Moving Lightly over the Earth: A Cinematic Map of Post-industrial Sulcis

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In the novel The Rings of Saturn *(1995), the German writer W. G. Sebald recounts his solitary journey to the town of Suffolk (UK) at the end of his years, while he also reflects on some of the dramatic events that shaped World War II and his personal memories. In this work, he takes on a particular narrative tactic defined by the interaction between the text and images that creates a special type of montage in which he seems to draw from cinematic language. I argue that, drawing on Sebald's work, we can imagine a form of ethnographic observation that involves the creation of a cinematic map through which to explore the memories and imagination of individuals in relation to places where they live. I explore the day-to-day lived experiences of unemployed people of Sulcis Iglesiente, through their everyday engagement with, and situated perceptions of, their territory. I describe the process that led me to build* Moving Lightly over the Earth, *a cinematic map of Sulcis Iglesiente through which I explored how women and men in the area who lost their jobs as a result of the process of its deindustrialization give specific meaning to the territory, relating it to memories of their past and hopes and desires for the future.*

KEYWORDS: Sebald, W. G.; cinematic map; unemployment; Sardinia; Sulcis Iglesiente

FROM SEBALD'S LITERARY STYLE TO BUILDING A CINEMATIC MAP OF SULCIS

To write is to struggle, in other words, to resist; to write is to become; to write is to make maps.

(Foucault 1983)

IN THIS ARTICLE, I intend to describe the process that led me to create *Moving Lightly over the Earth*, a cinematic map of Sulcis Iglesiente, one of the poorest areas of Sardinia, Italy, with one of the highest rates of unemployment in Europe. Specifically, I will discuss how I drew inspiration from the German author W. G. Sebald, especially his novel *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), in order to build a cinematic map to investigate how the people of Sulcis attributed particular meaning to their territory as a result of the process of the area's deindustrialization. In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald recounts his solitary journey to Suffolk (in the United Kingdom), where he lived until the end of his life. The road, in Sebald's telling, stands as a metaphor of life, in which everything can crumble, shatter, or precipitate into ruin and destruction. Sebald moves through a space bounded by the sea, hills, and a few coastal cities; through large decaying estates on the edges of airfields from which fighter planes took off to bomb Germany. The novel is organized around a route of ten stations, where he meets different people and objects that reflect the area's natural history of destruction, marking out the human journey and succession of natural events.

He alternates the stories of his pilgrimage with those of other wanderings and emigrations that echo his, such as that of a refugee from Germany who was a poet and translator of Hölderlin; Joseph Conrad, who in the Congo knew the melancholy of the emigrant and the horrors of a country of darkness;[1] Chateaubriand, exiled in England; and Edward FitzGerald, a translator of Persian poetry.

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1. Many commentators have seen Conrad's portrayal of the "dark" continent and its people as part of a racist tradition that has existed in Western literature for centuries. In particular, Chinua Achebe accused Conrad of racism because of his refusal to see the Black man as a full-fledged individual, and for his use of Africa as an environment representative of darkness and evil. While it is true that evil and its corrupting power is Conrad's subject, Africa is not simply representative of that theme. The darkness in the heart of the "civilized" white man (especially the civilized Kurtz who entered the jungle as an emissary of piety and arcience and who becomes a tyrant) is contrasted and confronted with the so-called barbarism of the continent. The civilization process is where the true darkness lies.

Sebald interweaves the stories of the characters he meets with those he only remembers through glimpses of ancient and modern history (the cruelties of the Celestial Empire, the violence of World War II), as a counterpoint to earthquakes, floods, catastrophes of nature, and the suffering inflicted by a rapacious economy. Karen Remmler (2005) compares Sebald's literary style to the activity of an *archaeologist* in which the discovery of past ruins caused by natural events are indistinguishable from those generated by historical destruction. The mutual relationship between "man made and natural" (Remmler 2005, 238) disasters reminds us of the multi-dimensional characteristic of destruction that affects both the social and natural spheres of human life. The recognition of destruction is inherent in the process of remembering. Only through the fragments and the ruins can we recognize the double dimension (presence / absence) of the past in us. *The Rings of Saturn* suggests that by changing one's place to see the remnants of destruction, no matter how miniscule or marginal, we see the past as distant and yet connected to the present.

David Darby has said that *The Rings of Saturn* can be seen as a particular form of territorial mapping (2006, 270). At first glance, Sebald's walk along the coast of Suffolk does indeed seem to describe the territory as a topographically transparent entity. Geographical locations are accurately marked, often with photographs. This makes it seem as if his walk could be easily replicated "with the help of a good map." Yet, as Darby has also said, this is only an illusion. Many of the routes taken come from improvised choices: "the walker cuts across fields, climbs over walls, loses himself in labyrinths, real and metaphorical, wanders lost in circles, and nearly comes to grief, blinded in a sandstorm" (Darby 2006, 270). Some of this can be reproduced in a map that seeks to be an objective representation of the territory. Sebald's wandering on the Suffolk coast seems mostly like a trip through time. "It is a landscape of a borrowed time, a landscape that will one day be gone, its tenuous afterlife, consisting exclusively in whatever memory is left, of the stories still contained in its fraying fabric" (Darby 2006, 270). In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald overlaps and mixes the experiences of the characters he meets (or recalls) and historical events, forging a connection between individual memories and historical events. This particular narrative tactic is enhanced by the interaction between the text and images to create a special type of montage in which he seems to draw from cinematic language. I argue that, drawing on Sebald's work, we can imagine a particular form of cinematic mapping through which to explore the memories and imagination of individuals in relation to places where they live. For the purpose of this article, I intend to describe how Sebald's literary style, and in particular *The Rings of Saturn,* can be taken as a significant source of inspiration for the making of a cinematic map.

Sébastien Caquard (2009) wrote that maps are often inspired by stories and their relationships with places. Different forms of narrative (oral, written, and audiovisual) may use cartographic forms to represent space-time structures; to give shape to the spatial expressions of particular events; and to connect aspects of the personal sphere to where daily life happens and to other phenomena that act on a global scale. This aspect takes on special importance concerning the current maps, made through cinematic tools. The interconnections between cinema and geography have been the subject of study by several authors (Mauduit and Henriet 1989; Lukinbeal 2004), and the cartographic reading of films has been conducted by several authors, such as Tom Conley (2007) and Teresa Castro (2009). Christian Jacob (2005) was one of the first authors to recognize the cinematic dimension of cartography. He conceived the idea of the atlas as an accumulation of individual maps, cut out and organized following a particular logic aiming to create a specific sense of structure, rhythm, and progression. Through his analysis, Jacob showed the narrative dimension of mapping, drawing on the work of scholars in different disciplines (Bruno 2002; Castro 2009; Conley 2007).

Drawing from Jacob's ideas, Teresa Castro (2006) sees Albert Kahn's vast film and photography project, *Les Archives de la Planète* (1912–1931), as a way of mapping the world through a systematic collection of images that convey a particular form of knowledge. Castro compares the film director to a cartographer who selects, records, and archives different aspects of the world, and the camera to a cartographic tool that can narrate human beings' stories in relation to geographical spaces. In *Cinema's Mapping Impulse*, Castro looks at several films about World War II, identifying in each different cartographic shapes (areal views, panoramic views, atlases) that correspond to different forms of knowledge. While panoramic views in films create a sense of understanding of places and landscapes, and the aerial views offer a sense of "unquestionable source of emotion" (Castro 2006, 11) through their particular association with the landscape, atlases are associated with a collection of images that can give information about certain places in particular time periods. The mapping

impulse is intended as a vehicle of knowledge to investigate the emotional aspect of the atrocities of the war.

The theme of memory related to the events of World War II is also the focus of Tom Conley's observation of the trauma of war through the genre of film noir (2007). Through the eye of French director Jean Renoir, he maps French society in the interwar period. Then, through two American noir films—*The Killers* by Robert Siodmak (1946) and *The Crooked Way* by Robert Florey (1949)—he takes on the theme of memory lost during World War II. By analyzing these films, Conley underscores "much of the ambivalence and the trauma of war that the cartographies of film noir locate relentlessly," and concludes by pointing out the importance of cartography in a broad sense "to take issue with our own sense of location and our rapport with traumatic and traumatizing events" (Conley 2009, 22). As Sèbastien Caquard (2009) noted, both Castro and Conley use film as a tool to map the places of World War II with the aim of revealing the atrocities of armed conflict in a way new to traditional cartography. Conventional maps often simplified and dehumanized the landscape to help wartime leaders "avoid conscience issues related to the impact that any of their decisions might have on the population of the mapped area" (Caquard and Taylor 2009, 7). Film noir and "cartographic shapes" subverted this trend by revealing the human presence in the landscape in order to make visible the human consequences of the conflict.

In Sebald's work, too, a central theme is memory and the attempt to re-humanize the landscape as a historical product: the fruits of the war's destruction. One of the central aspects of his literary style consists in framing the experience of the individual within a geographical space and mnemonic process. This aspect emerges clearly in *The Rings of Saturn,* where the practice of walking favors the mnemonic reconstruction of a past that comes up against the irreversibility of historical events and the geographical condition of the landscape. As the stories unfold in the narrating consciousness, the events of epoch-shifting changes and the atrocities of war cannot be stopped, just like the degradation caused by nature. "The trees crushed by the wind, burned in the name of progress, or fallen from the crumbling cliffs, cannot be saved or resurrected" (Sebald as quoted in Wolff 2014, 17). Sebald's landscape is an intricate collection of fragments of the past, floating in a melancholy narrative consciousness. The practice of walking in this sense is defined by an ongoing process of disintegrating and reconstructing the landscape, an

attempt to reconstitute a nearness of the fragments of the past in the present, the faraway in the near, and the living in the deceased. Drawing from Sebald's literary style, a particular form of cinematographic mapping can be conceived that aims to capture the temporal coexistence of the past and present in places.

Sebald's literary style, in particular that used in *The Rings of Saturn,* has been a source of inspiration both for cinematographic and cartographic works. For example, in the 2012 film *Patience (After Sebald)*, the British director Grant Gee takes a particular documentary approach in which he revisits the Suffolk coast through interviews conducted with characters who knew or were influenced by Sebald. Ng-Chan (2015) notes that, in addition to being a meta-travelogue, *Patience* can be seen as a "travel story of a travel story" that explores how understanding the emotional experiences of a place can be conveyed through cinema. Drawing from Castro's analysis of the analogies between cinematographic shots and cartographic shapes, Ng-Chan notes how *Patience* explores the territory through a double perspective, consisting of both a mobile viewpoint that retraces the paths of Sebald and a distant viewpoint of the places that he moved through, noting how they refer to different forms of knowledge.

In a similar way, Barbara Hui in her 2009 *Litmap* draws from *The Rings of Saturn* to develop a cartographic work on the routes taken by Sebald. Her project conceives geographic space with a positivistic, empirical approach, using "numerically precise data" to delineate the names of places on the earth's surface "with a certain degree of mathematical accuracy" (Ng-Chan 2015, 558). Hui should be acknowledged for offering a key to understanding *The Rings of Saturn* and Sebald's literature in general, presenting a direct correspondence between its geographical orientation and textual narrative description. However, as Lynn Wolff (2014) noted, this type of spatial representation runs the risk of disorientation and decontextualization. Making Sebald's paths visual through spatial geometry, Hui "decontextualizes the narrative passages and erases the visual elements of the text" (Wolff 2014, 17). This approach specifically lacks a central element: "the images integrated into the text" (which are typical of Sebald's work and essential to his poetics) "are neither reproduced nor referenced in this form" (Wolff 2014, 17).

In his work, Sebald combines texts and images in a particular way to highlight the intellectual and emotional

involvement in the themes he addresses, to the point that the reader wonders if the text can be considered a novel, a travel story, or an autobiography. What is the role of integration between text and images, and why does this story refer to other writings, such as Kafka, Borges, and Nakobov? What is real and what is invented? Where is fact and where is fiction? The readers are engaged in an interpretation of a multiplicity of simultaneous levels that inspires them to ask various questions and, at the same time, to have a sensory involvement (visually and haptically) and to actively imagine what is written. Drawing from Sebald's literary style, a particular form of cinematographic map can be imagined as consisting of a series of photographs, places, writings, and soundscapes whose purpose is to involve the reader in a sensory disorientation of the landscape, one that can elicit different forms of chronotopic reconstructions of the past.

Below, I describe the process that led me to construct *Moving Lightly over the Earth*, a cinematic map of Sulcis Iglesiente, through which I explored how unemployed people in the area (who lost their jobs as a result of the process of its deindustrialization) give specific meaning to the territory of southwest Sardinia, relating it to memories of their past, as well as their hopes and desires for the future. Using the cinematic map as a tool of ethnographic observation, I observed Sulcis's process of deindustrialization, seeking to understand how the experience of job loss changed how local people perceived the territory.

THE SILENT REAPPROPRIATION

THE RETERRITORIALIZATION OF SULCIS AFTER THE AREA'S DEINDUSTRIALIZATION

We believed in the immediate advantage of employment, wages, and greater consumption. We believed that modernity had arrived. We are paying and we continue to pay a terrible price for this kind of modernity.

(Bachisio Bandinu, *Noi non sapevamo*, 2016; translated by Miriam Hurley.)

IN MARCH 2012, ABOUT A HUNDRED miners from Sulcis occupied the coal mine of Nuraxi Figus in the Carbonia-Iglesias province. The former employees barricaded themselves 400 meters underground to protest the closure of the mine and demand their right to work. This was the last event in a line of many protests and attempts to reappropriate the territory, which had shaped Sulcis's society since the 1990s and turned it into a theater of protests and violent social conflicts. Protests had progressively declined over ten years, giving way to a state of helpless resignation. Yet, there was a process underway in Sulcis of reconfiguring spaces, through which its inhabitants reappropriated the territory through their memories and imaginations.

Immediately following World War II, Sulcis Iglesiente was chosen by the Italian government as a strategic location to launch its revival plan, a process of industrializing Italy's poorest areas (Di Felice 1993). In Sulcis, this process involved establishing chemical and manufacturing factories and modernizing existing mining plants (Ortu 1986). A large part of the local population saw the coming of major industry as an era-changing event. It generated many expectations among the local residents in terms of achieving employment stability, economic improvement, and lessening migration. This process, however, did not have the desired long-term effects. Starting in the early 1990s, there was a gradual decline in manufacturing that reached its lowest point at the start of the Great Recession (2008), when many area factories went out of business, laying off thousands of employees. In 2014, Sulcis Iglesiente had the highest rate of unemployment in Italy and one of the highest in Europe (Pirina 2018; Madeddu 2018).

Deindustrialization has fundamentally, and irreversibly, reconfigured Sardinian society, including people's most basic relationships with the state, society, territory, and the land. This process of ongoing social change and disruption was accompanied by deeply felt emotions of displacement, marginalization, loss, precarity, purposelessness, and betrayal. These emotions manifested as distrust and resentment towards governmental authorities and foreign businesses, but also generated new forms of individual and collective action through which people attempted to reclaim and reappropriate the territory. People without work, and those at risk of losing their livelihoods, sought a claim on the land, economy, and their futures by staging high profile public protests, including strikes, marches, and occupations of mines and factories that ultimately failed. However, alongside these dramatic, publicly-shared, and

visible demonstrations, I argue there is a more subtle, silent, and extensive form of reappropriation and reterritorialization going on. It is one that involves the transformation of how the territory itself is perceived, experienced, re-shaped, and re-imagined on an embodied, emotional, sensory, and affective level, on an ongoing daily basis. This not only constitutes the existential, emotional, and moral content of people's everyday lives but provides a critical framework of interpretation and understanding through which people reshape their experience and future, reflect on events and their life situations, and negotiate moral dilemmas.

For more than thirty years, unemployment has been a subject of growing interest in anthropology and the social sciences in general. Many studies on the topic have focused on enormous economic, political, and institutional upheavals (such as the deindustrialization processes in the UK and the US, the recession in Argentina, and the reunification of Germany). Two aspects of unemployment that have been studied in particular depth are social marginalization and the process of personal and community change arising from job insecurity. Many authors have likened the condition of unemployment to a liminal phase (Newman 1989; Diedrich 2004; Jancius 2006; Hall 2005; Hall and Milgrom 2007), in which, through the experience of being alienated from productive activity, individuals and social groups begin a process of profound transformation in how they perceive themselves in relation to the community. Leana and Feldman (1988) have noted how the experience of job loss can lead to the distancing of social groups, and the loss of practical, shared knowledge, while Newman (1989) has noted how it can lead to a deep, unsettling reconsideration of the system of practices and beliefs acquired in previous work experience. In particular situations where unemployment affects the population on a large scale, this process of reconsideration can affect how an entire community perceives categories of time and space. Daniel M. Knight and Charles Stewart (2016) compared the economic crisis in southern Europe following the Great Recession with the crisis of presence

described by Ernesto de Martino. The crisis of presence is the state of separating from historical temporality through which people can take a critical viewpoint on the temporality of the present. The historical being in the world is not a certain and guaranteed condition, but rather it is "a conditional reality" (de Martino 1997, 48), always exposed to the risk of annihilation, to terrible trials that "can put a strain on the resistance of the existing" (48). Similarly, Bryant (2014) noted how a situation of economic crisis can cause an unusually overburdened perception of present-ness. It can be seen as a *critical threshold* where the amplified perception of the present leads to a space-time reconfiguration in how the events of the past are perceived and the future is imagined. Transferring these ideas to the context of Sulcis, we can see how the area's process of deindustrialization has created a space-time reconfiguration through which its people have changed how they perceive the territory in relation to their lives.

My primary objectives for this project were as follows:

1. Observe how deindustrialization in Sulcis generated a process of reterritorialization among people without work, shaped by a changing attribution of meaning to the territory in their memories and imagination.

2. Explore how those without work in Sulcis perceived the post-industrial landscape, relating it to their memories of the past and hopes for the future.

3. Observe how the process of deindustrialization in Sulcis created different modes of considering their personal experiences and various expectations among unemployed people and how these are related to the territory.

4. Explore how we can use the practice of mapping to explore the process of reterritorialization conducted by unemployed people.

ON METHOD

SEBALD'S MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION to this work was his literary style; specifically, his literary montage. He makes many references to films and cinematic metaphors in his work. For example, in *The Rings of Saturn*, he refers to two films about industry and fishing that he

remembers having seen as a child. In *The Emigrants*, he relates the experience of having a premonition inspired by seeing Werner Herzog's 1974 film *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (English title: *The Enigma of Kaspar Howe*) in a London movie theater. However, it is in his particular

narrative style as a literary montage that we can understand the profound relationship between Sebald's writing and the world of film. In *The Rings of Saturn*, he overlaps and mixes pieces from the memories of the characters, famous authors, and actual historical events, forging a connection between individual memories and past happenings. This particular narrative tactic is enhanced by the interaction between the text and images, creating a special type of montage in which he seems to draw from cinematic language. Frey compares Sebald's literary style with the notion of bricolage, following Lévi-Strauss, in which the elements collected respond to the principle that "they may always come in handy . . . and the decision as to what to put in each place also depends on the possibility of putting a different element there instead" (Frey 2007, 231). Taking inspiration from Sebald's literary style, I built a specific ethnographic methodology through which I could observe the territory, considering different contributions from the world of literature, art, and science and relating them to the memories, ideas, and thoughts of local people.

My methodology was also influenced by the relationship between images and text used by Sebald. He defined himself as a bricoleur, and juxtaposes and superimposes images and writings from different sources in his works. In some cases, he produced the texts and images himself, and "in other cases, he borrowed the works of other artists and just composed the two languages" (McCulloh 2003, 23). For example, in his novel *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, the texts are from greats of literature like Franz Kafka, Stendhal, and Vladimir Nabokov, accompanied by images from visual artists like Ernst Herbeck and literary visual artists like Konrad Bayer. In this juxtaposition of images, the two communicative forms prove hybrid and able to borrow fragments of communication from each other. Mark Anderson (2008) noted how Sebald's written texts aspired to take on a visual form and his photographs were intended as a form of writing. Sebald noted himself that photography inspired his texts: "While writing, you see ways of departing from the images or entering into them to tell your story, to use them instead of a textual passage" (Anderson 2008, 134). He also said, "Facts are troublesome. The idea is to make it seem factual, though some of it might be invented" (Anderson 2008, 136). In other words, photography seems to serve as an anchor that connects the pursuit of the past to factualness.

Drawing from this particular aspect of Sebald's literary style, I also used the relationship between the text and image to build my method. I interviewed people who had been affected by the deindustrialization of Sulcis, and we visited places that were significant to them. I photographed these places, and also asked interviewees to offer existing photographs that they considered meaningful (old photos of historical events, places, and family members). I then asked my interviewees to draw inspiration from these images, to consider their personal experiences. Making use of this particular interview form, I sought to explore how the visual perception of the places visited by the interviewees on the pathways that we took could stimulate new types of memories and imaginations in them. The visual stimulation that comes out of the photo elicitation process can give rise to memories, emotions, and intuitions that are not necessarily clear to the interviewer (or the person who took the photograph). This method makes for a triangulation between different sources of information (interviewer, interviewee, photograph) and can inspire many research ideas (Bignante 2010). Though it is not directly linked to Sebald's literary style, the photo elicitation technique suggests the combined use of texts and images adopted by the author in his works. Harris notes that Sebald includes visual images "not because they underscore the written narrative but because they present the reader with that which the text alone cannot" (Harris 2001, 379). In Sebald, the photos are employed as independent syntagmatic units—often literally in the middle of the sentence—that seem to suggest that the text and images are not heterogeneous and may come together on a common basis at a semiotic level. In some cases, the images support the text, in others, they contradict it, and in still others, they coexist in an associative relationship. While in terms of editing, "we might say that text and image are at times meant to be perceived directly, sometimes antagonistically," (Frey 2007, 236) and at times harmoniously, they create "a new kind of coherence, that of spectator-subject recording facts and desires" (Frey 2007, 236). Putting into relationship the texts from the interviews, I could observe the resignification processes of these places and how the experience of job loss had created a space-time reconfiguration of these places.

The third major aspect of my method involved the montage, and the particular way that I related the images and the texts emerging from the interviews. A particular source of inspiration was Chris Marker's film *La Jetée*, one of the most most influential films of the mid-twentieth century. Many film critics, as well as scholars of literature, semiotics, and psychoanalysis, consider it one of the most significant works for rethinking the theory of film

and representation. Like in Sebald's novel, in *La Jetée*, the urban territory of a metropolis (Paris) is used as a stage through which to travel through time. Here the character re-experiences his past with the help of scientists, shown to the audience in an unusual narrative form: a rapid sequence of still photos that tell a story. It has been noted that Marker uses a hybrid language between photography and cinema in an attempt to overcome the dichotomy between the temporality of the past and that of the present (Croombs 2017, 42). In giving movement to the static nature of still photos, the director suggests that the seeming fixity of the past can be put into motion in the present. This completely subverts the impression of reality. The screen is no longer a window on the world but a surface where images, objects, and people flow, and from which the viewer keeps a distance, little inclined to abandon themselves to a perceptual transfer onto effigies exhibiting such a weak degree of reality. This particular narrative choice leads the viewer to imagine movement and spatial continuity for images that are still and suspended in time.

Like in Sebald's work, the juxtaposition of images with text in Marker's film (both the text appearing on the screen and the voiceover) can be seen as a search for a particular time dimension. Roger Odin conceives of the role of voiceover in *La Jetée* as a tactic to restore the narrative's coherence and mark the nature of the work as fiction: "The narrative for the search of fiction (the fiction film's search) that characterizes the signifying operation of *La Jetée* is recuperated by the narrative (that is told), so the two narratives (narrative of the signifier and narrative of the signified) become one." (1990, 76) Yet, as Bensmaïa, Rowe, and Lyon (1990) have remarked, the conception of the voiceover as a stabilizing tool that can restore textual coherence seems oversimplified and cursory. According to these authors, *La Jetée* resists any comforting attempt to flatten its narrative within a formal cohesiveness. *La Jetée* is built on what is termed the drift of the fiction effect, not subjectivity, nor homogeneity, but a silent experience. Present and outside at once. The lack of pointing or

naming specifically leads to choosing the idea of a pictogram: "Images escape from the text, and no words are able to name them" (Bensmaïa, Rowe, and Lyon 1990, 78). These images resemble confession images that have more the look and the power of aborted actions of speech. In the dissolves and fades, it is possible to say the unspeakable and to see the unrepresentable. Only by creating this new time, spatiality, and "idea," are we in a position to understand how the film tells us a story, "presents characters to us, makes us identify with them, and at the same time keeps us completely removed from it." (Bensmaïa, Rowe, and Lyon 1990, 79)

Drawing on Sebald's literary style and Marker's film montage, I built a specific style of ethnographic writing in which I juxtaposed images of the Sulcis territory with its inhabitants' reflections, thoughts, and memories. This pairing of images with text would allow me to observe the individual memories of the local people in relation to major historical events that had caused the process of Sulcis's deindustrialization. My ethnographic observations of people's daily movements and practical engagements with the territory created a particular form of personal and collective mapping through which to examine and understand the relationship between people's unfolding lived experiences and the territory.

Taking inspiration from Sebald and Marker, I also sought to observe how the people of Sulcis perceived the territory of the area after the process of deindustrialization by comparing, mixing, and overlapping their memories, desires, and imaginations with the major economic and historical events that had transformed the area. As in Sebald and Marker, the projection of separate times generated a new chronotopic dimension in which historical facts and imagination cannot be distinguished. This made it possible to observe the process of the area's reterritorialization in which historical rethinking, personal memories, shattered dreams, hopes, and illusions converge into a single process of rethinking the territory.

RETURN TO CARBONIA

RETURN TO THE PLACES OF CHILDHOOD AND DISCOVERY OF THE URBAN TERRITORY AS A MNEMONIC AND IMAGINATIVE SPACE

In October 2017, I went to Carbonia, a small urban center located in the Sulcis area. It had been many years since I had been to this city, to which I was strongly

connected, having spent part of my childhood here. My first impression when I returned was to note the poverty and deserted streets. Since the 1980s, Carbonia has gone
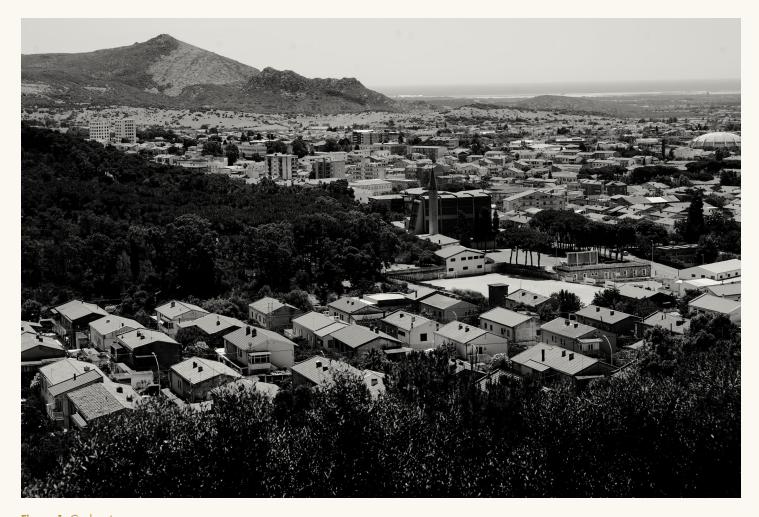
Figure 1. Carbonia.

through difficult periods, due to the closure of the mines and factories in the area and the Great Recession (2008). It became one of the centers of the worst economic and employment crises in Italy since the end of World War II. Wandering the streets of the city, my attention was drawn to the buildings, objects, houses, and urban scenes that reminded me of the time I had spent here. I walked down the dirt road that I used to walk with my parents. I stopped to look at the door of my house, from which I watched boys playing in a courtyard.

Figure 2. Rosmarino District.

Figure 3. Piazza Roma (Roma Square), Carbonia.

In front of the city's conference hall, I remembered having first been there to attend the presentation of a book written by a woman from the city. During my walk, I was also struck by the signs of a historical past that still shapes the urban architecture. I began, in this way, to juxtapose the memories of my personal experience with historical events that shaped the city's fate. Wandering through Carbonia, I saw the window (now walled up) of the Torre Littoria of Piazza Roma, from which Benito Mussolini had given a speech at the city's foundation, and then I walked down Via Gramsci, where protest marches were held by workers in the 1960s.

Then I walked down the desolate streets of the city center and looked at the bars where young people idled, evidence of the persisting unemployment crisis that had struck the city in recent decades. Observing Carbonia's streets, I tried to reconstruct a past made up not only of real images and events that actually happened, but also of novels that I had read, such as Sergio Atzeni's *Bakunin's Son*, the story of a young anarchist who took part in Sardinia's workers' struggles. I also thought of stories that I had heard as a child, such as those about elderly men who had accepted becoming ill with silicosis as long as they could have a permanent job in the mines. Only later did I start to understand how this spontaneous action of walking aimlessly around the city and letting myself be carried by my memories and imagination could be interpreted as an attempt to reappropriate my past.

Below, I present several examples of interviews I conducted, relating them with literary writings, photographs, and urban scenes that I encountered on my way through Sulcis. In the first case, I relate the novel by Sergio Atzeni *Passavamo sulla Terra leggeri* (1997) with the experience of Mario, a forty-year-old man from Carbonia, and a former employee of Alcoa. In the second case, I use the experience of Raffaele in relation to a photograph of his father in the mines. In the third case, I describe Serena's journey from Iglesias to Cagliari, drawing inspiration from the view of the landscape that she had seen from the train while she went to Cagliari one day and, having no money left, had to prostitute herself.

My interview methodology was as follows:

1. I asked interviewees to identify places that were related in various ways to their work and professional experiences, or connected to their layoff experience.

Figure 4. Torre Littoria, Roma Square (Carbonia).

Figure 5. Carbonia city center.

2. I asked them to go to these places and remember or evoke these particular moments. While they remembered things, I recorded and took notes on what they said.

3. Then I asked them to look at the photos and listen to environmental sounds recorded during the walk and draw new points for memories and imagination.

I pursued the following objectives with this approach:

1. Exploring how Sulcis's deindustrialization process had affected how its local people perceived the urban territory.

2. Observing how the personal experience of job loss affected residents' way of perceiving the territory.

INTERVIEWS

The following interviews have been translated by Miriam Hurley from Italian to English.

MARIO'S LIGHTNESS

"We passed through earth lightly as water, said Antonio Setzu, as water that runs, springs, down from the basin full of the fountain, slides and winds among moss and ferns, up to the roots of cork and almond trees, and goes slowly down, slipping on the stones, through the mountains and hills down the plane, from the springs to the river, towards the marshes and the sea, asked by the sun to become vapor and wind dominated cloud and blessed rain. Aside from the madness of killing each other for irrelevant reasons, we were happy."

(Sergio Atzeni,
Passavamo sulla terra leggeri, 1997;
translated by Miriam Hurley.)

In his novel *Passavamo sulla terra leggeri* (1997), the Sardinian writer Sergio Atzeni covers the history of Sardinia, taking a literary approach in which he overlaps two narrative voices. The first voice is that of the writer with whom Atzeni identifies, whose job it is to convey the memories of the ancients in a written form. The second voice is that of Antonio Setzu, an oral narrator who tells the history of the island, holding its memory, with emotional involvement and critical conscience. Taking this dual perspective and relating the two viewpoints, the author covers the history of Sardinia, intertwining and overlapping real historical events, myths, legends, and popular imagination. With this approach, the author creates a particular form of literary reconstruction in which the historical time of the island merges with an evocation of an idyllic time defined by the people's freedom and

Figure 6. Carbonia industrial area.

lightheartedness. I had never fully understood the need to seek an idyllic past that could contrast the sense of historical defeat until I met Mario, a former Alcoa employee who received official word of his dismissal in 2007. After he told me his story, Mario invited me to go with him to a nuraghe (an ancient megalithic stone tower, of which there are thousands in Sardinia) near his village, where he went often when he needed to think, and where he had gone the day he got the news that he had been laid off.

The day I got the news about the layoff, I went to the countryside and headed to a nuraghe. This was not the first time that I had gone there to think and make important decisions. But that day, looking at the majestic construction rising from the hill, I started to think how our land had changed after the mainlanders came and put their stinking, polluting factories on our land, while in the past we had been able to build these structures. I spent a whole morning in the nuraghe, and I imagined the life and actions of these people that

we are descended from. I'd heard on television somewhere a scholar saying that we came from a lineage of warriors who had sailed the sea, fought other peoples, and, most importantly, proudly defended themselves from outside attacks. I felt proud to belong to this lineage. It was like vindication for what we have suffered in our times when everyone has come, imposed their rules on us, and treated us like puppets. And we have always been willing to bow our heads and obey. I wondered what had happened to that people and if there was still a trace of that pride and courage left somewhere. The fantastic daydreams of the battles, the actions of those people without masters, overlapped with the images of the factories, the smoke fumes polluting our land, of the lines of the workers punching the clock and all the humiliations we have had to bear.

In "*The Spectral Geographies of W. G. Sebald*" (2007), John Wylie borrows Jacques Derrida's concept of *spectrality* to analyze Sebald's literary styles and his particular approach to the past. Sebald's spectral way of writing suggests a precise phenomenology of being in the world and a model for a particular way of understanding places. Spectrality expresses itself in different ways in different places, and can complicate the linear sequential order of time conceived as a sequential succession of past, present, and future. Spectrality not only displaces places from themselves through ghostly memories but also displaces the self from the present. Even if past and present no longer exist or do not yet exist, they "still haunt the present and are in supplement relation to it, always coming back" (Derrida, quoted in Wylie 2007, 174). They are "that which secretly unhinges it, ensures the non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present" (Derrida, quoted in Wylie 2007, 174). The spectral constitutes an incessant thing that belies the origins and the end: uncanny. Moving through

Figure 7. Nuraghe. "I wondered what had happened to that people and if there was still a trace of that pride and courage left somewhere."
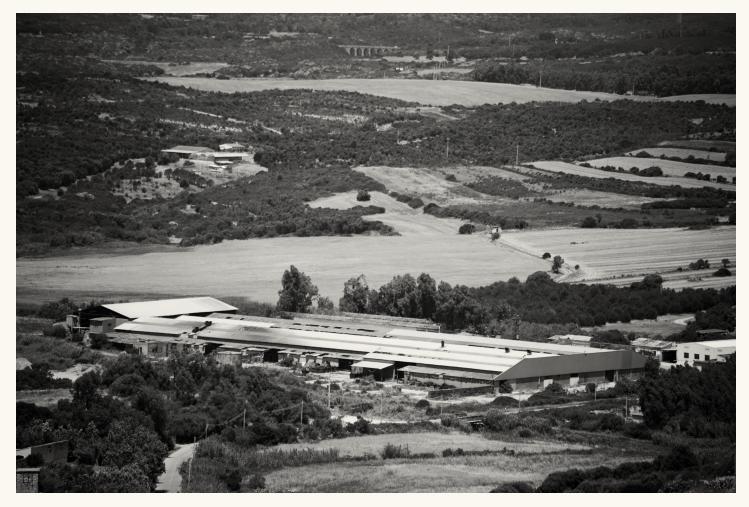
Figure 8. Industrial area. "The fantastic daydreams of the battles, the actions of those people without masters, overlapped with the images of the factories, the smoke fumes polluting our land, of the lines of the workers punching the clock and all the humiliations we have had to bear."

the Sulcis territory with Mario, when we came upon ancient monuments and architectures, the images of the past appeared in an uncanny way in the present. Like Atzeni, Mario also overlaps and intertwines the events of a historical time when Sardinians were defeated with the imagination and fantasies of a mythical time. Drawing on Atzeni's writings, I sought to express this overlapping of Mario's imagination, putting in sequence the images of the nuraghi and other archaeological finds from the Nuragic Age and the abandoned factories of the deindustrialized territory of Sulcis.

RAFFAELE'S PHOTO

Another interview important for my project was with Raffaele, a former employee of Portovesme who lost his job in 2010. One key aspect of this interview is the role played by a photo of his father, which he kept in his kitchen. Raffaele's father was a miner who had died ten years

earlier from a lung disease he got on the job. The sight of his father's picture inspired Raffaele to think about the responsibility of an entire generation, which he considers guilty of having passively accepted the dictates set by the "masters" (the employers), and having "sold his dignity" in exchange for economic security. As Raffaele remembers the moments right after he was laid off, he mixes his feelings about his own situation with resentment towards an entire generation.

The rumor that we were going to be laid off had been going around for a long time, but when the official communication came it was like being doused with cold water. It didn't seem possible to me that I had lost my job, and I understood the situation only when I got home. I realized that I wouldn't have to go to work the next day and that I would spend my time here in the days to come. I remember that I went into the room where my

Figure 9. Montevecchio mining village.

father had lived, and I felt a hatred for his memory. I thought of all the mistakes his generation had made, the wrong mentality they had instilled in us, trusting in the mainlanders who we thought of as those who could feed us. Their only aspiration seemed to be peace of mind, a stable job in exchange for our dignity. Every day I woke up, like he did, to go and serve the masters who, in exchange for our lives, had tossed us a few crumbs of their millions in earnings. I looked at the bed where I had found him dead a few months after his long-awaited retirement, and I felt tremendous anger. Now that the masters had gone, now that they had broken

Figure 10. Raffaele's House. "The betrayal was complete, and, along with any kind of security, our dignity had vanished too."

their promise, I would no longer have any protection. The betrayal was complete, and, along with any kind of security, our dignity had vanished too.

In the interview with Raffaele, I considered the use of photography as a tool intended to create uncertainty about reconstructing the past. Looking at the photos depicting Sulcis's landscape, Raffaele reconstructed the events of his personal experience. The images were meant not as tools but as spectral presences suggesting new interpretations of the past. His relationship with his father mixes with the political conflict of an entire generation. His memories of unreturned love mix with the bleak scene of a land poisoned by pollution. As in Sebald, the use of images elicits in the memory an uncertainty when reconstructing the past, which is not developed only through a linear sequence of historical events that shaped a people's fate, as it is inserted in the midst of mazes of memory.

Figure 11. Raffaele's house, interior. "Every day I woke up, like he did, to go and serve the masters who, in exchange for our lives, had tossed us a few crumbs of their millions in earnings."

Figure 12. Landslide. "I looked at the bed where I had found him dead a few months after his long-awaited retirement, and I felt tremendous anger."

SERENA'S PATH

In December 2019, I met Serena, a 37-year-old woman living in Iglesias, Sulcis's second most populated city. When we met, Serena was employed as a domestic worker for several local families, but she had previously been unemployed for more than six years after the factory where she worked was closed. She told me how, before she found a stable job, she had worked as a store clerk and at a call center for €400 a month. When she had finally found a job in a major company, she had felt secure at last. But in 2010, she was laid off and felt "the world fall apart" on her. Serena and I decided to return to the most important

places where she had gone after she heard the news. The first place we went was the Cala Domestica beach where she went after she got the news.

The day I got the news, I came here, and I started to watch the sea. I thought about throwing myself into it because my life no longer made sense. I was thinking about what my life would be like the next day, sitting around the house, doing nothing. I remember that there was no one near, and I felt like I had rediscovered this place as if for the first

Figure 13. Road from Carbonia to Iglesias.

Figure 14. Serena's beach.

time. At the same time, I thought how I could have ended it all, the different ways, like gas, heroin, or cutting my veins. It was a really strange feeling because, while I was thinking about how I could take my life, I started to appreciate things I had never noticed, such as the sound of the sea whose waves dragged pebbles on the shore, and the warmth of the sun on my skin. It was as if, at the very moment I had decided to take my own life, a higher power had shown its presence.

Next, we went to the mining village of Ingurtosu in Piscinas where she had broken up with her then-boyfriend.

Not having a job was tearing me apart inside. At first, I was only afraid about the economic consequences, but then I started to see how losing my job would affect all aspects of life, including my relationship with Mauro. I felt like a failure, and I could no longer imagine my future. I had realized that it had been over between us for a while, but he kept on acting like nothing was wrong. One day we decided to come here to Piscinas where we often went to the beach. In the car, I told him it was over between us. I had expected him to start arguing and ask me for an explanation. But he stayed silent and kept on driving without saying anything about it. At that moment I understood that he had already realized everything a long time ago, and maybe he hadn't said anything to not add problems to my situation. I remember that the silence hurt even more and that this place I had loved started to seem horrible to me.

After Ingurtosu, Serena brought me to Masainas, a small town where she went with one of her friends after many months without work, and where, as she could not afford her living expenses, she had decided to prostitute herself.

After a few months without a job, I started thinking about how I could survive. Nobody would give you a job. So, I decided that I would start selling my body. I didn't know how to start. Only later, talking to an acquaintance, did I see how to take the first steps. I put an ad on the internet and a man from Cagliari answered. So, I decided to take this step, and I understood that if I went to the meeting everything would change for me. The next day I went to the train station to go to Cagliari.

Figure 15. Serena's sky. "I started to appreciate things I had never noticed, such as the sound of the sea whose waves dragged pebbles on the shore, and the warmth of the sun on my skin."

Serena and I decided to re-take together the trip she had taken from Iglesias to Cagliari on that day.

I remember that it was raining, and I started to look at the landscape through the foggy window. As the train sped on, I felt that my life was leading me to a new fate. Looking at the scene from my train compartment, I started to think of how, in a way, my island had had the same fate as me. They had come, they had exploited it, taken its natural beauty, and then they had thrown it away when it was no longer useful to anyone. The same thing had happened in my case. They had used me when I was useful and thrown me away when I was no longer useful to anyone. So, I wondered where this need for loyalty and demand for respect came from, even though I had never found it anywhere. I wondered why I was being asked to be respected if everything around me was based on the system of power and opportunism. I thought that maybe my fragility was pushing me to ask these kinds of questions.

Wandering in the places important to Serena, I encountered different objects, places, landscapes that aroused new memories in the young woman's memory. As in Sebald's works, each new pathway could provoke new memories in her, through which she constructed a new narrative. According to Weston (2011), how Sebald conceived the landscape can be compared to Derrida's concept of *supplement*, in which the idea of the organism as an object coexists with the representation of an entity in continuous transformation. Derrida considers the supplement to have the dual function of indicating a pre-existing reality on one hand (a natural reality subject to being represented) and transforming it on the other. In this instance, the supplement (representation) transforms into the thing itself, "implying a lack in the original" (Weston 2011, 179). Derrida considers it unthinkable to seek the original meaning before the surplus, as it is the process of signification characterized by a sequence of supplements, "an infinite chain ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediation that produces the sense of the very thing: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived" (Derrida quoted in Weston 2011, 175). In this sense, the primary origin is always the imaginary. For Sebald as well, the observation of the territory is not considered the discovery of an immaculate organism but a supplement to a pre-existing narrative.

Figure 16. Ingurtosu. "I felt like a failure, and I could no longer imagine my future."

This aspect emerges clearly in Sebald's other works, such as *Vertigo* (1990), in which the memory aroused by images (the photo album) leads the author to conjoin the visual experience of the landscape with a mnemonic reproduction elicited by the photograph. "The low-lying cloud

Figure 17. Masainas. "Nobody would give you a job. So, I decided that I would start selling my body."

Figure 18. Masainas. "I didn't know how to start. Only later, talking to an acquaintance, did I see how to take the first steps."

Figure 19. Masainas. "I decided to take this step, and I understood that if I went to the meeting everything would change for me."

drifting in from the Alpine valleys and across that desolated country was conjoined in my mind's eye with a Tiepolo painting which I have often looked at for hours" (Sebald quoted in Weston 2011, 175). In this case, the sensorial perception of the landscape is mixed with a pre-existing representation and gives rise to a new interpretation of it. Likewise, Serena's sensory experience of landscape was considered a new stimulus through which she recalled new events, found new combinations, and created new reconstructions of her past.

CONCLUSION

In *Cartographic Cinema* (2007), Tom Conley examines the map's different forms and functions. Maps can be conceived as a tool for social control, a starting point for travel and adventure, a link between time and space, or a way to express unspoken memories. He builds his analysis by putting into relationship various modes of investigating and reflecting on the relationship between memory and places, through cartography and film noir. His analysis examines the different functions that maps can take on in relation to the territory, such as marking routes to be taken, establishing a link between space and time, and revealing hidden memories. Conley points out how cartography's influence within cinema can be considered in two dimensions: (a) the geographical and representational cartographies contained with the filmic diegesis, and (b) the affective form of mapping involving the relationship between the film text and the spectator in terms of their subjectivity, positionality, and becoming. But if both cartography and cinematographic practice are able to represent the territory from a detached point of view, capable of grasping the accumulation of visible, discursive formations that suggest how the world may be seen and deciphered (an atlas), and at the same time of assuming a mobile point of view in which space both arises from the relationship of the subject with the territory (a diagram) and is inextricably linked to the conformation of the territory, how do these two gazes relate to each other? And again, is it possible to imagine a particular form of mapping in which these two types of gazes relate and interpenetrate each other?

In order to answer this question, it is possible to draw inspiration from Sebald, and in particular from *The Rings of Saturn*. In this work, Sebald adopts a multi-perspective viewpoint that can show us the object of interest through different facets. Daniel Weston called this particular narrative tactic *situated perspective* where the term "situated" does not mean taking a stable observation point but, on the contrary, is used to indicate "the taking of one perspective among the myriad perspectives available" (Weston 2011,

173). Taking a situated perspective, Weston notes, Sebald takes over a set of analytical tools through which he develops his history: "The figure who variously observes, takes part in, and reports upon history is, in definite ways, spatialized and his or her perspective precisely situated" (173). Through the adoption of a situated perspective, Sebald is able to assume different perspectives on the territory in which a detached gaze alternates and mixes with a subjective gaze that "emphasizes its own subjectivity and fluidity" (173). In this sense, Sebald's novel can be seen as an extraordinary anticipation of the thinking and ideas that informed the debate within the post-representational current of cartographic criticism. One of the most defining aspects of this trend in cartographic criticism involves the creative and generative realm of the practice of mapping that emerges from a relationship with the territory. James Corner (1999) noted how the analysis of cartographic practice has long been anchored to an idea of it as representing the territory rather than producing it. In reality, the relationship between the map and the territory, according to Corner, should be seen as a co-constituted relationship. The map in this sense is not considered a mirror of the territory but an agent capable of making it and remaking it. Del Casino and Hanna (2005) conceive maps as fluid agents in constant evolution. They conceive the map not as a static agent but as one that is dynamic and ever-changing. Wandering the coasts of Suffolk, Sebald creates and recreates the territory, taking it as a mnemonic and emotional space in which memories of historical facts are intertwined with personal memories.

Bill Cartwright introduced the idea of the *theatre metaphor* (Cartwight 2009) to explain that the understanding of places through maps requires more integration of unconventional dimensions such as emotion, perception, and sense of place. The theatre metaphor is proposed to include these dimensions, taking the script as the environment in a broad sense: "the stage is the part of the landscape being depicted and the actors are the elements that act upon or move through the landscape" (Cartwright 2009,

29). The map, like the movie, can then unfold, revealing a world understandable through data and analysis, as well as through story and emotions. This map metaphor provides the user with facts, as well as with potential consequences and outcomes of a collection of events and situations in a narrative way. Drawing on this metaphor, we can conceive Sebald's landscape as a theatrical stage in which the people of a particular place are conceived as extras whose personal narratives develop in an often unexpected way through the relationship with the spaces.

In this article, I described how I built a cinematic map of Sulcis, taking inspiration from Sebald's literary style. Like Sebald, I observed the landscape through a view defined by multiple space-time perspectives, and by the embodiment of memory and imagination of its residents and the region's various spaces. By adopting this particular interpretative tactic, I sought, like Sebald, to observe the landscape as a chronotopic organism in which the memory of the historical events that had shaped the region's fate intersected, mixed, and overlapped with the individual memories and imaginations of its inhabitants. As in Sebald, the landscape of Sulcis was conceived as a theatrical stage in which the people reconstructed their personal experiences by rediscovering their own memories in the territory and new chronotopic forms through their movement. In addition to movement and mnemonic journeys, using the photo elicitation technique was key to this work. By using the photos of Sulcis's places as a source of visual stimulation, I asked my interviewees to retrace the most significant moments of their personal experiences. This let Sulcis's urban territory be explored as a mnemonic and imaginative space where the people reconsidered their memories and imagined their future.

Douglas Harper (2002) noted that the difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone, lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. The origin of these differences has a physical basis. The parts of the brain that receive visual information are older than those for verbal information: "Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilise less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words" (Harper 2002, 5). In this sense, juxtaposing images with text was not intended only as a stylistic solution but also as a full-fledged mapping methodological technique through which to investigate the process of signifying the territory through the memories (even the most buried ones) and the imagination of its people. Celia Lury considered recovered memory "an unstable amalgamation of the voluntary memory of representation, characterized by abstract time and the operations of consciousness, and the involuntary memory of invention or generation, characterized by discontinuity and the operation of the unconscious" (Lury 1997, 136). Through the process of photo elicitation, this type of memory can be fostered in which primary and secondary thought, imaginary and "real" reconstructions intertwine and mingle with each other. Unlike in Sebald, where the relationship between text and images played a role only during the literary montage of this work, the pairing of text and image played a role beyond the stylistic and expressive, becoming methodological as well. Rediscovering places through visual stimulation was meant as an additional form of mapping the territory (in addition to that arising from movement). As in Sebald, where the juxtaposition between text and images was an attempt to represent the territory through the unstable, discontinuous nature of memory, in my work as well, the photo elicitation process was taken as a form of mapping of the territory defined by a process of generating and regenerating places that constantly change and are renewed through the memory and imagination of their people.

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