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Beyond Human Limits

The Culture of Nature Conservation in Interwar Italy

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Abstract

In Italy, the creation of national parks in the Alps became a major topic in public debates at the beginning of the twentieth century, eventually finding its practical realization under Fascist rule: the Gran Paradiso and Stelvio national parks were founded in 1922 and 1935, respectively. This paper analyzes the dialectical and rhetorical strategies used by nature conservationists and tourism enthusiasts to support the creation of nature reserves and discuss the diverse interpretations of what a park should be. How was the representation of the natural world displayed and constructed? How were the geographical spaces enclosed within the planned and existing parks interpreted in relation to the us/other and humanity/nature divides? In order to answer these questions, I will discuss articles published between the two World Wars by journals that showed at least a partial interest in nature conservation or in the management of natural resources, paying particular, but not exclusive, attention to the publications of the Italian Touring Club.

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Both the perception of the Alpine environment as something aesthetically pleasant and a genuine interest in its natural features are quite recent phenomena in Western culture (Cronon 1995, 70). Such a view was, for example, still almost completely absent in Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the mountains were still considered unhealthy and dangerous. For most of that century, important intellectuals such as Carducci and Mazzini considered the Alps to be a mere geographical border, if not simply of a huge defensive structure (Andreotti 2006, 256; Ryall, 2007, 21; Porro 1930, 855). Still, in 1938, the following text can be found in an important tourism journal: "the mountains must be loved, our nice Alps must be loved, because they are the bulwark of our dear Fatherland and the springboard for the offence beyond the borders" (Pagano 1938).[1]

If wild nature, in particular in mountain regions, was seen in Italy primarily as dangerous and unhealthy, how were the early Italian preservationists able to successfully promote the creation of national parks in the Alpine region? What rhetorical means were used to overcome cultural distrust of the natural world? How was Alpine nature reinterpreted into a cultural vision of civilized nature? To attempt to answer these questions, I will address the debate surrounding the establishment of national parks and the role of outdoor leisure activities and the symbolic role of the Alps therein. I will then discuss the debate that took place before and after the creation of the Gran Paradiso National Park in the Graian Alps. Finally, I will analyze the process that led to the creation of a national park on the Ortles-Cevedale massif in 1935. I believe that the development of nature conservationism in pre-World War Two Italy was inextricably linked to both nationalist rhetoric and the mysticism of mountaineering. Thus, I argue that the creation of nature reserves in the Alps depended greatly on the construction of a complex narrative of Alpine environments that combined patriotism and the memory of war, spirituality and sportsmanship, heritage and tourism, and finally, ecology and culture.

The main sources I used in this study are *Le Vie d'Italia*, probably the most important Italian tourism magazine in the first half of the twentieth century, and its precursor, the *Rivista Mensile del Touring Club Italiano*. Using issues from the interwar years, currently housed in the library of the Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali (MTSN) in Trento and the Biblioteca Comunale in Mantova, I was able to thoroughly analyze the role of the natural world in Italy, and in particular the debate about national parks and nature reserves during this period. Another journal that I have analyzed in depth is the *Rivista Mensile del Club Alpino Italiano*, a magazine conserved at the libraries of the MTSN and of the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale in Verona. These three monthlies, published by the popular Touring Club and the more elitist Alpine Club, respectively, express an early interest in nature conservation and represent the most popular journals in which the members of the early Italian nature conservation movement could discuss the issues they cared for.[2] Finally, I have also examined another

monthly, the *Bollettino of the Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini*: an endeavour markedly less successful than the previous three.[3]

Other possible platforms for propaganda and debate were hunting journals like the *Corriere del Cacciatore*, the *Cacciatore Trentino*, and the cultural magazine *Nuova Antologia*, where some proponents of the conservationist movement managed to publish a few relevant articles. Yet for the sake of continuity, *Le Vie d'Italia* and the *Rivista Mensile* definitely offer the most consistent arena for a debate on the needs and practices of nature conservation. I have also considered the journal *L'Alpe* in my analysis of the medial representation of Alpine nature conservation, but in the end, I abandoned this venture: this magazine was, in fact, more interested in technical issues related to reforestation and the like, rather than in the creation of a rhetorical image of nature.

With regards to the methodological approach, I address my research questions through a methodology based on the critical examination of sources and text analysis. Historical methodology, as informal a practice as it may be in our postmodern times, still requires a strong social and cultural contextualization of the sources used, and a comparative approach to allow the construction of a clear and consistent frame in which to place elements that may otherwise be perceived as unconnected. Only within such a framework is it possible to construct a coherent narrative. And narration is an important part of the historical method, not only because historians aim to tell good stories, but also because the method I use in this study focuses on the analysis of past narratives as expressed in the mediascape and the way in which these narratives were structured and created.

Natural borders and personal limits

The strategic role of the Alpine environment in national security and as the natural border of the new Italian nation-state led, in 1872, to the institution of the world's first military corps specializing in mountain warfare, also known as the *Alpini*. But the construction of the "warrior myth" that since has followed this military corps would not have been possible without an independent symbolic rediscovery and valorization of the mountains themselves (Mondini 2008, 5). It is in this context of ideological construction that some Italian elites developed an early interest in mountaineering, eventually leading to the foundation of an Alpine Club in 1863, two years after the country's unification (Pastore 2003). For the club's founders, then led by Minister of Finance Quintino Sella, mountaineering was mainly a way to morally educate and physically train the "new Italians:" in other words, to create stronger and better men (Pastore 2003, 24-25; Friedmann 1923).

By the end of the Belle Epoque, mountaineering had become in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, a phenomenon involving a rising number of groups and individuals. This led to a relatively widespread appreciation of the mountains and their beauty. However, mountaineering and interest in Alpine nature in Italy never achieved the same massive

Figure 1
Alpini *on the Dolomiti (Massano 1933, 292).*

success it had in Germany: before World War One, the Italian Alpine Club had just 9,000 members (Raeticus 1921).[4] According to *Le Vie d'Italia* in the aftermath of World War One, the number of tourists in the Alpine regions, and in particular in the new provinces of Tridentine and Julian Venetia, just freed from Austrian domination, increased swiftly (Anon. 1924b).

Mountaineers apart, the natural world was still traditionally perceived as a cultural construct, set up by elements of heritage and landscape. In the interwar years, Italian cultural schemas of nature were dominated by the neo-idealistic ideas of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile. This current of thought fostered an aesthetic and anti-positivist concept of interpreting nature only as a beautiful landscape and transforming natural beauty into a dependent variable within national identity as opposed to any scientific understanding of the natural world as a continuous ecosystemic process of generation (Zanetto et al. 1996). In other words: a landscape was made beautiful and significant primarily through its links to the history and heritage of the nation, a belated example of what Zimmer terms "nationalization of nature" (1998, 643-45). Beauty and the sublime were the main rhetorical concepts used to justify the need for the preservation of mountain areas. These elements were, in fact, cited in most articles featured in *Le Vie d'Italia*, showing a lack of innovation in respect to the romantic topoi that first led to the acceptance of the mountains as places that were worth a visit (Giacomoni 2008). Strangely enough, in these journals, no reference is ever made to George Perkins Marsh and his *Man and Nature* (1864), despite the fact that the book had found early success in Italy with a 1872 translation overseen by Marsh himself (which became the basis for the second American edition in 1874) and despite

that, apparently, Marsh's insights had a determining influence in the framing of late nineteenth century national forest acts (Olivieri 2005, 100; Lowenthal 2003, xvii, xxxv). This may have been caused by the fact that the sources I examined, a representation of a good part of the Italian conservation movement during those years, were tourism centered and, as a result, inattentive to issues of resource use. Alternatively, their failure to address developments related to Marsh's writings show how soon Marsh's writings, after an early interest in Italy, slid quickly into oblivion (Olivieri 2005, 100).

As suggested by Per Binde, the traditional Italian view of nature, particularly the Fascist one, was of "something uninteresting or disagreeable, which cannot be truly appreciated unless it is transformed by man" (Binde 1999, 767-68). Furthermore, according to Piero Bevilacqua (2010, 25-26), "the people of the Italian peninsula have traditionally seen the natural world more as a threat to humans than as being threatened by humans." Wild and uncultivated environments were thus commonly seen as dangerous and potentially unhealthy and in need of physical reclamation (such as, for example, the Pontine Marshes) or at least of a symbolic "civilization" or moral redemption. Such a moral redemption was possible through references to the role of the natural world in the construction of Italy's national identity and through the production of a new kind of humanity.

When discussing the views of nature held by Italian Fascists, it is difficult not to make at least a fleeting reference to the rather large existing scholarship that associates environmentalism and conservation with fascism, developed over the last twenty-five years in (largely critical) response to Anna Bramwell's writings (1985; 1989).[5] Scholars generally tend to look sceptically upon those purporting to have discovered actual similarities between Italian fascism and Nazism: it is, in fact, difficult to draw clear parallelisms between the two movements (Uekötter 2007, 6-7). Nonetheless, on the whole, one can tentatively state that both regimes were characterized by a pragmatic and utilitarian approach to issues beyond their core ideology, such as the natural world. Either movement had polycentric institutional structure, and were more or less united by the belief that nature needed to be adapted to human needs and mastered (Aquarone 1965, 3-4; Melis 1996, 375; Uekötter 2007, 11, 30). Yet one peculiar difference between the two ideologies, however, is particularly relevant in the context of this essay: while Italian Fascists understood the landscape as a cultural product and, in general, had an anthropocentric view of the world defined by cultural and spiritual heritage, Nazi propaganda and various articles and books by German conservationists emphasized how the Germans were rooted in the land and in nature in an almost environmentally deterministic fashion (Uekötter 2007, 9).

On the eve of the twentieth century, the modification of the Italian landscape caused by the burgeoning industrialization process began to be perceived by part of Italian elites as both wrong and dangerous. For the purposes of analysis, representatives of this early nature conservation movement have been grouped into three categories:

naturalists and preservationists, aesthetes and patriots, and sportsmen and tourism-fosters (Piccioni 1999, 86). Of these, only the first group saw nature as an ecological structure that deserved to be protected for its own sake, while the other two groups were more adherent to the above mentioned cultural interpretation linking nature, beauty, and nation, and to an utilitarian interpretation of the environment and of its resources, respectively. It is, however not always easy to make precise distinctions among members of different groups, since the early preservationists cooperated within the same associative networks and institutions. While each group had its peculiar reasons for promoting the creation of national parks (such as ecology, national identity, outdoor leisure), they all had more or less, the same goals, and so one can often find articles written by scientists and aesthetes in tourism and outdoor leisure journals such as *Le Vie d'Italia* and the *Rivista Mensile del CAI*. For a movement that lacked a vast social base, it was important to be able to communicate beyond its limited basin of members. Moreover, one must remember that the Touring Club and the Alpine Club were among the few organizations somehow interested in nature preservation that were not disbanded under Fascist rule. The role of their journals as a potential arena for the discussion of conservation-related issues became more and more important during the 1920s and 1930s.

Figure 2
Map of the alpine range with watershed line and the cited planned and actual parks.

The history of nature conservation in the Italian Alps in the interwar years is marked by the creation of two national parks in the region: the Gran Paradiso in 1922 and the Stelvio in 1935. These parks were not the expression of a peculiar Fascist interest in the preservation of the natural environment, but rather the by-products of longstanding debates surrounding the need to preserve Alpine environments. About twenty-five sites were proposed as national parks between the beginning of the twentieth century and the creation of the Gran Paradiso National Park. Of these proposed sites, at least five were for Alpine parks: Mount Argentera, Livigno, Adamello-Brenta, Eastern Trentino, and the Venetian Alps (Sievert 2000; Piccioni 1999).[6]

Tourism, nature, and war

World War One marked a change in the way the mountains were perceived in Italy. Between 1915 and 1918, the war ravaged the Alpine region from the Stelvio Pass all the way to the Adria, causing many casualties among members of the Touring and Alpine Clubs. Yet, the Touring Club journal *Le Vie d'Italia* never stopped proposing possible developments in the region's tourist infrastructures: in January 1918, an article supporting the development of winter sports in the Italian Alps as soon as the war was over was published. "As soon as this dreadful calamity is over," the author noted, "the youngsters will resume the habit of hitting the mountain tracks" (Gerelli 1918).

In the media, the Alpine environment was commonly presented as a place of freedom from the anxieties of urban life, where the mountaineer was confronted, aside from the natural environment itself, with a different kind of humanity that was purer and less corrupted by the vices of the plains (L.V. Bertarelli 1918a). The Alpine climate, particularly in the winter months, was advertised by the Touring Club's magazine as a true panacea with the ability to reinvigorate the body and regenerate the mind (Brocherel 1918).

One of the simplest rhetorical means adopted to support the establishment of national parks in Italy was the mere, but not completely correct, assertion that Italy was one of the last European countries that did not have one (Guarnati 1918).[7] Furthermore, the need to preserve the country's natural beauties, aside from the usual, but "not always artistic" specimens of heritage, was stressed. The lack of sites of environmental protection led, it was said, to the disappearance of "marvellous places where nature, in the free expansion of its forces, could offer perpetual delight to artists and scientists and a source of healthy joys to those who ask, in an increasingly turbulent life, a brief parenthesis of rest" (554). Nature was seen as an aesthetic inspiration and means of lessening the stresses of urban life, but also as an opportunity to create new tourist destinations and further possibilities for a developing tourism industry.

The mountains were symbols of spirituality, national redemption, and individual liberty. They were not only the natural border of the nation: they were also a place where nature could lead a lone alpinist beyond his personal limits to a state of moral

and spiritual superiority. It was also the ideal arena for the formation and education of youth. All these elements merged in the view the Italians had of the *alpini*: seen as humble mountain-dwellers, but also viewed as an elite group made up of loyal heroes, strong and sturdy due to centuries of struggle against an impervious and inhospitable natural environment but also in love with the mountains and valleys they were defending. Not only were they perceived as physically fit and perfectly trained in both mountaineering and combat, they were also intolerant of discipline and almost indifferent to class differences (Mondini 2008). For the *alpini* "military life is not sacrifice, but joy" (Massano 1933). Among the undertakings of this military corps, there were many bold mountaineering enterprises. From 1923 onwards, the *Rivista Mensile del CAI* published reports of the climbing routes established by the *alpini* during World War One (Comitato delle Pubblicazioni 1923).

A personification of the link between patriotism and mountaineering was the socialist and irredentist *Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini* member Cesare Battisti, who fought for the Italian army and was executed by the Austrians in 1916 for high treason. After the war, he became a martyr in the struggle for the redemption of Tridentine Venetia. As an alpinist and *alpino*, he was also seen as the epitomization of the tight links between mountaineering and national liberation (Tiezzi 2007, Fabietti 1932). In fact, Battisti viewed mountaineering as the ideal means to train his young townsmen's bodies and souls for future battles against the Austrians. He clearly saw the links between the promotion of tourism in Trentino and the defence of *italianità*, that is, the region's peculiar Italian character. On the other extreme of the political spectrum, one of the most important propagators of the link between *alpini* and mountaineering in the years of the Fascist regime was Angelo Manaresi, at one point simultaneously president of the *Associazione Nazionale Alpini*, the association of former *alpini*, and of the Italian Alpine Club (Manaresi 1930, Pastore 2003). His idea was that there was no difference between *Alpini* as military corps and as mountain-dwellers, because both activities were intrinsically linked by their dedication to the defence of the Italian borders.

The mountains were seen as objects to be dominated in the struggle against the national enemy. At the same time, however, they were also bulwarks to be vanquished by mountaineers in their quest to assert their individuality and spiritual superiority over the masses (Mosse 1991, 126-27). Nature, within this patriotic Alpine rhetoric, had to be subject to human domination—a position that was fully assimilated by the interwar years' media representation of the Alpine environment. Furthermore, the link between the symbolic role of nature and the existential, rather than historical role of the nation gained renewed political importance that strengthened the ties between nature conservationism and right-wing extremism (Mosse 1991, 124; Gentile 2006, 161). The representation of the natural world—its preservation and its promotion as a tourist destination in the interwar years—may be also seen as an issue indicative of a wider nationalist mythopoeia within the process by which the liberal governments and later

the Fascist regime responded to the crisis that followed World War One and attempted to go beyond the physical limits of humanity to attain a more spiritual dimension.

Mountain landscapes were considered to occupy a fundamental role in the development of the tourist industry because of the natural beauty found there, which included glaciers, waterfalls, caves, and panoramas, and, perhaps most significantly, the fresh air and the various sporting opportunities the mountains offered. The goal of a good mountaineer was, according to the *Rivista Mensile del CAI*, the conquest of the peaks, not only as a means of asserting one's own strengths, endurance, and courage, but also simply to see some of the most appealing panoramas possible—an aesthetic but also spiritual delight (Cavara 1927). Cavara's "Paesaggio e alpinismo" attempted to summarize the elements that made a landscape interesting to an alpinist and came to the conclusion that only a balanced mixture of geological formations, flora, and fauna could produce an ideal scenic panorama. Diversity and change were the main elements the author identified as necessary.

But first, the mountains had to be "polished" and "embellished." The sublime, to borrow from Cronon, had to be "domesticated" (1995, 75). Forests were considered to be one of the mountains main attractions: thus, their beauty had to be preserved. If a particular forest had already been destroyed, its reconstitution, possibly in the form of a park, was propagandized, especially because the resinous smell of fir woods was considered salubrious and had an important role in marketing the mountains as a healthy environment (Zavattaro 1919). Furthermore, so-called "natural curiosities," specimens of endogenous and exotic trees, and hunting reserves that lured sportsmen to the Italian Alps, were used to promote the attractiveness of tourist destinations. Such proposed tourist attractions and embellishments, not to mention the creation of more Alpine botanical and zoological gardens or the improvement of the Alpine communication network, went in the direction of a mass bourgeoisization of the mountains, an adaptation of the environment to the tastes and needs of a rising middle class. This tendency countered the mountaineers' elitist and spiritual interpretation of the Alps. The landscapes of the proposed parks and tourist destinations were intrinsically civilized, if not by the means of a physical transformation, at least by superimposing a modern, organized, and secure vision of the region. Opportunities for weekend rambling and picnicking appealed to a greater public, rather than just to the hardcore alpinist or nature preservationist. As a result, the park proposals resembled urban leisure park projects rather than plans for national parks or nature reserves. In later issues of the same journal, this type of park was proposed many times by the supporters of mountain tourism. Even when proposals were of a more soundly naturalistic character, the role of the potential park areas as a tourist destination was, unsurprisingly, always stressed (D'Amora, 1921).

Its Royal Highness

The first Italian national park was founded at the end of 1922 in and around the former

Figure 3
The Gran Paradiso peak (G.B. 1925, 1404).

royal hunting reserve of Gran Paradiso. The main reason that the national park was established on the Gran Paradiso massif was to preserve the endangered ibex population there. In 1919, the king had relinquished his hunting rights in the region and donated them to the state for the erection of a nature reserve. The postwar socio-economic conditions, however, delayed the institution of this reserve, and the whole process led to an abrupt increase in poaching. The main concern of nature conservationists, led by the president of the Province of Torino, was that the ibex could become extinct in the Western Alps if the state did not take on the preservation measures that until then had been performed by the royal gamekeepers (Anon. 1919c). Aside from this, the second issue to consider was whether the Gran Paradiso massif had the right aesthetic and ecological characteristics to justify the institution of a national park. To this question, according to the naturalist Lino Vaccari, the answer was positive: in 1921, he wrote that the results of a survey he had conducted among scientists, mountaineers, and artists suggested that no other region had more national park potential (Vaccari 1921b). The height of its mountains and the character of its forests, hydrology, fauna and flora, geology, and diverse geography were all considered striking from both an aesthetic and the scientific point of view. Among its positive "natural features," Vaccari even included eminently anthropic elements such as the local language and traditions and infrastructure, such as roads and mountain huts. The latter became an element in favor of a national park in name of their sheer monetary value. Vaccari maintained that a national park in the area should not so much promote mountain landscapes as mass tourist destinations, but rather defend them from an excessive human presence. The main aim of the park should be the preservation of the last ibex and chamois colonies, both perceived as animals that could somehow symbolize the whole Alpine landscape. The planned restraint of mass tourism should however not impact on the rights and freedom of alpinists, local populations, and scientists. A couple of years later, the following was written on the construction of a dam in the Abruzzo National Park: "to create a National Park means to rescue its territory from extraordinary forms of exploitation and maintain it

at normal levels of exploitation, which have been exercised for centuries" (Bognetti 1928, 199). The aim of a national park was perceived to be, at least in part, the preservation of nature as an anthropic construct, subject to continued and permanent human impact. Such a culturally inclusive view, favoring the interpretation of wild nature as a sort of built environment, may, in the end, have helped ease the way for the creation of national parks in Italy.

The dialectic means used by the government to support the creation of a national park on the Gran Paradiso massif, which was also picked up by the tourist media, appealed to the advancement of science and the defence of national dignity, which would have been hit hard by the possible extinction of the ibex (Vaccari 1921a). What the park on the Gran Paradiso should not be, according to the *Vie d'Italia*, was a garden park, a sporting ground, an industrial wood reservoir, or a simple hunting reserve. Instead, it was argued, the park should become "an immense region where the integral conservation of the natural elements is possible," and where it would also be possible to preserve rare Alpine fauna and flora from complete extinction (Vaccari 1921a, 490). The park thus should serve primarily as a means to preserve alleged uncontaminated landscapes and noble species, while the rest of the country could be sacrificed to the transformations of progress.[8] There was, in fact, no criticism of the widespread changes to which the natural world was subjected by industrialization and modernization, but only the feeling that parts of it should be preserved for leisure and science needs. The landscape of the envisioned park was something *else* in respect to the normal and civilized world in which nature conservationists and tourism promoters lived and worked. It was this otherness and peculiarity that presented the possibility to plan its preservation: a project of integrated preservation of all landscapes and biotopes would not only have been anachronistic, but would also have challenged the bourgeois faith in the benefits of modernization in an unacceptable manner.

Even in a journal concentrating mainly on the promotion of tourism, the ideal aim of a national park was described as being the maintenance and recreation of a "natural state" free from human intervention. Humans should only make sure that nothing interfered with the spontaneous and free deployment of the "phenomena of natural life," so as to allow scientists and amateurs to admire the effects of natural development. This, however, was not considered possible in Italy, because of the civilization pervading all its national territory (Sarti 1918). Touring Club members and sympathizers who supported the realization of national parks in Italy were, in fact, fully aware that there was no landscape or region in Italy that could be entirely preserved, brought back to its purest form, or left to an hypothetical pre-human pristine state.

The Gran Paradiso became the epitome of an equilibrium between the so-called Swiss model of total preservation, where the national park was created as a total reserve essentially dedicated to scientific research, and the American one of tourism promotion, where the parks were more characterized by good transport networks, hotels, and camp

sites (G.B. 1925). To strike such a balance, the Gran Paradiso National Park should promote not just the preservation of flora and fauna for scientific purposes, but also the realization of tourist infrastructures, such as a belvedere pathway that everybody could use to circumnavigate the central massif without having to engage in real mountaineering. The preservation of the ibex and the beauty of the Alpine landscape were sufficient reasons to set up the Gran Paradiso National Park, but these national treasures should also be made available to all for leisure, and not enclosed in what many feared could become a "ibex monastery" (Hardenberg 2006, 134).

The idea of the ibex as the park's symbolic animal—virtually the only reason for the whole area to be protected—and the park's role in the defense of the species are mentioned in almost any article discussing the Gran Paradiso massif published in the interwar years. While reading a 1931 article on rambling and royal hunting paths in the park, one can sense once more that in order to justify nature and landscape as objects that deserve preservation, one must somehow link it to human cultural constructs: in the case of Gran Paradiso, it was the history of the region as a royal hunting reserve and its profound symbolic ties to the Royal Family.

As many had hoped, tourism became an important part of the raison-d'être of the Gran Paradiso National Park: at least in part, the park assumed the characteristics of an urban zoological garden. A small group of ibex was captured and put on display on a farm in case tourists found it too demanding to trek up in the mountains to the areas were the ibex could be seen in their natural habitat (Garbieri 1931). Thus, for the comfort of the tourists, the animals were severed from the landscapes of which they were an integral part. In this case, the gap between the needs of tourism and those of preservation led to the creation of an artificial environment in which nature and humanity could meet and interact without the dangers and discomforts of the real world.

Figure 4
Ibex at the pasture (Festa 1933, 603).

In 1932, a debate on the pages of the *Rivista Mensile* about the appropriate role of a national park brought the potential impact of this gap even further. Ugo Rondelli (1932) proposed a vision of national parks as a sort of huge zoological gardens: that is, places where, in a controlled environment, fauna could be preserved and seen by everybody. His argument was that the park administration had focused too heavily on the conservation of the ibex while ignoring issues such as mass tourism and the promotion of mountaineering. Rondelli denounced the park's selling of its ibex, noting that, on one hand, some of them had died of hunger in the winter, and on the other, they had allegedly damaged fields in the valley floor. Moreover, he mourned the park administration's decision to forbid the building or even repair of Alpine Club mountain huts, and to abandon some pathways and routes, making it more difficult for the tourists to reach the inner parts of the park. Essentially, Rondelli's argument was that the park administration was attempting to transform the Gran Paradiso into a purely scientific park, putting an end to its tourist vocation and leading to the complete depopulation of its valleys. He feared that, using the excuse of the preservation of the ibex, the commission was attempting to isolate the whole park from the rest of the country, in favour of a reproduction of the Swiss model. The national park he dreamed of was instead a place where tourists paid entrance fees; where young ladies could feed the animals sugar cubes; where one could find banks, ice cream parlors, and all the comforts of an urban leisure park (301). The animals should be fed, not only with sugar, as if they were domesticated. Rondelli's concept argued a complete separation of the animals from their natural landscape in an effort to reduce the park's otherness and promote its connection in the civilized world. In other words, he dreamed of the complete bourgeoisization and domestication of the park and its nature. What Rondelli, a member of the Turin section of the Alpine Club, asked for, in fact, was a clean, aseptic, and perfectly crafted space for his leisure treks.

Figure 5
The Gran Paradiso, Tresenta, and Ciarforon peaks within the national park (Festa 1933, 606).

Perhaps the only logical point in his argument was that preserving animals should not mean to hide them. On the pages of the same *Rivista*, Luigi Peretti (1932) responded to Rondelli, arguing that this was absolutely not the case in Gran Paradiso. In fact, Peretti stated, the park had all the structures needed to support the development of mountaineering in the area that allowed, with routes at diverse levels of difficulty, almost everybody to come and see ibex and chamois firsthand. Moreover, the park could be seen, according to Peretti, as a mountaineering "gym" where one could effectively improve one's soul and body.

Behind the decision to establish a national park on the Gran Paradiso, as we have seen, was the opportunity and the desire to preserve a particularly rare species, the ibex, which at that time was on the brink of extinction. But what were the reasons for the realization of a park on the Ortles-Cevedale massif between Tridentine Venetia and Southern Tyrol? Were there particular ecological reasons, or was the decision based on more cultural and ideological motives?

Nationalizing landscapes

As argued by George Mosse (1991), nature appropriation was, during and after World War One, one of the main means used to conceal the real, and cruel, face of the war. In particular, snowy Alpine peaks became, on both sides of the front, symbols of an individualistic strive for eternity and for an unchanging image of the nation, integral parts of a myth of chivalry that attempted to reread, in a romantic fashion, what actually had been a fully modern form of warfare. Nature became the paragon of an idealized homeland and of all the virtues that it could embody (Armiero 2010; Keller 2009). These images of war environment became fundamental elements of the rhetorical representation of Alpine nature in interwar Italian tourism journals: in short, the Alps were depicted as the backdrop for heroic behavior, and Alpine tourism presented an opportunity to visit former battlefields and military cemeteries.[9] Nature was also associated with the national cult of the fallen soldier. The soldiers had fully lived and experienced the natural world. Thus, in a certain sense, they had ennobled the environment with their "heroic" deeds. Therefore, the postwar tourist could experience the beauty of the natural world and the heroism of the soldiers at the same.

War memory had the typical features of a civic religion, and pilgrimage was one of its main elements. The former battlefields of the recently conquered Alpine and pre-Alpine territories became compulsory highlights for any informed Italian tourist, who in visiting them could see both the environmental features of the site and, obviously, the war cemeteries (Cobòl 1922).[10] In the pages of the *Vie d'Italia*, there were frequent invitations to visit this or that peak that had a particular meaning in World War One. These included battlefields, a peculiar defensive structure such as the galleries cut in the Ortler's glaciers or caves used as natural trenches in the Karst, military mountain roads, cemeteries, reconquered towns, villages and hamlets (Anon. 1923a, Anon. 1923b, G. Bertarelli 1923, Deambrosis 1923, Gariboldi 1924, Gariboldi 1925). As was written in

Le Vie d'Italia in 1932 "to remember the last great war, no monument will ever be able to exceed the mute advising eloquence of the trenches cut into the rock, or of the galleries and caves dug into the flanks of the mountains" (Mezzadri 1932).

On the Western front, the war landscape had soon regained its previous rural and peaceful character—most of its scars were hidden, thanks to the zealous work of the peasants. This restoration process was perceived by some, according to Mosse (1991, 124-125), as a conspiracy against relaying the pain and terror of war to the younger generations. In Italy, the *Vie d'Italia* proposed to create a sort of memorial park in the Karst, the *Via Sacra del Carso*; an area of the former front should become state property and all the traces and ruins of the war should become living memories of the conflict and of the sacrifice of the Italian soldiers. The visitors to this "national monument" were supposed to become modern pilgrims, traveling between the battlefields on a road built for that specific purpose (Sartori 1919). The rhetorical meaning of such a project, fully supported and sponsored by the journal of the Touring Club, seems self-evident: once more, the landscape becomes monument, in line with the traditional Italian view of a natural world made relevant only by its links to history and heritage. In order to be successful, such a landscape had to have not only natural features, significant for the particular geologic conformation of the area and its role in warfare, but for also the physical memory of trenches and military cemeteries.

In 1925, in the framework of this promotion of memorial tourism, *Le Vie d'Italia* advertised the Touring Club's national excursion to the battlefields by presenting it as a pilgrimage. Unfortunately, it seems that by then, national memorial monument projects had lost at least part of their appeal. The recovery of the war damages, with its corollary of economic returns, had by then become more important than the transmission of memory and the education of youth, and reconstruction was starting to be perceived in a positive way (Anon. 1925).

Mount Grappa and Mount Sabotino, the sites of two of the most significant battles on the Italian front, needed, according to the Touring Club, to be both preserved as they were and more widely advertised (Mezzadri 1932; Tomaselli 1926, 353). For Mount Grappa, the "extreme bulwark of our resistance" (Michelesi 1928a, 629) the idea was, once more, that it should be conserved as a monument to Italian warfare, and with it the roads that led to it. As early as 1919, Michelin had published an Italian edition of its *Guide illustrèe des champs de bataille, the Guida dei campi di battaglia: fronte italiano* (Michelin 1919, Armiero 2010, 300). To support this strand of patriotic tourism, the Touring Club began to publish its own guides of the battlefields of the Alpine and pre-Alpine regions entitled *Sui Campi di Battaglia* (R.M. 1927, 795). In 1927, the series began with a volume dedicated to the middle and lower Isonzo (Touring Club Italiano 1927). The volume about Mount Grappa appeared as the series' second volume in 1928 (Touring Club Italiano 1928).[11] These guides were intended to be to be useful tools for the tourists or pilgrims in the organization of their trips. They were also intended to

help the Italian battlefield tourist industry to reach the high level of organization that had been achieved in other European countries (Armiero 2010, 300). Moreover, they were supposed to become an anthology of Italian war courage (Michelesi 1928b, 954).

In May 1918, *Le Vie d'Italia* discussed the new tourist opportunities offered by the military roads built or improved on both sides of the Alpine front during the war. These roads were created to reach impervious passes and even to climb some among the more difficult mountain tops, but would, after the war, likely, lose all strategic interest. *Le Vie d'Italia* suggested the need to preserve these roads so that they could be used in the postwar years for tourism and leisure (L.V. Bertarelli 1918b). The *Strada degli Alpini*, a road in Veneto near the Tyrolese border cut by the *Alpini* in the flank of the mountain at an average height of two thousand metres, was one of these scenic war remnants. Recovered by the Alpine Club as a tourist road, it would stand in perpetual memory, as *Le Vie d'Italia* asserts, of Italian wartime courage among those impervious mountains. Once again, the mountains became a symbol of the struggle with the Austrians, and the masses were invited to experience the sublime beauty of the Dolomitic landscape with the famous "Tre Cime" of Lavaredo and the no less important memory of the victorious war at the same time. And those daring mountaineers involved in their personal struggle with the peaks could become potential alpini in future wars: the same boldness, the same love for the homeland is ascribed to both groups (Casara 1928). Obviously, the memory of the war was present also in the bulletin of the *Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini* with articles, as has shown a cursory survey, about, for example, the military roads or descriptions of particular wartime mountaineering deeds.[12]

World War One led to the creation of a new national border with Austria, which was both "naturally" and "geographically" defined as the watershed line dividing the rivers flowing south from the Alps from those flowing northward (Pariani, 1921).[13] The natural quality of this new border was assumed to be self-evident, and nature itself, which according to Quintavalle (1924, 772) created places where everything was Italian, from landscapes to popular sentiment, was used to separate Italy from Austria. In this instance, we are faced with an example of what Zimmer (1998, 645) calls the "naturalization of the nation," where nature becomes capable of defining national identity in a deterministic way, in opposition to the traditional, and then still dominating "nationalization of nature" (643-45). A 1930 article stated that the Adige basin geographically belonged to Italy because it was, from both the physical and anthropic, and consequently also political point of view, autonomous from the mountain area north of the Brenner. Therefore, the article argues, it could not be split without violating the "laws of nature" (Porro 1930, 851). The founding myth implied that the war had allowed Italy to consolidate its natural defensive bulwarks and regain vast territories that were "geographically" undoubtedly part of Italy. Thus, in the tourism journals, these landscapes were represented as typically Italian and tourists were invited to visit Tridentine Venetia in the thousands (Anon. 1926).[14]

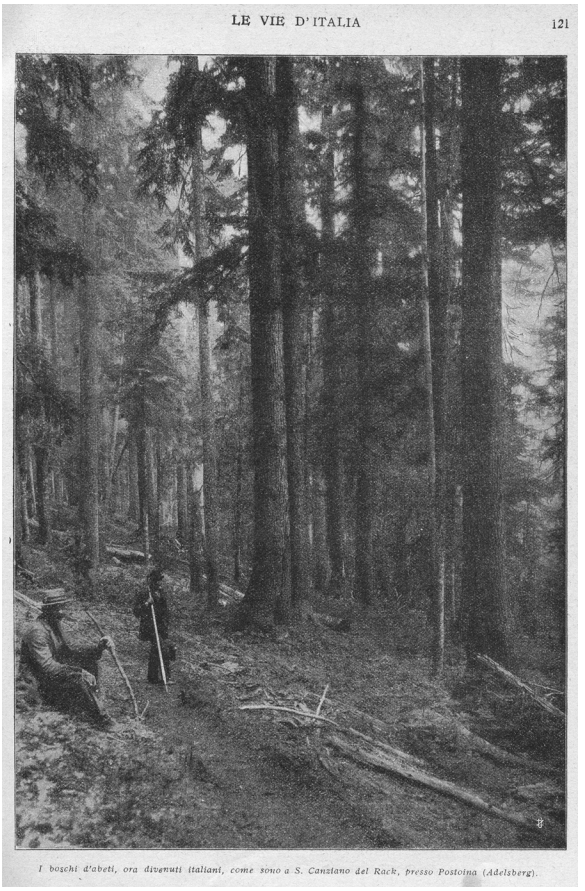

Figure 6
The "Italian" woods by San Canziano del Rack (Adelsberg) in the new South Tyrolean province (Bertarelli 1921, 121).

The links between this *italianità* of the Tridentine Venetia and the mountaineers' activities had an important role in the postwar media (Scotoni 1918, 609). The *Società Alpinisti Tridentini* was presented not only as an Alpine club striving for the physical improvement of its members and the promotion of mountaineering, but also as crucial element in the associative network struggling for the "liberation" of the region from foreign domination. Climbing the mountains became thus a symbol for a more ideal shift towards patriotic ideals (610). Instead, German Alpine associations were seen by Scotoni as mere propaganda, and as actual weapons of the Austro-Hungarian state in the battle for ideological and linguistic superiority in the Dolomites (612).[15]

Among the dangers of the postwar years denounced on the pages of the Touring Club monthly was the loss of the recently conquered rich Southern Tyrolean forests because of the deficiencies of the Italian legislation in respect to the former Austrian laws and the Italian lack of awareness of the need for a sound forestry (L.P. 1919). However, the fear that the war had irreparably damaged the recently acquired forests was refuted by the journal. Even if the same forests had, in spite of great efforts to preserve them even during the war years, suffered major damages, these were not considered to be irreparable given an organized and committed reconstruction process (Pavari 1921a).[16]

Beside the economic aim to re-establish a profitable forestry industry in the conquered provinces, the symbolic aim of this effort was to assert the value of the forest as spiritual and aesthetic feature within the mountain landscapes. These vast and picturesque extensions of forested terrain were presented as one of the principal features of the new provinces—one of the main attractions for the many Italians who went on a "loving pilgrimage" (Pavari 1921b) in the region. Immediately, the forests became "Italian," despite the fact that they were admittedly a product of Austrian legislation, endangered by the poor Italian forestry legislation of the immediate postwar years.

In January 1919, *Le Vie d'Italia* published an article by the Touring Club's president Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli (1919a) in which he presented the projects prepared by Giovanni Pedrotti, then the president of the *Società Alpinisti Tridentini*, for the creation of two national parks in recently liberated Trentino as a means of preserving the region's geological diversity, flora and fauna, wildlife, and the beauty of its landscapes— all of which, according to Pedrotti, were endangered by an increasing degree of human greed (F. Pedrotti 2005). One of the proposed parks was supposed to be in Eastern Trentino, approximately where the regional park Paneveggio-Pale di S.Martino is now located. The other was intended for further West in the region around the Adamello massif, which today is also a regional park. A subsequent letter to the editor published the following February, stated that these projects should be considered of national interest, because of their importance for the future of tourism and sports in the region and the "wild beauty" of the region in question. The mountaineering opportunities in these regions were, according to this letter, among the reasons for the establishment of a national park there (Sardagna 1919).

Other parts of the new provinces conquered from Austria during the Great War were also considered to be in need of protection—such as the caves of the Karst in Venezia Giulia. *Le Vie d'Italia* even asked for the institution of a subterranean national park in the area that could preserve the caves, which were not famous tourist destinations and had not yet been the subject of any conservation measures. The idea was to go beyond the protection of the caves granted by the previous Austrian laws through a special form of legislation that designated them as "natural monuments," forbidding any further modification. Modifications had, in fact, become increasingly numerous since the end of the war (L.V. Bertarelli 1919b; Anon. 1919c; Anon. 1921). The new provinces were among the most frequently advertised destinations in *Le Vie d'Italia* after World War One—among other reasons, for their richness in natural beauties and forests.[17]

As I have touched upon earlier, after the end of the war, the promotion of national parks became one of the prime interests of the Italian Touring Club. The club widely publicized this interest through its journal, *Le Vie d'Italia*. In those years, references to the American parks were relatively numerous, as were appeals for the creation of parks in Italy (D'Amora 1921). For example, a short news article that appeared in June 1919 discussed a request made by the scientific society *Società Italiana per il Progresso delle*

Scienze for the establishment of other national parks other than the one that was in an advanced stage of completion in Abruzzo (Anon. 1919b). Among the suggested sites, there were at least five Alpine parks stretching from the current Mercantour to the area surrounding the Karst caves. Suggested sites here included the first reference to a park in the Stelvio region in Trentino. Astonishingly, for the post-World War One years, the part of the article dealing with Trentino took almost a pro-Austrian stance, with the author longing for the severity of the former hunting legislation as compared to the coeval Italian anarchy.

> The state of neglect in which some areas are left; the anarchy of hunting laws; the easiness with which the peasant, having lost the habit to work, starts to poach; the absence of respect for the constraints imposed by forestry lead to the fact that the beautiful forests and the game that inhabits them run the most serious dangers. It will be difficult for the government to concede exceptions to the Italian hunting laws, as to preserve game as severely as the Austrian laws did: the only remedy would thus be to create as soon as possible parks, where the respect for the forest could be imposed with a severe surveillance and game could multiply (Anon. 1919b).

In the aftermath of World War One, media representation of the Alpine environment, in particular in the columns of the Touring Club monthly *Le Vie d'Italia*, was bound to war mythology: the mountains were usually remembered as the scene of an epic struggle against a supposedly barbaric enemy. Soon the editors of *Le Vie d'Italia* assumed the stance that it was just because of the war, with its painful vicissitudes, that it had been possible to introduce the great masses of Italians to the beauties of Alpine landscapes and create a taste for heights (Anon. 1924).

The diverse geographical, physical, and cultural justifications for the annexation of the Tyrolean, Tridentine, and Julian Alps, and the whole war rhetoric used in these monthlies seems to have been central in the numerous plans to set up at least one national park in the new provinces. As has been discussed above, among the proposals

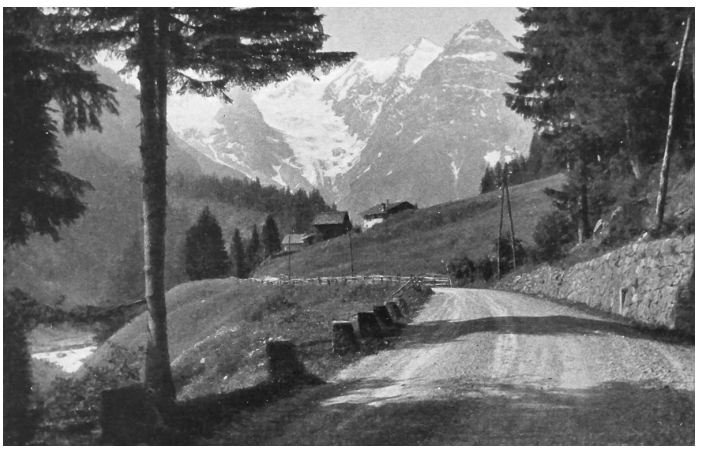

Figure 7
The Stelvio road near Trafoi (Bertarelli 1929, 623).

made for national parks there were at least two parks suggested by Pedrotti in 1919 in Trentino, the subterranean park so desired by Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli, the memorial park on the Karstic front, and, last but not least, the Stelvio National Park, the only park among these that was actually realized. The aim was evidently to consolidate the *italianità* of the region by claiming part of it as an inherently Italian nature and landscape, following a process by which the part became to symbolize the whole. Moreover, it seems plausible, if not entirely clear, that the Stelvio National Park took on the role, in part, of a memorial park of the Alpine front.

In fact, the western sector of the Italian front came to symbolize the difficulties of Alpine warfare, because here, as states Michelesi, "nature has assembled its roughest obstacles, the struggle reached epic heights, unheard acts of courage shone, and titanic undertakings were accomplished" (1928b, 947). It was, to use the words of another *Vie d'Italia* author, the scenic backdrop of "the war of man against the cliff" (Tedeschi 1928, 971). It was here that the struggle against nature and against the enemy reached its highest point. And this nature, including the Adamello and Stelvio regions, was the more suited for an effort of conservation—an effort that could preserve a sublime landscape and the memory of an epic struggle at the same time. In the postwar years, the deeds of the *Alpini* on the Adamello, for example, were presented in the media as unprecedented historic instances of boldness and sheer technical adeptness (Michelesi 1928b, 947). In another article on one of the many Touring Club excursions, it seems that for the authors, the landscape was made more beautiful by the mere fact that it still bore the marks of the terrible war that had been fought there (Tedeschi 1928, 971). In a certain sense, this region allowed for a convenient combination of a traditional national park, like Gran Paradiso, and of the planned memorial war park in the Karst.

Central in the dialectic process that prepared the terrain for the creation of a national park on the Ortles-Cevedale massif was a 1929 article by Guido Bertarelli. In this article (for the very first time, in fact) Bertarelli made a formal proposal for

Figure 8
The Königspitze, Zebrù, and Ortler peaks (Bertarelli 1929, 623).

the creation of a national park in the Stelvio pass region. The author compares the Ortles-Cevedale massif with that of the Gran Paradiso, both two almost completely independent mountain groups, virtually isolated from the neighbouring Alps. Though not located along the watershed line, both have some of the highest Alpine peaks and most extensive glaciers. Moreover, they are at the heart of complex and thriving systems of commerce and communication, and are characterized by a great variety of landscapes. All in all, the author argued that these massifs should be among the main points of interest of those that want to visit the Italian Alps, and lamented the fact that then, they were only visited by a small group of expert mountaineers. The author's main aim was to improve the quality of tourism in the region as well as to introduce everybody to a massif that "has been restored in full ownership to Italy through the glory and the sacrifices of a victorious war."[18]

Bertarelli wanted to bring the love for the mountains and the habit of visiting them to wider segments of the population, beyond the elite groups of mountaineers that had made up most of the Italian Alpine movement before World War One. He wanted to promote, to use the words of another of *Vie d'Italia's* authors, that "small mountain tourism" that had experienced so much success in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany before the war (Laeng 1929). Among the elements of this possible tourist

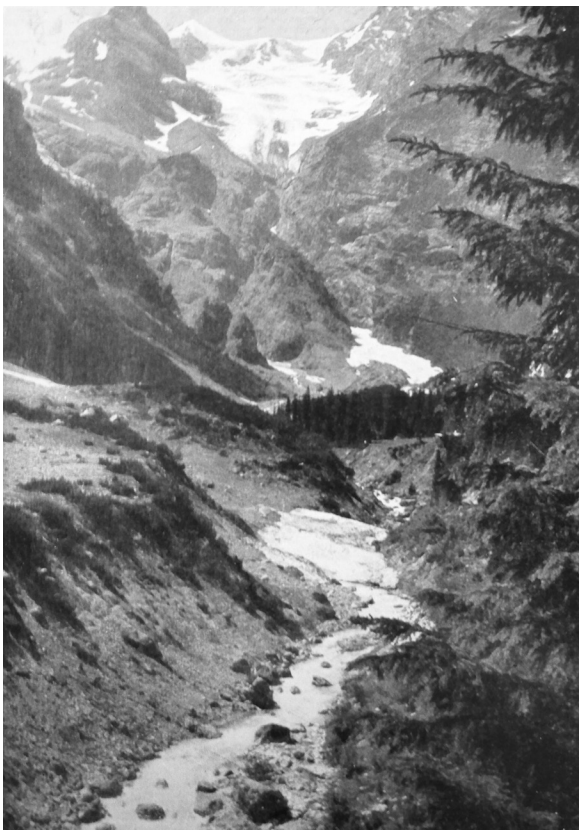

Figure 9
The 'Dantean' Trafoi valley (Bertarelli 1929, 625).

Figure 10
View of the Grand Hotel in Solda, within the Stelvio National Park (Bertarelli 1929, 630).

development that Guido Bertarelli (1929) listed were the recent improvement of the Gavia pass military road that by then had become a real parkway connecting the Val Venosta and Val di Sole passing through some among the most beautiful mountain landscapes of the Ortles-Cevedale massif. Another element was the steadily increasing number and quality of the area's mountain huts and pathways. Bertarelli's plan provided for the improvement of car tourism and mountaineering at the same time. In the final paragraph of his article, Bertarelli suggests setting up a national park in the area, exclusively as means to support further development of tourism in the region. The author, in fact, does not make any reference to scientific and ecological reasons for the creation of a national park in the area, if we exclude the geographical features and particularities listed at the beginning. In regards to the fauna, Bertarelli, in a certain way, admits that the area was not home to any particularly interesting species.[19] He states, however, that chamois, ibex, roe, and even reindeer and European bison could be, in fact, bred in the region. The reference to the introduction of reindeer and bison to an Alpine environment may appear quite bizarre, but in those years, such attempts were actually made in the sacred Gran Paradiso National Park. In this view, the role of national parks in nature is that of picturesque scenery, and not that of a living organism: there is no real understanding of the links existing between the diverse elements that make up a landscape (geography, fauna, flora, humans). "Anything goes" – as if an Alpine national park was some sort of public garden or urban park. The need for a constant human intervention seems to be felt: as man is the actor in the destruction of landscapes and environments, he is, in this view, and in stern opposition to the coeval American wilderness myth (Cronon 1995), also essential in the creation of a landscape that deserves to be preserved. Looking at one of the images accompanying the article, we can see how the Italian heritage and culture were still seen as important tools affording dignity and autonomy to a natural landscape that was still felt as alien: the Trafoi valley, just recently recovered from Austrian rule, becomes thus Dantean in the caption.

Conclusions

As has been shown, depending on the author, very different views of the natural world were presented on the pages of Italian tourism-related journals, going anywhere from the need to embellish it for the purposes of tourist industry to totally preserving it for scientific and memorial needs (Vaccari 1921a, Zavattaro 1919). Nevertheless, a point of contact may be found even among such diverse interpretative positions: the view of nature as something other, something that humanity can—and must—control, modify, and preserve. This view was, in fact, central to all kinds of representations of Alpine landscapes and nature, and was used indifferently to support the need for parks or the promotion of tourism, if not both at the same time. In a certain sense, conservation and transformation of nature were two sides of the same coin: modernization. The concept of wilderness, as Roderick Nash (1967) and William Cronon (1995) have shown, is a social construct, and as such a wilderness area is as artificial and anthropic as a cultural landscape.

Looking back at the elements gathered in this essay, it becomes clear how Italian nature conservationists supported the creation of Alpine national parks in a country that had still an ambiguous relationship with its mountain landscapes and with the natural world in general. Nature was always something else, and it was difficult to conceive a completely natural space that was also a positive space. First, as we have seen, a process of civilization of the areas that should be subjected to preservation had to take place. The whole relationship of post-World War One Italians with the Alps was marked then by the dreadful experience of the war and by the construction of its myth via a popularization of the formerly elitist practices of mountaineering, and by the divulgation of the concept that in a "natural" environment the individual could go beyond his personal limits to reach a superior level of conscience.

The Gran Paradiso National Park was based on a long-standing tradition of preservation, only shortly disrupted to adapt to different socio-political conditions when the hunting reserve was donated to the State. The symbolism in this case mixed the history of the Italian Royal House with the role of the ibex as king of the mountains. In the case of the Stelvio National Park, which lacked a link with such a symbolic animal species (the Adamello would probably have been a better choice, because of the presence in the area of an important bear colony), the aim seems to have been to Italianize and nationalize the landscape of a region that had been recently dominated by the enemy and that had experienced an original war epic. The creation of the park aimed, besides creating new opportunities for the tourism industry, at consolidating the dominion of Italy in landscapes still contested by the Austrians and the Germans, and in particular by the German-speaking minority in Southern Tyrol, at the ideological level.

Patriotism, spirituality, ecology, and heritage all had a primary role in the production of the mediatic narrative that acted, over the years, as the basis for the creation first of an effective preservationist movement and then, also, of an embryonic

network of Alpine nature reserves. At the same time, these elements were important in defining, for the public, which Alpine regions were more suited for the establishment of parks—and better able to reflect the *italianità* of Alpine nature.

Endnotes

[1] All translations from Italian by the author.

[2] It must be kept in mind that the ideas expressed in an article can in the first place be attributed only to its author and not immediately to the journal as such, as if it were a superior entity able to write in first person. The journal's editorial board may however be seen and interpreted, at least in part, as an autonomous author because the choice of articles, essays and letters to be published is, in the end, its sole responsibility. A journal may be seen as the coherent expression of a political and/or ideological position, whose interpretation is the product of the analysis of the published articles. Even more interesting becomes the analysis of such a political-ideological position of the media in front of an authoritarian government such as the Italian Fascist regime.

[3] See endnote 12 for further details.

[4] According to Keller (2009, 254) in 1909, even if rather prone to selective and elitist admission policies, the German-Austrian Alpine Club could instead claim almost 90,000 members. The Verein Naturschutzpark, established as late as in 1909 and aimed exclusively at the creation of extensive nature reserves, could boast, by 1911, already of more than 10,000 members (Dominick 1986, 271).

[5] Besides Uekötter (2006) for the German case see Ditt (2000), Josephson and Zeller (2003), Radkau and Uekötter (2003), and Brüggemeier, Cioc and Zeller (2005). For an introduction to the Italian case see Sievert (2000), Hardenberg (2010) and Piccioni (1999).

[6] A very brief account of the history of Alpine national parks in Italy is given in Hardenberg (2009).

[7] Actually Italy was the third European country where a working national park was instituted, after Sweden and Switzerland. The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by the creation of numerous parks in many European countries. Sweden instituted its first two national parks in 1909. In the same year a private preservation organization created a park in the Lüneburger Heide in Germany that became a natural preserve in 1921. In France a first national park was formally established in 1913, but it never became effective. The Swiss government established the Engadina Park in 1914, while Spain created its first parks in 1918. The first Polish park was established in 1919 at Biatowieza. In the last two cases it seems however that the parks were nothing more than the formal claim of legal protection, without practical effects on nature preservation. At last, in 1921 Lenin planned, but did not succeed in realizing, a park on the low Volga as part of an integrated nature preservation project (Dogliani 1998; Zuanon 1995). European conservationist faced very different problems in respect to their American precursors in respect to the creation and management of nature reserves: because of the different geographic and anthropic conditions in most European countries beside Italy nature conservation meant also to preserve the historic heritage and the cultural value of landscapes.

[8] For a more detailed discussion of the definition of uncontaminated nature and of wilderness as a human construction see Cronon (1995).

[9] The heroes of the Alpine war became also symbols of mountaineering and mountain huts were named in their honour, such as the hut dedicated to the soldiers that fought on the Adamello's glaciers (by the way one of the areas that was among the proposed ones were to set up a park in Trentino) (G. Bertarelli 1927, 911). Another important monument to the victims of the Great War in this context was the monument built to honour 64 fallen on the Stelvio pass, the western most point of the Italian front (Michelesi 1939, 1437)

[10] The tight links existing between tourism, war mythologies, and nationalism are well described by Winiwarter (2008).

[11] The following issues were respectively consecrated to "Il Trentino, il Pasubio e gli Altipiani," "Il Cadore, la Carnia e l'alto Isonzo" and "Il Piave" (Anon. 1928).

[12] The survey took place in September 2009 at the MTSN library. The analysis has been performed on the few available post-WWI issues: n. 1-2, n. 3-4, n. 5-6 of 1922 and n. 1, n.2, n. 3, n. 4 of 1921. The most relevant articles were Bertoldi (1921), G. Pedrotti (1921), R.B. (1921), R. Meteorologico Centrale (1921), Zaniboni (1922).

[13] Nevertheless, at least on the Swiss border there were exceptions to the watershed rule: the Livigno valley and the Cravairola Alpine pasture for example, culturally and politically Italian, were, hydrographically, actually Swiss (Genolini Benetti 1924, Lowenthal 2004). The reverse was the case, on a much grander scale, for the Swiss canton of Ticino.

[14] Many anonymous one page photo-reportages were published between 1924 and 1925 presenting each an unknown Southern Tyrolean or Tridentine landscape.

[15] Tait Keller (2009) has recently published a seminal article in which he discusses how the Austrians and Germans perceived during and after World War I the same mountains and how the war impacted the pan-German nature conservation movement. The parallelisms and similarities between how the Austrians and the Italians saw and interpreted the same mountains are striking.

[16] As reports Armiero (2010, 309) the Alpine forests had actually been heavily hit by World War One, with an estimated loss, according to different sources, of about two million cubic meters of timber or 15,000 hectares of forests.

[17] For example see, beside other articles already mentioned in this essay, Battisti (1919), Boegan (1919, Dalmasso (1919), Direzione Generale (1919), Gerelli (1919) and Scotoni (1919).

[18] It must also be noted how during the war the Stelvio was cited in every war bulletin as the western starting point of the front (Michelesi 1929, 654).

[19] In fact this is not completely true, since the area hosted one of the last colonies of red deer in the central Alps, but no reference to this was made in support to the planned national park in Bertarelli's article.

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