In apertura della rubrica sull'antropologia dell'innovazione ho ritenuto opportuno segnalare ai lettori del sito la recente conferenza annuale dell'Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA), tenutasi ad Aberdeen dal 4 al 7 aprile 2005, sul tema "Creativity and cultural improvisation". In particolare il panel su "Creativity and temporality"si proponeva di trovare risposte antropologiche alle seguenti questioni (riportate dall'abstract a cura di Sharon Macdonald ed Eric Hirsch): "What kinds of change over time should be counted as evidence of "creativity"? What are the reasons for so much emphasis on creativity in certain periods, including the present?. ... People say they follow the way of the ancestors but their conduct and material culture register signs of modernity. Is 'creativity' the right word to apply here? How does it compare with, say, discourses of creativity as key to business success or an emphasis on personal (especially childhood) creativity as key to individual success? ... Is a world-view informed by a belief in 'progress' more productive of creativity than 'non-progress-oriented' worldviews? Or do such worldviews imply different kinds of creativity that need to be analytically distinguished? ... How do notions of "the past" or "history" pose limits on creativity or, conversely, act as a spur? Are some times, and some time-scales more productive of the creative than others, and, if so, why?"

Quanto segue è un breve estratto del mio intervento al panel, basato sulla mia ricerca etnografica in aree rurali montane e in particolare sulla trasformazione dei prodotti tipici in un articolo di "heritage" culturale. L'intervento è stato presentato a nome dell'Università degli Studi di Bergamo e della Fondazione Bassetti. Lo riporto dall'originale in inglese.

This is a first attempt at focussing on issues and questions of timescapes, responsibility and creativity with regard to the issue of the production and consumption of food in contemporary Italy. I hope to elicit questions and making links between the realms of the anthropology of the senses, the
anthropology of food, the emergent issue of an "audit culture" (Strathern 2000) and how this links with creative attempts at, on the one hand, re-inventing food as tradition, and, on the other hand, inventing new ways of deciding about and assessing "new" foods. Why so much emphasis is placed on creativity at present? Italy is currently striving to capitalise on its "natural" vocation of producer of "typical" foods, in order to recuperate economic margins lost to the European recession. But complex and conflicting dynamics lie behind the strategy for the construction of food as heritage, of taste as a skill, of quality of life as quality of food. Visiting the stands of international exhibitions such as the Milan "Expo of Taste" or the Turin "Slow-Food Salon", one gathers the commercial, juridical, philosophical and existential momentum behind the issue of taste in the contemporary affluent Western society. An investigation of the strategies and processes involved shows an enhanced stress placed on innovation and creativity, both at the level of a phenomenology of taste, and at the social level of the management of political issues. I shall first analyse the possible contradictions within the agenda of re-establishing tradition in an already "compromised" practice such as that of food production, assessing whether innovation is played up as creativity or played down as non-traditional and non-authentic.

(Linked)