



Amateur films as geo-historical documents: Traditional fishing through a tourist's lens

Pietro Agnoletto^a

^a Department of Human Sciences for Education “Riccardo Massa”, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy
Email: pietro.agnoletto@unimib.it

Received: June 2024 – Accepted: November 2024

Abstract

This article results from a geographical “archival mining” of an amateur film archive. It examines the cine-tourist gaze in the amateur films of S. Ceppi Badoni, particularly focusing on her documentation of the Tonnara di Scopello in Sicily during the 1960s. Through two films, *Mattanza a Scopello* (1963) and *Sicilia 1962 – I. Lettere da Scopello* (1962), Ceppi Badoni captures the life and practices of Sicilian tuna fishermen, depicting the *mattanza* (traditional tuna harvest method) with a distinct, outsider perspective. These films, shot during a time of socio-economic transformation in Italy, are valuable ethnographic records of a fading tradition and serve as reflections of the filmmaker’s tourist and bourgeois gaze. This differs from professional ethnographic cinema, as they offer a unique vernacular narrative that reveals more about the filmmaker’s experiences as a tourist than the *mattanza* itself. Employing an ecocritical and geo-historical approach, this analysis uncovers environmental discourses embedded within both films, offering insights into how private filmmakers interpreted and mediated cultural and environmental narratives. This research emphasizes the potential of amateur cinema as a rich yet underexplored medium for geographical and environmental studies, opening new methodologies for analyzing private cinema to understand cultural practices. The article also argues for the potential use of visual material for didactic purposes, among various other applications.

Keywords: Amateur Cinema, Environmental Humanities, Ethnographic Films, Mattanza, Sicily, Tourist Gaze

1. Introduction

In recent decades, geography education has used film to visually illustrate landscapes, cultures, and environmental processes, making abstract concepts more tangible and “alive” (Ozder, 2014).

If films allow us to “see through the eyes of others” (Bignante, 2010), amateur ones can offer unique opportunities to see through the eyes of everyday people from different societies and historical times. In fact, unlike professional ethnographic documentaries, which often aim for polished narratives (Hay, 2017), amateur

films capture personal geographies, experiences, and relationships with the non-human world.

Amateur cinema emerged concurrently with the invention of the cinematograph. From that moment, technological innovations have led towards a “home-made” cinema. However, since the 1920s, filmmaking was mainly for a wealthy, passionate audience, but with more affordable film formats and cameras, it became a mass phenomenon by the 1950s and 1960s (Simoni, 2018).

This is different from home movies, which are a type of film that deviates completely from traditional cinema in terms of production, audience, language, and form. Amateur films refer to all non-professional films intended for a limited audience, sometimes only family members, that nonetheless imitate professional films in style, cinematic language, and narrative structure (Odin, 1995). However, this distinction is not always so clear-cut, and it is common to find cine-amateurs who produced both amateur films and family films, or a mix of the two.

Home movies, like photo albums, were made to be enjoyed within the domestic sphere, reinforcing the sense of emotional and identity cohesion (Rose, 2011). Often, the sequence of mostly silent frames was verbally described and commented on by family members. In them, the filmmakers captured moments following their emotional tensions and impulses, focusing on what intrigued them, what they loved, or what they wanted to remember (Cati, 2009).

In this context, amateur cinema can prove to be a useful tool for revealing representations of living and experiencing a territory in its everydayness; as well as unveiling a previously unseen bottom-up perspective, highlighting the personal geographies of individual cine-amateurs and their relationship with space and the *other*. Integrating amateur films into geography education exposes students to vernacular narratives that deepen their understanding of place, scale, and the lived realities of different regions.

This article presents an example of geographical exploration through amateur cinema, resulting from an extraction work (Ishizuka and Zimmermann, 2008) carried out at the Lab80 – Cinescatti association in Bergamo.

The collaboration with archivist Giulia Castelletti was crucial in the initial selection of audiovisual materials, the contextualization of the material with biographical information, and the provision of high-quality frames.

During the archival research phase of this study two films were selected, shot at the Tonnara di Scopello by S. Ceppi Badoni. They not only captured the life experience of the *tonnaroti* (tuna fishermen) and the inhabitants of the Tonnara di Scopello (Sicily) but they also possess a stylistic form that harks back to professional ethnographic documentaries, suggesting a particular strength in storytelling, photography, editing, and direction. The films acquire further relevance since they were made by a woman at a time in history in which amateur filmmaking practice was predominantly male-dominated (Motrescu-Mayes and Nicholson, 2018).

This paper begins by briefly introducing the most significant geographical research on amateur films. It then outlines the methodology employed, which includes archival research and visual analysis of the selected works. A historical contextualization of the Tonnara di Scopello follows, with a focus on the importance of the specific historical period in which the films are set. The subsequent section describes the films, emphasizing their most relevant aspects. A comparison is made between ethnographic amateur films and ethnographic films on the *mattanza* (traditional tuna fishing), demonstrating the value of amateur films as geo-historical documents. Finally, the conclusions synthesize the key findings, particularly in relation to geographic education.

2. Amateur films, geography and tourism

Since the 1990s numerous academic studies on the subject of amateur film studies have arisen (Motrescu-Mayes and Aasman, 2019), following initiatives for the collection, digitization, preservation, and valorization of this immense visual and documentary heritage (Simoni, 2013).



Figure 1. From left to right, from top to bottom: a) the *levata* stage; b) the death chamber; c) close-up of a tuna; d) a tuna hoisted aboard the palischer. Source: Stills from *La mattanza a Scopello*, 1963; Lab 80 – Associazione Cinescatti.

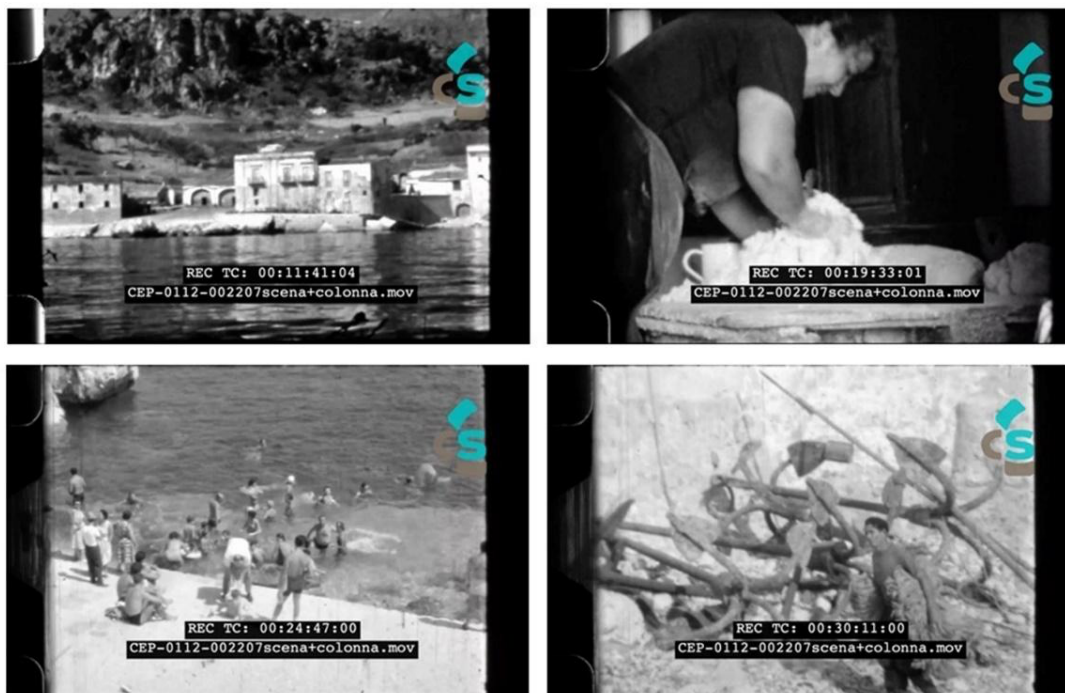


Figure 2. From left to right, from top to bottom: a) overview of the Tonnara of Scopello; b) Maria makes bread; c) Sunday tourists; d) preparations for winter slaughter begin. Source: Stills from *Lettere da Scopello*, 1962; Lab 80 – Associazione Cinescatti.

Volume 15 number 2 of *Film History* (Stone and Streible, 2003), has been a milestone in amateur cinema studies, signaling its entry into academically legitimate discourses on film history. Fifteen years later, a second issue dedicated to the subject was published (Salazkina and Fibla-Gutierrez, 2018) recollecting its global history and calling for more interdisciplinary and transnational approaches.

However, geographers have yet to answer this call, with the main contributions from Heather Norris Nicholson (2004; 2006; 2009) which focused on early twenties vacation films, and Les Roberts (2012), who undertook the project *The City in Film: Liverpool's Urban Landscape and the Moving Image* integrating amateur and professional films into a digital map of the English city.

If the shared characteristics of the domestic photo album and film are considered together, the contributions of Gillian Rose (2010, 2011) and Deborah Chambers (2003) extend this discussion through the analysis of the role of private photos in a domestic sphere, exploring the concepts of “togetherness” and “indexicality”. These concepts explain how family relationships are recorded and preserved through time, by the medium of family archives.

In Italy, there are not yet any geographic studies considering the dimension of amateur films, with only recent exceptions by the author (Agnoletto, 2022; Agnoletto and Bagnoli, 2023). Moreover, as Nicholson asserts, amateur films can serve to supplement existing visual, printed, and oral sources, thereby contributing significantly “to our understanding of early mass tourism as they document what holidaymakers wanted to recall and share about their experiences abroad” (Nicholson, 2004, p. 330).

Similarly, Locatelli (2005) observed how an amateur film can become an exceptional medium for investigating the tourist gaze from a geo-historical perspective, defined as “the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences and what is ‘other’” (Urry, 1990, p. 145).

In this direction, Locatelli (2005) applied Richard Urry’s definition of the tourist gaze as that which “orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences and what is ‘other’” (1990, p. 145). By applying these concepts to amateur films, Locatelli demonstrates that this material can become an exceptional medium for investigating the tourist gaze from a geo-historical perspective.

Amateur films such as those explored in this paper can be primary visual sources not only of an event or practice but also of the tourist’s positioning towards it. This allows for an understanding of what piqued their interest across different cultures, what was taken for granted, and what was valued about the places they visited.

The films by Ceppi Badoni represent a persuasive case study because a) they show a nearly extinct ancient tradition and practice related to the sea, b) they show the recreational tourist experience in the *tonnara*, and c) they serve as the narration and interpretation of the dichotomy of nature-work (White, 1995) by the tourists as witnesses of the extractive practices of traditional labor.

3. “Archival mining” and visual analysis

The introduction of new tools and the digitalization of the archive has transformed archival research, leaving last century’s methodologies nearly obsolete (Roche, 2010; Ogborn, 2011; Maggioli, 2022). From these ashes, Lorimer (2009) proposes creative and innovative archival methods that facilitate the scholar’s personalization of archival research methodology, rather than prescribing a model to follow. In fact, due to the absence of a unified cataloging and accession system for archival material of private cinema archives in Italy (Fiorini, 2020), a novel archival approach was not only suggested, but necessary.

The films were “mined” on a single archive: Cinescatti, based in Bergamo (Italy). Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the archival research was conducted primarily online, following an inquiry-based approach as outlined by Roche (2010).

The research process began with an initial meeting with the archivists, during which the overall research framework and objectives were presented. Based on this discussion, a strategy was developed to submit targeted research queries. These queries utilized keywords such as “fish*”, “industry”, “factory” “pollution”, “and rubbish”, related to potential environmental themes that might have been captured by cine-tourists¹.

In response, the archivist provided a selection of fifteen films, all available for download and viewing via cloud storage. These films incorporated environmental elements to varying degrees², but only two of the films focused exclusively on an environmental theme, fishing, as their central topic.

Both of these films were shot at the Tonnara di Scopello and were created by the same filmmaker, S. Ceppi Badoni, in the early 1960s: *Mattanza a Scopello* (S. Ceppi Badoni, 1963)³ and *Sicilia 1962 - I. Lettere da Scopello* (S. Ceppi Badoni, 1962)⁴. They differ substantially: the first is a silent color ethnographic documentary, the second a black-and-white narrative film with sound.

After completing the archival research to identify this case study, visual analysis - a well-established methodology utilized in geography (Rose, 2001; Bignante, 2011; Doucet, 2019) - on the films followed. As Harper (1988) specifies, visual research methodologies encompass a wide range of approaches that vary from a more

clinical practice, where images serve as repositories of data and information, to narrative approaches that describe social changes. In addition, there are phenomenological approaches that focus on the emotions evoked by visual productions, and reflective approaches that consider the critical implications of visual language. This paper combines ecocriticism with narrative approaches.

The first step is content analysis to identify if the discourse in which the author is situated is explicitly expressed. In the case of Ceppi Badoni’s films, they do not have any explicit political or environmental messaging, and they were made to be seen by only a few selected people. However, the directorial choices (*what is shown and how*) and the editing (*the selection and duration of the shots, the internal rhythm*) reveal the cine-tourist’s gaze.

The second step of analysis involved considering the genre of the text. In this case, one film is inspired by ethnographic documentaries on the same subject, while the second film is auto-ethnographic. By consequence, Ceppi Badoni’s films have been compared with professional films to explore how and to what extent they present an additional geo-historical source to understand the past practice of the *mattanza* and life at the Tonnara.

The third step of analysis examined the text, structure, and images in the films alongside the information available about the authors (Dell’Agnese, 2021). This method aims to understand the environment the film’s creator took for granted and considered “normal” without questioning it, as well as the cultural context in which the films were produced (Saunders and Strukov, 2018). Understanding the cultural context is key to interpreting how the filmmaker’s worldview and environment shaped the films. The next section explores these historical and cultural contexts further.

4. *La Tonnara di Scopello*

The Tonnara di Scopello is one of the most important and ancient tuna fisheries in all of Sicily, located in the territory of Castellammare del Golfo, near the sea stacks of Scopello. The

¹ “pesc*”; “industria OR fabbrica OR elettrica”; “petrol* OR “grande nave” OR “grandi navi”; “inquinamento OR rifiuti OR carbone”.

² In some films, environmental themes appeared only in the background of a few scenes, such as panoramic shots featuring fishermen, while others devoted entire sequences to them.

³ Code: CEP-0112-002210; 1963; 8mm; lenght: 10’:09”; Mute.

⁴ Code: CEP-0112-002207; 8mm; lenght: 25’:11”; Sound.

term “tonnara” refers both to the set of particularly shaped nets used for tuna fishing and to the place where they are used in the practice of the *mattanza*: a technique developed to trap and capture bluefin tuna which was brought to Sicily during the Islamic period.

Scopello was built no earlier than the 13th century (La Duca, 1988) and court transcripts date back to 1461 in which the *tonnara* is mentioned, confirming it was fully established by the 15th century. At the end of the century, the annual production of the *tonnare* in the Trapani province of Sicily was around 2.5 million kilograms of tuna, confirming tuna fishing was one of the main sectors of the Sicilian economy.

The rituals and traditions associated with the *tonnara* have remained unchanged since the Middle Ages, including the fishing method known as “*tonnara da corsa*”. It was installed in the open sea or near the coast around the beginning of May when tuna migration begins, and withdrawn at the end of the period when tuna have completed their journey, usually around late June.

The *tonnara* was composed of five chambers, divided by nets called “*porte*” (doors) that were opened and closed by the *tonnaroti* to allow the fish to pass from one chamber to another (Figure 3). The “*camera della morte*” (death chamber), was the only chamber with a net called “*coppu*” (cup) at the bottom, which was pulled to bring the tuna to the surface by reducing the space for the tuna and forcing them to rise. At this point, the *tonnaroti* armed with harpoons would pull tuna onto their boats.

Due to the high influx of tuna in Sicilian waters, the crew size for tuna fishing was very large. Crews consisted of around one hundred *tonnaroti*, along with dozens of net makers, master ropemakers, and carpenters. The “*rais*” was the leader of the *tonnara*, chosen by the owner and elder *tonnaroti*. Below the *rais*, the overseers were responsible for supervising the crew and guard shifts at sea along the net. The boat workers included those who handled repairs and others who applied pitch to waterproof the vessel. Finally, there were the laborers from the hinterland who performed the most demanding tasks during the tuna harvest.

Today, the *mattanza* has almost disappeared due to the decreasing fish population caused by increasing sea pollution. Additionally, industrial fishing practices intercept tuna schools long before they approach coastal areas. Most of the *tonnare* have ceased to be active and have been re-discovered as tourist attractions. The Tonnara di Scopello had a similar fate and today houses a diving center that organizes boat and dinghy excursions, a key point for tourism in the area.

In this context, Ceppi Badoni’s footage was shot during an unparalleled moment in history. They are visual documents made by a tourist in a period in which the *tonnara* was beginning to be visited as a tourist destination – a function it serves today –, while it was still inhabited by fishermen and used for the *mattanza* – its original function. The films are thus a testimony to a coexistence between a past that has now disappeared and a future that would not arrive until a few decades later. Therefore, these amateur films evidence a unique point of historical overlap of two disparate identities of the Tonnara di Scopello.

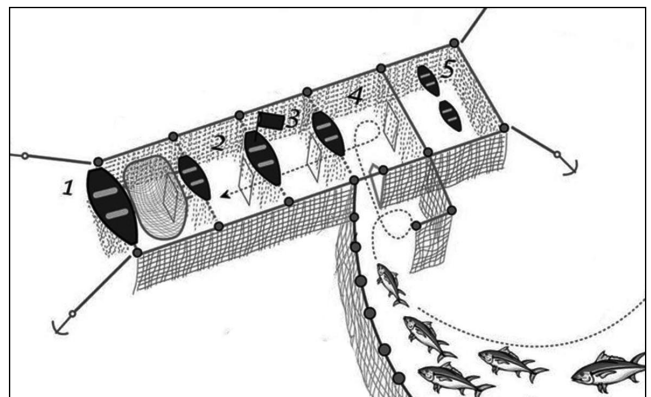


Figure 3. Diagram of the technique. Source: Image elaborated from <https://www.designinggrandtour.it/callipo/>.

5. A cine-tourist in the Tonnara

S. Badoni was born in 1911 in Lecco in an upper-class family and for most of her life, she lived in her family’s historic house. She studied architecture at university and then worked as a graphic designer at the prestigious architecture magazine *Domus*. 1938 was a tragic year for the amateur filmmaker when she lost her first

husband, who she had married only a few months before. She would remarry ten years later to A. Ceppi, who shared her passion for amateur cinematography.

A second tragedy struck Ceppi Badoni's life when her brother died prematurely in 1943. As a result of this bereavement, her father asked her for help at the family's heavy civil construction enterprise, which at the time had more than seven hundred workers.

Badoni's personal history motivated her filming practices directly. Driven by her job interests and passion to meaningfully document previously unknown localities, she frequently traveled to the most disparate destinations, filming with an ethnographic spirit their traditions, customs, and habits.

La mattanza a Scopello is a 1963 silent film devoted entirely to the tuna fishing catch, shown in its various stages and times of the day. It opens with a panoramic sequence, then continues with a chronological montage, although often not linear, and with several time holes. The film continues capturing the preparation period of the *mattanza*, and the second day when the tunas are caught.

The first day begins with medium-field shots of the *tonnaroti* who offered the Badoni family a boat ride. Close-ups highlight their sunburned faces marked by years of sun-drenched labor. Once they arrive at their destination, the boats full of fishermen are framed, side by side, intent on pulling in their nets during the first act of the *mattanza*, the *levata* (Figure 1a). In this phase, the amateur filmmaker pays special attention to the *rais*, filmed both in half-length and American shots, as he orders and guides his crew of fishermen. When the net is pulled to the surface during the hauling phase and the numerous boats have moved closer together, the cinematographer lingers on the fishermen as they begin to target nearby fish with harpoons. In particular, she follows a sunfish first framed in the sea, then harpooned by the tuna fishermen, displayed as a trophy and, finally, stowed inside the boat. The day ends with an evocative shot of the fishermen returning to the harbor.

The second day has no introduction, and the

sequence opens with the act of fishing. The *tonnaroti* are pulling the *camera della morte's* nets (Figure 1b), where tuna are located, while the *rais* shouts his orders. As the shots follow, the convulsive movement of the tuna becomes more frantic as they are pushed to the surface by the fishermen, who gradually pull the *coppu*. In the last most dramatic and eventful sequences, the fish can be seen struggling to escape from the trap, one on top of the other, with no way out. The images are silent, and the screams and chants of the fishermen can only be imagined, contrasted with the image of the violent splashing of the frantic movement of the tuna. In the silence of the film, the tension of that moment emerges: the hooks pierce the flesh, and the sea is tinged with a scarlet pool as the tuna are lifted to the edge of the boat to asphyxiate (Figure 1d). S. Ceppi Badoni devotes close-ups of the tuna covered in their blood, now helpless (Figure 1c). When the waves are finally calmed, and the blood has been diluted by the sea, the film concludes.

In contrast, *Lettere da Scopello* is a well-structured black-and-white narrative film with a soundtrack. It is an account of the family's vacation at the Tonnara through the letters that M., S.'s sister, sends to her fiancé who remains in Lombardy. They are read in voice-over and accompany the viewer throughout the film. The images merely serve as a visual counterpoint with a descriptive function. The first part describes the Tonnara (Figure 2a) and the accommodation of the family ("The place is beautiful: on a small bay surrounded by rocks and stacks overlooks the tuna fishery with its limes, yards, and small harbor". "Further down, at sea level, is the vicheria where we stay and, at slaughter time, the fishermen...")⁵, while later the different inhabitants of the Tonnara are introduced: Maria, the janitor's sister-in-law, "good and vigorous woman, a true pillar for the

⁵ Original quote: "Il posto è bellissimo: su una piccola baia contornata da rocce e faraglioni si affaccia la tonnara con le sue limette, i piazzali, ed il piccolo porto", "Più giù, al livello del mare, c'è la vicheria dove alloggiamo noi e, nel periodo delle mattanze, i pescatori...". These quotes and the following are translated by the author.

tonnara”⁶; Vito, “guardian and rais during the mattanza”⁷; Gianmarco, a fisherman who goes there to sell his catch; and Leonardo, “on vacation, they gave him a room, half den, and half closet, at his disposal, but he practically lives in his boat night and day”⁸.

In the second part, there is a description of the Badoni family’s days on vacation. S. devotes special interest to food, describing the breakfast (“For S., who wants fresh milk, there is the goat”⁹), Mary’s production of fresh bread (“Well cooked and with a slight sesame flavor”¹⁰, Figure 2b), and the other meals. It underscores the serenity of those moments, interrupted on Sunday when “this peace is broken; whole companies of tourists from the area come here, all devoted to big eats and close-to-shore swimming, based on splashing and big splashing”¹¹ (Figure 2c). Finally, he devotes his last moments to the food found in the hinterland such as grapes and figs, sold “for thirty liras a bag”¹², and the presence of grazing cows. The third and final part of the film is devoted to the preliminary preparations for the slaughter and, therefore, to the Badoni family’s farewell to the Tonnara: “We heard that the first skeins of ropes were arriving to make nets. It was the first sign of resumption of an activity that we do not know about, reserved for the winter months”¹³ (Figure 2d).

⁶ “Donna brava e vigorosa, una vera colonna per la tonnara”.

⁷ “Custode e rais nel periodo delle mattanze”.

⁸ “in villeggiatura, gli hanno dato a sua disposizione una stanza, metà tana e metà ripostiglio, ma praticamente vive nella sua barca notte e giorno”.

⁹ “Per la S., che vuole il latte fresco, c’è la capra”.

¹⁰ “Ben cotto e con un leggero sapore di sesamo”.

¹¹ “Questa pace si rompe; vengono qui intere compagnie di turisti della zona, tutti dediti alle grandi mangiate e ai bagni vicini a riva, a base di spruzzi e grandi schiamazzi”.

¹² “A trenta lire al sacco”.

¹³ “Abbiamo saputo che arrivavano le prime matasse di corde per fare le reti. Era il primo sintomo di ripresa di un’attività che noi non conosciamo, riservata ai mesi invernali”.

6. Considerations on ethnographic and amateur films

The debate surrounding the *mattanza* is complex and filled with contradictions. While it involves the killing of living beings, traditional rural fishing can foster a deep connection between humans and nature. Through their labor, people gain knowledge about the natural world (White, 1995) and develop what Mondarini Morelli (1984) calls a “culture of the sea”.

Furthermore, nature becomes embedded in the culture of a community through work, a concept reflected in environmental justice (Di Chiro, 1995). It is important to highlight the distinction between traditional, self-sustaining fishing practices and industrial, profit-driven methods such as trawling.

Ceppi Badoni’s films unveil both *mattanza*’s brutality and its importance for the fishermen’s culture and their interaction with the sea, fitting into a historical moment as charged with socio-economic transformations as the Italian economic boom.

Yet, the importance of Badoni’s films is not related to their subject. The *mattanza* was already documented throughout the twentieth century by professional and authorial ethnographic works that partly inspired Badoni.

Ethnographic filmography on this theme has its origin in the early 20th century (Carpitella, 1981). After World War II, however, it was the “Neapolitan school” that produced films such as *Tonnara* (Quintino di Napoli, Pietro Moncada, Francesco Alliata, 1947), *La Mattanza* (Francesco Alliata, 1948), *La pesca del tonno* (Francesco Alliata, Quintino di Napoli, Pietro Moncada, 1955), and *Tempo di tonni* (Vittorio Sala, 1955). At the same time, Folco Quillici filmed more than a thousand scenes on the subject, while RAI (the national television broadcast) produced the film *Isola di Favignana: ripresa diretta da una tonnara* (Carlo Alberto Chiesa) in 1958. Finally, Vittorio de Seta’s *Contadini del mare* (1955) depicts tuna fishing through the songs of the tonnaroiti.

These films possessed an ethnographic density comparable to the works of Ernesto de

Martino, Diego Carpitella, Alan Lomax, and other contemporaries, who were undertaking the most significant ethnographic project ever assembled on post-World War II Italy.

Guido Giarelli (1998) questions, however, how much realism there is about ethnographic cinema. This is because the editing and selection processes carried out by the filmmaker, as well as the presence of their intentionality towards a possible audience (MacDougall, 1978), make the distinction between fiction and documentary very tenuous (Loizos, 1994). Amateur cinema, instead, can be considered not only a spontaneous vernacular representation but also a more “real” and true representation than ethnographic cinema itself because of the lack of awareness of an “other” audience.

Thus, whereas from a technical, narrative, and stylistic point of view, S. Ceppi Badoni’s films certainly cannot be compared to ethnographic works, they nevertheless represent a rare testimony of the *mattanza* and the life in the Tonnara di Scopello, portrayed through the gaze and curiosity of a tourist.

Ceppi Badoni’s films can be considered as the embodiment of the tourist gaze when considering the proximity between the eye of the cine-tourist and that of the camera (Cati, 2009). They focus on what the filmmaker/tourist expects from a particular location or what, on the contrary, surprises and intrigues them because it contrasts with their expectations.

The culture of the sea and the relationship between humans and non-humans emerge from these films through a gaze that is estranged from that context, aimed at seeking the other, the different, or the “abnormality” (Urry, 1990). In fact, in the context of environmental humanities, it is noteworthy that as tourists increasingly view attractions through the lens of consumerism, their focus on commodities may leave them unprepared to address environmental issues (Emmett and Nye, 2017).

No direct criticism of the *mattanza* emerges from Ceppi Badoni’s films. If anything, a curiosity emerges about a practice so distant from the reality of the author, who belonged to the new industrial bourgeoisie of northern Italy. In *Mattanza a Scopello*, she intimately depicts details and experience of killing tuna and the

practice itself in silence. Conversely, she uses a voice-over for the narration of life at the Tonnara and her experience as a tourist. There is thus a dual interpretation: on the one hand, the local fishermen and the slaughter, the object of the filmic text; on the other hand, the subjectivity of the author who, through film narration, represents the object filtered through her gaze.

In *Sicilia 1962 – I. Lettere da Scopello*, instead, the focus of the tourist lays on her and her family’s daily life at the Tonnara and on its inhabitants. However, in the last part of the film dedicated to the preparation for the new season, Badoni comments: “For now, among those who stay and those who leave, the happiest are still the tuna that sail free in the oceans”¹⁴.

7. Conclusions

The two films by Ceppi Badoni, resulting from archival extraction, represent two precious geo-historical documents on the *mattanza* of a value equal to or even greater than coeval ethnographic documentaries and writings. Indeed, these vernacular narratives crafted by a cine-amateur inherently embody the perspective of a contemporary tourist, and her gaze. Their significance lies therefore in the interpretation given by the cine-tourist to the practice of *mattanza* and the culture of the sea. Hence, how the filmmaker describes the brutality of fishing and portrays life in Tonnara reveals more of the perspective of the tourist, rather than the *mattanza* or the Tonnara itself.

This article hopes to unveil the potential of amateur representations as geo-historical sources, aiming to encourage future research trajectories that depart from or intersect with the sphere of private cinema, for example in geography education.

Amateur films, such as those created by S. Ceppi Badoni, could be used in secondary or higher education to provide students with a more intimate and humanized view of regional landscapes and cultural practices (Taillibert, 2023). For example, her films documenting the *mattanza* in Sicily from a tourist gaze offer a

¹⁴ “Per il momento, tra chi resta e chi parte, i più felici sono ancora i tonni che navigano liberi negli oceani”.

window into the relationship between local communities, their environment, and the perspective of a contemporary “alien”, which can be valuable for teaching about sustainable practices and the impact of modernization on traditional livelihoods.

Such films also serve as visual case studies that allow students to explore concepts like place, culture, and environmental change in a tangible way. By engaging with the filmmaker’s perspective, students may develop critical thinking and perspective-taking skills: observing how local identities are shaped by and connected to their environments, and how they are interpreted by a personal gaze, will train their cognitive understanding, empathy, and social awareness.

Amateur films add a personal, ground-level narrative to geographical studies, making abstract concepts more relatable and grounded in real-world experiences. The gaze of *someone* can be the gaze of *everyone*.

Acknowledgments

This contribution was carried out within the project PRIN “Greening the Visual: An Environmental Atlas of Italian Landscapes”, prot. no. 2017 BMTRLC.

A preliminary result of this work was presented at the conference *Oltre la Globalizzazione: Narrazioni/ Narratives*, Società di Studi Geografici, Como, 2022, of which the proceedings were published.

A particular thanks goes to Katerina Zouboulakis for the English language revision.

References

1. Agnoletto P., “Il Turismo Attraverso Lo Sguardo Del Turista. I Film Di Famiglia e La Vacanza Negli Anni Del ‘Boom’ Economico”, *Annali Del Turismo*, Anno XI, 2022, pp. 25-40.
2. Agnoletto P., “From the People’s Gaze. Holiday Home Movies as Vernacular Sources for the Ecocritical Thought” Ph.D. thesis, University of Milan-Bicocca, 2024.
3. Agnoletto P. and Bagnoli L., “Ambiente e percezione sociale. Cartoline e filmati di famiglia nell’Italia industriale”, *Geotema*, 72, 2023, pp. 60-68.
4. Bignante E., “Guardare attraverso gli occhi degli altri”, *Geotema*, 41, 2010, pp. 39-49.
5. Bignante E., *Geografia e ricerca visuale. Strumenti e metodi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011.
6. Carpitella D., “Pratica e teoria nel film etnografico italiano: prime osservazioni”, *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 3, 1981, pp. 5-22.
7. Cati A., *Pellicole di ricordi: film di famiglia e memorie private (1926-1942)*, Milan, V&P, 2009.
8. Chambers D., *Family as place: Family photograph albums and the domestication of public and private space*, in Schwartz J.M. and Ryan J.R. (Eds.), *Picturing Place. Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2003.
9. Dell’Agnese E., *Ecocritical Geopolitics. Popular culture and environmental discourse*, Abington, Oxon, Routledge, 2021.
10. Di Chiro G., “Nature as Community: the Convergence of Environment and Social Justice”, in Cronon W. (Ed.), *Uncommon Ground. Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York, London, W.W. Norton & Co, 1995, pp. 298-320.
11. Emmett R.S. and Nye D.E., *The environmental humanities: a critical introduction*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2017.
12. Fiorini K., “I film di famiglia: per una metodologia di descrizione archivistica”, *Documenta: rivista internazionale di studi storico-filologici sulle fonti*, III, 2020.
13. Giarelli G., “L’ultima mattanza”, *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 38, 1998, pp. 131-133.
14. Harper D., “Visual sociology: Expanding sociological vision”, *The American Sociologist*, 19, 1988, pp. 54-70.
15. Hay I., “Moving Pictures: From Ethnographic to Autoethnographic Documentary in the Internationalization of the Geography Curriculum”, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 41, 4, 2017, pp. 562-573.
16. Ishizuka K.L. and Zimmermann P.R. (Eds.), *Mining the home movie: excavations in histories and memories*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008.
17. La Duca R., *La tonnara di Scopello*, Palermo, Edizioni Grifo, 1988.
18. Locatelli M., “Lo sguardo del cineturista: cinematografia amatoriale e pratiche di consumo turistico”, *Comunicazioni Sociali*, 3, 2005, pp. 553-560.

19. Loizos P., *Innovation in ethnographic film: from innocence to self-consciousness. 1955-85*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994.
20. Lorimer H., "Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork", in DeLyser D., Herbert S., Aitken S. and Crang M. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, London, SAGE Publications, 2009.
21. MacDougall D., "Ethnographic Film: Failure and Promise", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7, 1978, pp. 405-425.
22. Maggioli M., "Archivi, Geografie e Racconto", in Latini G., Maggioli M. (Eds.), *Sguardi Green: Geografie, Ambiente, Culture Visuali*, Roma, Società Geografica Italiana, 2022, pp. 113-138.
23. Mondarini Morelli G., "Lavoro e territorio nella cultura dei pescatori. Note preliminari", *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 9, 1984, pp. 107-112.
24. Motrescu-Mayes A. and Aasman S., *Amateur media and participatory cultures: film, video, and digital media*, London, New York, Routledge, 2019.
25. Motrescu-Mayes A. and Nicholson, H.N., *British women amateur filmmakers: national memories and global identities*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2018.
26. Nicholson H.N., "At Home and Abroad with Cine Enthusiasts: Regional Amateur Film-making and Visualizing the Mediterranean, ca. 1928-1962", *GeoJournal*, 59, 4, 2004, pp. 323-333.
27. Nicholson H.N., "Through the Balkan States: Home Movies as Travel Texts and Tourism Histories in the Mediterranean, c.1923-39", *Tourist Studies*, 6, 1, 2006, pp. 13-36.
28. Nicholson H.N., "Journeys into Seeing: Amateur Film-Making and Tourist Encounters in Soviet Russia, c. 1932", *New Readings*, 10, 2009, pp. 57-71.
29. Odin R. (Ed.), *Le film de famille : usage privé, usage public*, Paris, Méridiens Klincksieck, 1995.
30. Ogborn M.O., *Archive*, in Agnew J.A. and Livingstone D.N. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, London, SAGE, 2011.
31. Ozder A., "Documentaries as a Tool to Convey Life into Geography Education", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4, 7, 2014, pp. 203-212.
32. Roberts L., *Film, Mobility and Urban Space: A Cinematic Geography of Liverpool*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012.
33. Roche M., "Historical Research and Archival Sources", in Hay I. (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography*, III ed., Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 173-190.
34. Rose G., *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, London, SAGE Publications, 2001.
35. Rose G., *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment. Re-Materialising Cultural Geography*, Farnham, Burlington, Ashgate, 2010.
36. Rose G., "Domesticating the archive: the case of family photography", *Semestrale di studi e ricerche di geografia*, 2011, pp. 15-32.
37. Salazkina M. and Fibla-Gutierrez E., "Introduction: Toward a Global History of Amateur Film Practices and Institutions", *Film History*, 30, 1, 2018, pp. I-XXIII.
38. Saunders R.A. and Strukov V. (Eds.), *Popular Geopolitics: Plotting an Evolving Interdiscipline*, London, Routledge, 2018.
39. Simoni P., "Archivi filmici privati: la rappresentazione del quotidiano e gli home movies", *Mediascapes journal*, 2, 2013, pp. 135-145.
40. Simoni P., *Lost Landscapes: Il cinema amatoriale e la città*, Asti, Edizioni Kaplan, 2018.
41. Taillibert C., "Quand l'éducation à l'image s'empare du film amateur : intentions et perspectives", *Cahiers de Champs Visuels*, 26, 2023, pp.155-208.
42. Urry J., *The tourist gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies*, London, Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1990.
43. White R., "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?": Work and Nature", in Cronon W. (Ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, London, W.W. Norton & Co, 1995, pp. 171-185.

Filmography

- Alliata F., *La Mattanza*, 1948.
- Alliata F., Di Napoli Q. and Pietro Moncada, *La pesca del tonno*, 1955.
- Ceppi Badoni S., *Sicilia 1962– I. Lettere da Scopello*, 1962.
- Ceppi Badoni S., *Mattanza a Scopello*, 1963.
- De Seta V., *Contadini del mare*, 1955.
- Di Napoli Q., Moncada P. and Alliata F., *Tonnara*, 1947.
- Sala V., *Tempo di tonni*, 1955.