned at the entrance of the village.
Fig. 330 and Fig. 331 *Gonare.*
Devotees arrived at the village for the mass of the ill people sit underneath the porches. Porches acquire a new dimension.
Fig. 332 Gonare. Men generally sit quite distant from the main area of the mass which is almost exclusively reserved to women.

Fig. 333 Gonare. Attending the mass from under the porches.
Fig. 334 Miracolo. Sign indicating the selling of sacred objects.

Fig. 335 Rimedio. The children of priorato selling sacred objects.

Fig. 336 Rimedio. Entrance to the souvenirs shop.
Fig. 337 *Annunziata*. Candles.

Fig. 338 *Rimedio*. A wax hand as an ex voto given by a devotee to honour the Virgin for the granting of a favour.
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Fig. 339, Fig. 340, Fig. 341
S. Cosimo. Carved pews with dedications to the saints Cosma and Damiano.

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Fig. 342 Annunziata. The statue of the angel at the entrance of the village.

Fig. 343 Annunziata. The procession of the daily Via Crucis.
Fig. 344 and Fig. 345 Anunziata. The procession winds along the path that within the village circumambulate the church.
Men usually stand aloof from the body of women who represent the head of the group.
Fig. 348 Annunziata. The procession early in the morning throughout the village's paths.
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Fig. 349, Fig. 350, Fig. 351 Annunziata. The procession of the morning.

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Fig. 352, Fig. 353 Miracolo. The procession on the last day of the novena.
Fig. 354, Fig. 355 Miracolo.
Miracolo. The final stage of the procession back to the *cumbessias* village.
Fig. 358, Fig. 359 Gonare. Torchlight procession.
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Fig. 360, Fig. 361, Fig. 362
Annunziata. Torchlight procession with wooden torches (sas merzas).

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Fig. 363 Gonare. Cave-like shrines.

Fig. 364 Annunziata. A small shrine.
Fig. 365 Gonare. Carved rocks along the ascending path with the initials of devotees.

Fig. 366 Gonare. Carved rock: Ave Maria Mama 'e Deus (Hail Mary, Mother of God).
Fig. 367, Fig. 368, Fig. 369 Gonare. A woman indicating the points where the Virgin stopped while ascending the path to the top of the mountain.
Fig. 370, Fig. 371, Fig. 372. Gonare. *Su imbaradorju* (the resting place) where the Virgin has stopped and propped herself on the rocks. Nowadays devotees ascending to the church still lean against the same rocks to obtain relief from physical pain.
Fig. 373 Gonare. The point of the rock where the Virgin put her hand has been literally scratched to obtain a powder with which devotees sign themselves.

Fig. 375 Annunziata. ‘This garden has been cleared for those who in this holy place look for solace’. An expression of care.