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Nadia Breda

The two Hydrogens. Water in an Anthroposophical view, facing up to the Anthropocene

Introduction

In this contribution I aim to articulate the relationship between the theoretical and social framework of the Anthropocene and some contemporary practices of Anthroposophy, examining how the latter respond to the demands and comments of the former. I will try then to investigate how the environmental emergencies are reinterpreted by a non-naturalistic philosophy as Anthroposophy, considered (not only by the founders) one of the frontiers of the contemporary organic farming.

Relying upon previous studies of Anthropology of Anthroposophy¹ and going beyond the constructivist approach (which also inspired some of my previous readings about water, e.g. Breda 2005), I try to show here which anthroposophical elements can fit within the framework of the Anthropocene, particularly in relation to Climate Change. Baer and Singer (2014) show at least four reasons why anthropologists should expand their *foci* up to include the issue of the Climate Change, and help to build a response to this serious threat to humanity. First of all anthropology has a long tradition of field research and this would give us the means to develop knowledge concerning the cultural dimensions related to the climate issue; moreover, implications with the local diversity would enable us to acquire further knowledge and to manage the local responses to the Climate Change; we could also make use of the knowledge acquired through other anthropological works on development issues, their consequences on the local populations, and their efforts for damage mitigation. Finally the “holistic vision” of society that anthropology builds up could contribute to reveal the complex interrelations between different social sectors, relations that might implement the successes in the policies concerning the Climate Change.

To such motivations for an immersion into the anthropological framework of the Anthropocene and into the theme of the Climate Change, I would also add that anthropology can read the Climate Change as a node of links between nature, cul-

ture, science, politics, and beliefs, between society and climate, certainty and uncertainty, science and knowledge, global and local, naturalism and other ontologies, human and non human matters².

If, as stated in our Introduction at this AAM issues, it is correct to say that «different sets of knowledge, as practices of appropriation, exploitation of resources, long term sustainability and social value, emerge in the Anthropocene as a unique issue to be dealt with through multiple perspectives» (Bougleux, Breda, *Introduction*), then we can also say that in the Anthropocene framework «the processes and the crises related to water appear as the first requiring complex visions: water can no longer be studied separately by unrelated expertise, and any local insight on water cannot be considered independently from large scale pictures involving different sets of competences» (*ibidem*). My contribution intends therefore to add to the debates on the Anthropocene a survey on the anthroposophical perspective about the element ‘water’, analyzing Anthroposophy as a form of knowledge and practice that is – intentionally or not – producing knowledge for the Anthropocene era.

In the macro-Anthropocenic scenario will be increasingly required collaborative and complex strategies to deal with problems of withering, water scarcity, salinization, pollution exacerbated by the Climate Change, «the wicked problem» (Pokrant, Stocker 2011), the multiverse-problem we are facing today. Therefore my question is *whether* and *how* Anthroposophy could convene at a table of discussion and experimentation about possible solutions of such problems. This means to assess how anthropology can study other sciences and other systems of knowledge, in order to refine the methods of the Anthropocenic Studies, and address the Climate Change issues.

Anthropology seems to be the discipline delegated for the encounter with ‘the Other’ (Descola, Ingold 2014). Ethnographies referred to the Climate Change are many, and comprise case studies from around the world, noting how «different societies prove to be creative, reactive, full of resources and practices for remodelling hard situations, and invest

their efforts in a future they already started to shape» (cf. Hastrup, Hastrup 2015, Hastrup, Rubow 2014).

My contribution intends to clarify, on one hand, what kind of knowledge is at work in the anthroposophical philosophy, analyzing textual and narrative productions on the element 'water'; on the other hand, it intends to describe some of the practices of the anthroposophical homeodynamic movement I met in my field research. I talk about the community called *La Nuova Terra* (The New Earth, Codroipo, Udine, Italy), a complex agricultural/philosophical/ecological/environmentalist contemporary system, perhaps not recognized by all as an 'eco-movement', yet certainly constituting a social and political actor, capable of manipulating, both symbolically and materially, the ecological languages and practices that define the boundaries between nature and culture and between human and non-human³.

The anthroposophical-homeodynamic practices used in this community show an explicit intention of incorporating in Anthroposophy the new emerging issue of the Climate Change, and to experiment solutions able to compete on these new responsibilities. This community works, since 30 years, on a wide range of environmental issues consistently concerning water: combating desertification, water saving, decontamination of the waters from heavy metals, plants' recovery from hail and frost, soil desalination, irrigation improvement, and water conservation⁴. This practical aspect opens up to further questions: can anthropology, as a critical social science, be of some help in the multidisciplinary process, exposing the different rationality enacted by the anthroposophical movement and thought, in an Anthropocenic context? In the macro-Anthropocenic scenario, where various and creative strategies will be more and more requested in order to address the plight of the Climate Change, how can we interface the micro ethnographic data, typical of anthropological research, with the large scale scenarios and processes considered by the Climate Change framework? The ability to investigate with qualitative methods about the local ecological knowledge, strategies and practices of the social communities, and generating a holistic knowledge through ethnographic operations, has proven to be the essential contribution of anthropology to that set of Climate Science, that, facing their deficiencies, require now the contribution of the Social Sciences (Baer, Singer 2014). The broad current neoliberal economic, productive and scientific scenarios show, indeed, cognitive deficiencies, supremacy of unique visions, dominant and exclusionary epistemologies, misunderstandings of socio-cultural aspects, ones that could, instead, re-inscribe useful

practices and meanings within the new disturbing framework of the Climate Change. Hence, within the Anthropocene perspective, I'll try to investigate how an esoteric thought, produced in the XIX-XX century – and rooted millennia ago⁵ – relates to a contemporary problem entirely new to the human beings. My contribution seeks to respond to some of these questions proposing the following ethnographic and anthropological argumentation.

Among the Navaho Natives. The Animas River contamination

This first paragraph is built around a transnational account. In summer 2013, Enzo Nastati (the leader of the community where I carried out my fieldwork) was invited by some North American farmers⁶ to illustrate his methods and start up a business organization according to the "homeodynamic" approach⁷. During his journey, a serious case of pollution of the Animas River (Colorado-USA) occurred. Referred to, in the media, as «the Gold King Mine waste water spill», the environmental disaster took place near Silverton (Colorado) on August 5th 2015, and caused the release of toxic elements in the Animas River, a tributary of the San Juan River⁸. Some workers had accidentally damaged the closure of the mine's drainage tank, causing the leakage in the Cement Creek – a tributary of the Animas River – of 11 million Litres of water contaminated by heavy metals as cadmium, lead, arsenic, beryllium, zinc, iron and copper. The leak caused the complete change of the waters' colour, which became orange. The heavy metals' levels were hundreds of times higher than the limits allowed, even several miles away from the spill. The ripple effect of the leakage in the river was propagated through the water flow, causing difficulties to farmers, breeders, tourists and citizens of a large part of the Colorado state, damaging both the daily and the economic activities of the surrounding inhabitants, mostly Navaho. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) recognized the incident and the governor of Colorado declared the zone a 'disaster area'. The leakage affected waterways in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and in the Navajo Nation, whose Commission on Emergency Management declared the 'state of emergency'. It was estimated that 2000 Navajo farmers and breeders were directly affected.

In such situation Enzo Nastati organized on site a practice dedicated to the river recovery. He had been put in touch with the Navaho natives through his American guests who were in good relations with them. Together they organized the spillage of a homeodynamic product into the river, aimed to de-pollute it, accompanied by prayers and medi-

tations. In the role of an expert and passionate of decontamination, Nastati, facing the Animas River's incident, "concretized" in America a homeodynamic product he had not brought from Europe, but that he "rebuilt" there with a series of actions performed with the participation of many supporters.

We have lengthily discussed about this case in a dialogue-interview I conducted with Enzo Nastati:

For Animas I made a product in a jiffy, we made a practical work [...] I had all my stuff there, then I made the products to get there from here, via space-time, yes [...] (via) quantum physics, I've put together some forty people, then the others around, to support, in order to do these actions out of space-time, and they made it wonderfully.

When two rivers meet, well, at the confluences, not far a guardian is there, I call it the guardian spirit [...] and that governs the unification of the waters. Animas goes into the San Juan river, that flows into the Colorado river then three guardians are there, thus we worked so that the three guardians participate in the decontamination work, we put our product, the guardian had already seen contaminated water, so he was alarmed [...] then we put this product [...] we have changed the quality of the river [...] we explained to the guardians that a recovery was taking place...

To do this work we have called the Indian leaders, who have a relationship with water that we cannot even imagine, I talked to them, chapeau and that's it, they did the ceremony, they called their forces, their spirits, and together the introduction of the product into the water was completed.

We have agreed the job, it was a day, at the end, the physical work, pouring slowly [...] twenty minutes [...] There was one of the Americans group who knew this Indian chief, so we agreed and they came⁹ (Nastati, Interview, March 2016).

This encounter among different cultures (Anthroposophical culture, Native American culture, and the white American farmers' culture) focusing on the attempt to intervene in a river clean-up, allows us to glimpse at Anthroposophy not just as a philosophy of the last century, but also as a contemporary practice that tries to interact with the complexity of the globalized world. We actually must recall that Anthroposophy, according to the directions given by Rudolf Steiner, has a definite pragmatic intent, and gets a task of 'reformer of reality', particularly in the fields of agriculture, education and medicine. The community *La Nuova*

Terra is devoted to create products for decontamination and, as we see in this episode, it experiments them wherever possible. To date, according to an US Environmental Agency report, the river results cleaned up¹⁰. Nevertheless, it is not possible to evaluate the quantitative effectiveness and the actual results of the homeodynamic intervention on the Animas River, because, as Nastati explains, Natives, Americans and Anthroposophists were not the only subjects to intervene on the river at the time. Moreover, the conditions were not suitable to carry out the operation according to the experimental protocol¹¹. This intervention on the Animas River was rather an «act of love for a suffering brother», Nastati says, adding that when he saw the river in those conditions, he wept.

Analyzing this account, some characteristics of the anthroposophical homeodynamic practices emerges, like "emergenciality" and "globalization". The founder of homeodynamics explains that his group is considered and called as a sort of emergency team from many international companies and organizations (governmental or not) when they are in severe difficulties. After having tried all the possible techniques, reduced in dire straits, then they open up and try some of the techniques elaborated by this particular homeodynamic agriculture¹².

Homeodynamic Anthroposophy appears aware of a certain haste with which we should proceed facing the Climate Change, and the global scale we must operate in. Nastati is travelling around the world, intervening on different problems, and training several hundreds of people in order to empower them to use his method.

They accept that we intervene when they no longer know what to do [...]. In Wales the government has called us [...] we are talking with Senegal, Ethiopia, Venezuela, they know that here we are, we need to understand at what level you talk, even in China do not mess around [...] agriculture [...] not poor at all, they have so mistreated it with industry, that now there are people uprisings, they gave them chemicals for free, a terrifying poisoning, a plague, we see [...] they have found us, we go, let's see ...

At the end of the month I am down in Sicily, there are four square kilometers of greenhouse full of diseases, they have asked for help against parasites, it comes the moment when you no longer know what to do, one looks further, when really the materialistic science reaches a point it cannot make it, then one begins to question (Nastati, Interview, June 15th 2016).

The anthroposophical practices seem to have a strong point in the current Anthropocenic framework: rejected the concept of culture, and not being interested in cultural relativism¹³, not historicizing the problems, except within broad categories such as those of modernity and antiquity, Anthroposophy appears to be a universalism, a science in search of general laws, not dependent by cultural or social diversity. This characteristic seems to make this practical philosophy an instrument immediately adaptable, extensible and usable anywhere all over the world¹⁴. The scale at which Anthroposophy works, is definitely global, and this is today a direct benefit, apparently deriving by having ignored the concepts of *culture* and *society*, having instead elaborated universal laws about the cosmos' functioning. But on what conditions? How to translate the laws, considered universal by Anthroposophy, in completely different cultural contexts, such as those cited by Nastati? From my studies, this does not appear as a problem for Anthroposophy, since ever, in fact, it considers itself a global (cosmic) science; it considers as "scientific" the laws it identifies, and therefore suitable for any context. Is perhaps needed a shared "spiritualistic" vision for being able to share these practices? Some form of "moral re-orienting" seems involved in the handling of such complexity. As the Waterworld group of Hastrup writes:

It has been demonstrated beyond doubt that people never simply react and adapt to changes, but engage in a complex social and moral reorientation that in itself contributes to societal change. The advancements made at the conceptual level regarding the social response to environmental changes, may inform new measures of mitigation and adaptation to climate change¹⁵.

From this perspective, the moral dimension seems deeply involved in addressing the Climate Change issue (Mirzoeff 2016). Also according to Capra and Luisi (2014) in a systemic view of life spirituality is compatible with science, shared by science and by a philosophy of complexity. Anthroposophy, as a complex science, allows us, as we shall see, to achieve a compatibility among all these dimensions, and to embed as well the spiritual and/or the moral ones. We will return to these issues later.

The two Hydrogens. Readings about water

This section aims to illustrate what kind of knowledge is established and experienced within the anthroposophical homeodynamic system. It is

based on the text *Dossier Acqua (Water Dossier)* by Enzo Nastati¹⁶. An in-depth study about water through an esoteric anthroposophical interpretation constitutes the main part of the dossier, certainly the most esoteric part, yet sided by extensive references to non-esoteric knowledge. The latter, accompanying the esoteric description, contribute to illustrate the rhetoric, the conceptual structure, and the internal logic of the entire anthroposophical knowledge system. But let's follow the text's steps.

Nastati's *Water Dossier* introduces the issues of desertification in progress, of deforestation and appropriation of water by the multinational companies, and of the privatization of this resource. His language is extremely topical and very close to the language used by the environmental movements, e.g.: «nowadays drinking a simple glass of water has become a social and political action implicated in a global dimension» (*ibidem*, 6). Several examples follow, about "old methods" to render the water "lively", drawn from Arab gardens in Spain, Spanish Cistercian monasteries, Roman villas in the Tuscan island of Giannutri, the Cantayo town in Peru, Epidaurus in Greece, and the Greek temple of Eleusis. They deal with popular or traditional ancient hydraulic engineering documents, based on pipes, trails, spiral wells, wheels and circular shapes. Nastati writes: «We can then see how deep was the human knowledge about water, a knowledge completely lost over time» (*ivi*: 15)¹⁷.

The dossier continues with the illustration of how water is conceived within the Anthroposophical system, where the origin of 'all the waters' is depicted within a wide ethereal world beyond the Earth, situated in the constellation of the Aquarium. The constellation allows the transformation of the two gases (O and H) in a liquid, thus demonstrating its "intentional" intervention and its creative-creational capacity, generating the liquid/water for the world. It represents the womb of the Earth, the embrace that surrounds it, and the constant, endless reserve of life and vitality. From this hypostatization, in the anthroposophical system, all the problems related to the water are considered as problems of "vitality", namely related to life and to its quality.

The text attributes an essence, an individualized entity to the water. It is «the life support», a kind of womb. The discourse then opens on a distinction between 'life as *Zoe*' and 'life as *Bios*', whereas the former is individual, related to the ego, while the latter is hereditary, associated to the earthly existence. Water, starting from cosmic, copiously lively dimensions, enters then into the concrete human and non-human lives, on Earth, and in diversified manners connects to these two types of life, thanks

to the presence of the “two Hydrogens”. The “two Hydrogens” are described as elements characterized by different “personalities”: the hydrogen associated to the *Bios* leads to the concrete manifestation of the Spirit, and to ordinary consciousness; its direction goes from the top down, allowing earthiness and embodiment, and the manifestation of the Spirit that, otherwise, would not become concrete on the Earth; it has a biological quality, a subtle component, related to the constellation of Leo and to the Fire, and it is of a poor quality nowadays, because of the contemporary pollution. The other hydrogen is related to life as *Zoe*, it is eternal, cosmic, and considered as a gift. It refers to the Spirit, its direction goes from the bottom up, from the Earth to the cosmic and spiritual heights; it brings development, it supports the life of the Spirit within the human beings, has a spiritual quality and a subtle component. It is as well affected by a degradation caused by pollution; it is as well related to Leo and to the Fire, and linked to the essential oils of the plants, composed, indeed, primarily of Hydrogen. On the Earth, this Hydrogen controls the Nitrogen, and whenever it is not able to control it, we have a kind of ‘astralization’, characterized by an excess of desires and passions, whose physical manifestation is putrefaction. Oxygen, on its turn, is considered as the etheric-vital part of the water, supporting the organic part of life; it consists in the actual environment for life (the mother), a decayed and degraded environment, as well, because of pollution. Excessive oxygen brings too many lunar forces and causes fungi and bacteria as their physical manifestations on the terrestrial world.

Different kinds of water pollution are interpreted in relation to each of the components of which Anthroposophy considers to be formed every being: physical-etheric-animic-spiritual components. Physical pollution (mineral, chemical, biological) is the best known and understandable to all, but beyond that, water can be degraded in its animic/astral dimension when the forces that lurk in a certain place are, for instance, charged with fears, anxiety, aggressivity, fundamentalisms, and wars. Further on, at the spiritual level, water can be contaminated if it becomes a bearer of negative spiritual entities. Water is also a purifying element: it purifies «the death row of the protein», in a sort of «mutable dance», as Goethe wrote, whereas «death is the stratagem of life to produce new life» (Nastati sd: 8). «Water is the Earth’s ambassador of the collaboration among the vital forces of the ‘protein cross’, and since it is the basis of life, it is not difficult for us to associate to this ‘arm of the cross’ the ‘arm of life’» (Nastati sd: 21).

The esoteric description of the water in Nastati’s

Water Dossier requires some knowledge of the concept of ‘etheric’¹⁸. We cannot, in this contribution, go too deep into the complex issue of what ‘etheric’ means, but we can highlight that such concept is responsible for the “enlargement” process of the Natural Sciences carried out by Anthroposophy. The theme of the “enlargement” of the Natural Sciences is an access key for the understanding of the Anthroposophical philosophy: a “cosmocentrism”, as Descola wrote, conveying the dimension of the entire cosmos, ranging from the galaxies to the center of the Earth. In order to build a *cosmicity*, the physical-material level has been necessarily “enlarged”, expanded towards the so defined etheric, animic and spiritual worlds.

I want to highlight as well that the anthroposophical knowledge is a western analogistic knowledge (Breda 2016) built without any denial of the Natural Sciences, rather expanding them to new dimensions, the spiritual included. The recognition of the validity of the scientific principles is in fact immediately “rearranged” through a process of enlargement. *Enlargement* means to legitimize the historical enemy (naturalism, materialism, scientism) and at the same time circumscribe, incorporate, and surpass it, placing it as a first step on top of which to build three more steps: this is the gigantism, the production of cosmicity of the anthroposophical analogism.

Nastati testifies as follows the relationship of Anthroposophy with the Natural Science, in one of my interviews:

We in our spiritual scientific view do not disdain Science. I do not know if you have seen the floor above, the test of the magnetic fields [...] we are working with the scientific method; on the 22nd, at the presentation, there will be two university professors involved, this means that we recognize the scientific aspect, we are not at all against the scientific method, rather, it is a rigorous approach, otherwise where you’re going, I dream this and that [...] and we just exchange greetings; I recognize 100% the scientific method, but besides the ‘self-extremists’, we accept this view, and we put it into practice; these professors have a career, they write on international journals, they are not beginners.

We just enlarge this vision [...] there is a world behind! We see the physical level as an alembic, a distillate of other levels, which carry the imprint of the upper floors we do not see (Nastati, Interview, March 2015).

Regard to Nastati’s *Water Dossier*, we also note that he adds some naturalistic observations, inter-

preted according to an anthroposophical view, beyond the esoteric description of the water. He refers to the salmon fish figure: «In nature, an animal that can teach us a lot about the hidden water quality is definitely the salmon» (*ivi*: 27). He highlights an esoteric reading, as an explanation of the natural behavior of the salmon fish:

The salmon got the ability to go up the course of waterfalls even 20-30 meters high. This happens because the salmon is related to the etheric component of the water [...] flowing backwards respect to the physical flow of the water. Thanks to this the salmon manages to win the Gravity component in the water (and Gravity is a deadly physical force) (*ivi*: 27-28).

The *Water Dossier* ends with observations based on the senses: «it is possible to judge even by naked-eye the water quality: if the flowing remains 'smooth' it is of a not good etheric quality, if it is 'oily', it is not of good astral quality. If, however, tends to form vortices, splashing, waves, it is alive and has good etheric and astral qualities» (Nastati: 28). Great attention is paid to the relationship of the water with the sounds. Nastati writes: «If we listen carefully to the noise produced by the flow of water in a mountain stream, after a while we will realize that in addition to the usual and principal sound, we hear a second thin sound¹⁹ which is characteristic of the water jump: a sort of 'V', sign of vital water» (*ivi*: 28).

We can now discern the emergence of a linguistic, narrative and conceptual structure of Anthroposophical literature, providing evidences of how its process of 'enlargement' is achieved, annexing and interweaving elements from a broad range of different knowledge areas: from the popular, traditional, ancient cultures, from cultures studied in anthropology, as naturalistic popular knowledge, Local Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge – TKE –, from cultures defined as "primitive" (Marti 2001: 21), from the classical ancient eastern philosophies, and from other forms of not-only western spirituality. To such "intertwinement" converge kinds of knowledge inherited from esoteric doctrines, often focused on – and deepened by – anthroposophy. Finally also naturalistic knowledge is taken into account: this broad entanglement constitutes the "enlargement" process, an *entanglement* composed by different routes of knowledge, ranging from a pole that can be identified in *esoteric* concepts and practices, to another, that can be identified in "scientific" and "naturalistic" ones, gradually passing through recognitions and elaborations.

Clearly, from a qualitative point of view, many

different kinds of knowledge are at stake, while from a quantitative point of view, esoteric knowledge and anthroposophical Steinerian concepts predominate. Such *enlargement* process can be better understood through a fuzzy logical framework that accepts the principle of contradiction, of the third included, and of the placement along an infinite line of points (Kosko 1997, Berkes *et al.* 2009). Therefore, there is no contradiction within this philosophy, rather, in its entanglement we recognize new juxtapositions and unusual approaches that acquire meaningfulness and intelligibility. These, together with a huge mass of specific anthroposophical references that re-compose the multiplicity as a whole, re-elaborating multiple antecedent knowledge in a new system. Holistic, hologramatic, systemic visions, are all possible definitions to identify the complex anthroposophical system of knowledge²⁰. The analogistic framework allows to keep all this together and gives to the anthroposophical system an overall sense (see Descola 2005, Breda 2016). After all, the analogistic system itself can be considered a "super complex system", which connects the networks of all the beings in the world.

With regard to the study of the forms of knowledge that could convene at a hypothetical discussion table on the issues of the Climate Change and the Anthropocene, as a complex system constituted by a variety of knowledge and practices of different origins, and constituted within the world complexity itself, Anthroposophy can well dialogue with the set of connections that compose the "systemic view of life", as proposed by Capra and Luisi (2014).

In the laboratory. Other Practices

In the previous paragraphs we have first seen an emergency practice dealing with water (the de-contamination of the Animas River), and then the discourse on it, in an exemplary text by the leader of the homeodynamic Anthroposophy method. In this section my aim is to show how other practices have been tested in the community's laboratory²¹. The laboratory activity is a very important point for the community, which created the International Research Institute, named Eureka, that constitutes its scientific experimental development. Its definition is *Research and Global Solutions*, a very significant name, which confirms the global-international vocation of the practical proposals of Anthroposophy, and of its contemporary movements and derivations. As Enzo Nastati confirms on several occasions, the community offers some practical global solutions, applicable anywhere all over the world, to the contemporary consequences of the Climate Change.

The literature produced by these researches insists in highlighting the problems that allegedly will characterize the future of humanity: drought, withering, salinization of the land, desertification, scarcity and water pollution. Nastati tells me that «deserts are his passions», and the practices for making it withdraw. That's why Eureka has engaged in many experiments involving water²². Currently, the experimental activity is the core, and a dozen researchers led by Nastati are devoted to it²³. The laboratory activity has currently supplanted the agricultural production, and is now implemented in order to have products ready for intervening in difficult cases. On my way back on fieldwork, in autumn 2016, I found the greenhouses, formerly used for the vegetal production, dismantled and disposed. My guests explained that an important turn occurred, involving the abandonment of the business activity of selling plants and vegetables, towards the intensive development of the Eureka laboratory research activity. They explained how this was a major step in their history, a big risk for their economic survival, but also a great challenge that they wanted to take. If their scientific approach was correct, they said, the company and the community would have been able to survive with the products developed by the research work. Yet, several problems exist related to the commercialization of the laboratory products, and to their integration and management in the market; the community also meets problems in finding staff willing to dedicate to this work with the necessary commitment, sharing of the philosophical vision, motivation to travel on all continents, knowledge of languages and, as Nastati says, «the openness of heart», in the sense of the desire to work and solve concrete problems. Countless are the experiments carried out by the community, actually started long time ago: in 30 years they produced a “story” of their experimental work, made up of distinct phases that we cannot analyze here in detail, but will be part of my forthcoming monograph. Even the architecture testifies this process: the biodiversity house was built first, then the San Michele house followed with the proper laboratory, and finally the so called *bugno di paglia* (straw beehive) was built, a sort of very special energetic, sacred and private place dedicated to the regeneration of the seeds²⁴.

Let us now analyze some experiments, in order to seize the work setting adopted in the laboratory. The experiments' purpose is to verify the efficacy of the artifacts production. The tests are documented with photos, data and graphics. Eureka's analysis tools are constructed to cover a 360° view of the environmental conditions²⁵.

In the public documentation we can read in

details the description of some significant experiments: one concerns the reduction of the Atrazine levels in the groundwater²⁶; another concerns the irrigation of vegetables with salty water, thanks to the lowering of Chlorine and Sodium using a product prepared in the laboratory²⁷. Two other experiments, regarding desalination, carried out in Spain and China, are as well interesting, since they show how the Eureka laboratory has a close relationship with the field, for it is precisely on the field that Nastati and his collaborators experience the effectiveness of their prototypes products²⁸. Let's have a closer look to them. The biodynamic farm Gumendi, in Navarra, requested Nastati's intervention in 2006. One of the farms of the property had fertility problems and showed lack of vigor in the plants, due to the presence of salt in the soil. The Eureka Institute studied a specific preparation which was then sprayed on the farm. The results after a single treatment claim: «The vegetation cover of the property revived as a sign of improved soil fertilization and the trees vigorously vegetated again giving signs of recovery, producing an acceptable, good-quality crop; according to the owner this practice enhances the fertility of farms with poor soils, drainage problems and low fertility. The result is still maintained, 9 years later»²⁹.

Another experiment deals with the desalination of soil and lakes in China, and involved the Tianjin City and Huanghai Sea area, in September 2014. Here Eureka experienced a test in collaboration with CRAES (Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences). The results in January 2015, after a single treatment, signaled a positive result, with a successful desalination, lowering of the Chlorine, of the hardness and Ph of the water³⁰. As Nastati relates:

In China there is a salinized area equal to three times Italy, one million hectares of lakes, first they called the Germans, a famous company, they said [...] no, thanks, then the British considered the problem, and in their company there is a Greek, a friend of mine, he says no, we cannot, but call Enzo, and the Chinese say who is him [...]?. Then they say okay, let's this Enzo come [...], and I'm just finishing up a prototype to clean up the salinized Chinese lakes. And on that occasion I said do you have salt problems? They answer Yes – since I knew that – so there I spray something [...] we removed 52% of salt, while usually there is no way to remove 1%. We've got the report that the method is valid (Nastati, Interview, March 2016).

So, we get back to the initial theme, to the case of the Animas River: Eureka Institute group is

called around in the world to intervene in highly problematic and emergency situations, where they act with their homeodynamic method, globally considered as suitable for any situation, but always experienced and adapted to any specific field.

We are quite small but we are all over the world, we are the '118' ['emergency call'] of the environment, when the world's problems are not solvable [...] as we are on the internet [...] In August we'll be in the Andes, at 3000 meters high, with -30 degrees in the winter, we will go in winter, they live in huts, we will go, since we give tolerance to cold and resistance to drought to our plants. I think we can get to -30, I guarantee -10 [...] we will do courses in drought-farming³¹.

Nastati fixed an economic-trade rule in dealing with the potential customers: the first test is free of charge, as a trial of effectiveness; the Institute then let the customers evaluate the products; the next steps and interventions are eventually commoditized and marketed. The comparison between the homeodynamic method and the mainstream scientific practices, recognized by governments and trademarks - and financed by banks and other institutions - is extremely delicate and conflictual. They actually deal with a multifaceted conflict, not only taking place at a market level, but also at an ideological one, in the confrontation with the mainstream scientific thought, and as well with the most institutionalized and renowned branch of Anthroposophy, which specifically dedicates to Biodynamic agriculture. Since the community represents a particular form of Anthroposophical practice (the Homeodynamic form), established on the basis of a partial break with the Biodynamic agriculture, its practices are not totally legitimated; the approval of their products constitutes, in fact, a challenge to the mainstream views. The confrontation with the official science and with the academy is highly required by the community. It has the effect of a public legitimacy, of a confirmation and publicizing of the validity and effectiveness of the homeodynamic method. Institutions are not always willing to cooperate with this kind of agriculture: Nastati testifies that someone offends them, calling them names like "magicians", or "producers of miracles", rather than producers of effective and scientific interventions. Nevertheless the Institute maintains direct and clear collaborations with various academic and scientific institutions, such as the University of Udine and that of Ljubljana. In 2014 Eureka receives the *Prix Yves Lasne* from the *Académie Privée des Sciences* for the work and the results in the field of homeopathy on the plants, and the Institute is appointed Honorary Member of

the same *Académie Française*³². In 2013 Eureka participated in an experiment conducted by Professor Luciano Ceccon (Department of Economics and Statistics of the University of Udine) regarding the Nitrates' content in rucola/arugula cultivated with four different methods: conventional, biological, biological-homeodynamic, hydroponic ones. The four results were compared and confirmed that «the total lower Nitrate levels were found in the arugula cultivated with the homeodynamic method, while the total higher Nitrate levels were found in the hydroponic cultivation method»³³. Through this experimentation the homeodynamic method obtained a scientific and academic validation.

Thus, the anthroposophical system turns out to be a complex narrative and practice, began with Rudolf Steiner and continuing today, that strongly pushes its followers towards a continual experimentation³⁴. The «anxiety of universalism», intended as an eclectic, syncretic, encyclopedic attitude (Corsetti 2003: 163) partially explains this approach highly interested in experimental practices. Corsetti, for instance, characterizes esotericism as a cognitive research, a great thirst for knowledge, experimentation and syncretism of forms and thought. In his studies of history of the esotericism, he writes that the spirit of esotericism is practiced in many fields: science, religion, art, culture (ibidem, 286); he underlines the «concreteness of the erudition» of the esotericists, and the eclecticism of their knowledge³⁵. He continues: «It seems very delicate, at times, to distinguish what is called 'science' from either magic or sorcery to which several theosophists, mystics or enlightened sages will remain faithful, both in terms of practices, as well of theoretical or metaphoric speculation [...]. Several theosophers and *Naturphilosophen* [...] are interested in the natural sciences, medicine, theurgy». Corsetti then lists a long series of figures who dedicated both to esotericism and to physical-mathematical, medical, natural, chemical sciences (Corsetti 2003: 262; *ivi*: 263-265).

A continual experimentation is confirmed as a characteristic still present in the contemporary movements of biodynamic agriculture and of its evolutions, such as the homeodynamic agriculture, under consideration here. Such attitude is preserved over the centuries and millennia, expressed in alchemy, in the wise artifacts of ancient civilizations, in the popular practices and also in the scientific experimentation: a whole that today, to our eyes – Western eyes that have assumed the enormous naturalistic separation between nature/culture – appears contradictory, but, as we have seen, is instead fully assumed in the anthroposophical system.

As I have written elsewhere (Breda 2016), the homeodynamic practitioners not easily explicit the esoteric background of their products, unless they are expressly requested. At the same time, they continually revise and disseminate a broad literature outlining the fundamentals and the methods of the “Science of Spirit” – as often Anthroposophy is internally referred to. This deals with a sort of *deferment* between practices and representations, as Nastati confirmed: the Institute proposes its products and experiment them on the field; it is up to the applicants to evaluate and eventually adopt the method and, if they are interested, to go further into the philosophy underlying it. This means starting from the material/practical level, and later accessing to the philosophical level.

It works as if, in order to self-expose publicly, Anthroposophy was first forced to show its adherence to a naturalistic view, and only later could unveil its immense non-naturalistic background³⁶. The esoteric description in Nastati’s *Water Dossier* is just a small fragment of it. The ground between the terms of this deferment is the huge ethnographic field of anthropology of Anthroposophy.

Conclusions

A close “recursivity” exists between representations and practices, both in Anthroposophy and in homeodynamics. A vast body of knowledge (the “entanglement” of agglomerated knowledge, as we have seen) elaborated in the written representations recognized in esotericism, is turned into practice, seeking useful answers for concrete problems, as those related to the Climate Change. Nastati’s interpretation of ‘water’ appears suitable, consistent, and compatible with the practical answers given today to the multiple quandaries regarding water.

In turn, these current problems are interpreted according to the anthroposophical concepts and their related linguistic-narrative rhetoric. The recursivity between representations and practices is always sought and rebuilt by anthroposophists in the contemporary world. In this consists the anthroposophical contemporary movement, with all its branches, being the homeodynamic a particular one. The continuous hermeneutical narrative, as well as the continuous revision of practices – nowadays related to the Climate Change – is realized in urgent and immediately globalized ways.

The water issue is a good example of this procedure. Polluted and devitalized, water becomes the subject of anthroposophical-homeodynamic practices of cleaning-up and revitalization. Such accomplishments are possible because the philosophical

framework of reference establishes the concepts (e.g.: what is meant by the concept of “life”), the syntax, and the narratives that allow a wide variety of experimentations³⁷.

Thus, the products are created without the need for a public explanation of their philosophical constituents. Practices, the experimental work of the homeodynamic community, are the means through which Anthroposophy exists in the world, concretely and historically coping with it. Representations and practices “defer” one from the other: constituted on multiple and asymmetrical tracks³⁸, they run one after the other, but do not overlap. Between representations and practices, are at stake the relationships between the analogistic, cosmocentric anthroposophical worldview, and a dominant naturalistic vision, within which Anthroposophy lives in a sort of “karstic” form³⁹.

To analyze what kind of knowledge is intertwined into the anthroposophical performances is a step towards the integration of different sciences (Capra, Luisi 2014). Anthroposophy is a kind of practical philosophy with reformist intents, not yet totally legitimized as a form of culture, for instance at the same level as are the forms of Local or Indigenous Knowledge. Yet, an access bridge to it is still missing. I intend to built it by the Anthropology of Anthroposophy (Breda 2016), also confirming that it can play an important role in the Anthropocene framework studies. If it is conceivable, as the Anthropocene asks, the setting up of a discussion table allowing the convergence of all the sciences that can help to resolve the problem of the Global Warming, we can assume that Anthroposophy could and should be there. The laboratory practices dealing with the water carried out by the homeodynamics experiments show indeed that an anthroposophical movement is currently confronting with the official and academic science, already activated on the theme of the Climate Change.

The exclusion of esotericism from the academy, as a form of knowledge “rejected” by the Western culture (Hanegraaff 2013), must be rethought, also in view of the global responses that Anthroposophy is able to provide, and already offers, to the ongoing ecological problems.

Notes

¹ Anthroposophy was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1912, and developed since then all over the world. For a general framework see <https://www.rudolfsteiner.it/link.php>; for the archive of literature see <http://www>.

rsarchive.org/; about Anthropology of Anthroposophy, I refer to my publications (Breda 2015, 2016).

² The reflections on anthropology and climate change could be developed in many directions (see Bibliography), but this is not the purpose of this contribution. For developments in different directions, please refer to other recent international works, to some of which the curators participated. In 2014 A.A.A. published the Report «Changing the Atmosphere. Anthropology and Climate Change», urging the academic anthropology to actively engage in the Climate Change issue. Other important initiatives are the A.A.A. Congress 2015 Anthropology and Environment Society, the EHESS Laboratory on the Anthropocene, the Conference Anthropology, Weather and Climate Change by the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, June 2016, to which the curators of this volume participated with a panel on Water and Climate Change titled Managing Global Water. Ethnography of Emerging Practices in the Anthropocene. In 2016 we presented the panel Anthropology and Climate Change at the SIAA International Conference- Trento 2016; in 2015 we participated in the contest for a Ministerial funding PRIN, with a project titled Antropologia e cambiamenti climatici, positively assessed, not funded.

³ I refer to my previous works (Breda 2015, 2016) where I have described the community *La Nuova Terra* (The New Earth), founded by the leader Enzo Nastati at Codroipo (Udine, Italy) and to the methodology I used in my field research: <http://ojs.unica.it/index.php/anuac/issue/view/71>.

⁴ See here the paragraph *In the laboratory. Other practices*.

⁵ Anthroposophy, as a derivation of Theosophy, can be considered a practical philosophy constituted in the esotericism route. For this term and for a first profile I refer to Breda (2016), and for a historical and scientific framework see the comprehensive analyses of Corsetti (2003) and Hanegraaff (2013). Currently, in my opinion, the most relevant studies on Anthroposophic culture and its history are those by Choné (2009). I wish to thank her for the shared assessments, and for her advice and encouragement to carry my research forward.

⁶ See: <https://biodynamicsbda.wordpress.com/2013/05/21/enzo-nastati-coming-to-north-america/>.

⁷ “Homeodynamic agriculture” means a homeodynamic treatment process applied to plants, water, and soils.

⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/how-did-august-2015-release-gold-king-mine-happen>. See some images at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usepagov/sets/72157654862884644>

⁹ This episode shows how the homeodynamic anthroposophist recognizes on an equal basis the spirituality of the native people, and collaborates with them in the name of a common cosmic and spiritual vision of life (Capra, Luisi 2014).

¹⁰ <https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine>; <http://sjbhd.org/public-health-news/animas-River-health-updates/> For some critical updates see: <http://www.coloradoindependent.com/159459/the-color-of-dread-the-animas-river-runs-yellow-again>.

¹¹ In the chapter devoted to the Laboratory we will see how the community carries out experimentations.

¹² They are contacted through internet sources or by word of mouth.

¹³ On the replacement of the concept of “culture” with that of “spirit”, see Descola (2013: 300), Breda (2016).

¹⁴ Corsetti [1992] (2003: 162-164) explains how universalism would also mean eclecticism, encyclopedism, and syncretism, «eager to open up to all sources of knowledge» (Corsetti 2003: 163). This attitude would explain the boost to scientific experimentation and the expansion of knowledge that Anthroposophy also expresses in the contemporary practice, as we will see here, in the section dedicated to the Laboratory.

¹⁵ Hastrup (2011), in *Waterworlds Project, Natural environmental disasters and social resilience in anthropological perspective*, http://waterworlds.ku.dk/pdf/mid_term_report_2011.pdf. See also: Hastrup, Hastrup 2015.

¹⁶ Researches Series, undated, preceding 2013.

¹⁷ Hanegraaff (2013), one of the most eminent scholars in the history of esotericism, illustrates the intertwining of knowledge, historically constituted from the Classical Greece, through the Middle Age, up to the flourishing of esotericism in the Renaissance.

¹⁸ The term “etheric” regards «a scope of reality [...] situated between the physical and the animic (spheres). [...] ‘Life’ is the region of the etheric: that is the foundation of the living manifestations in the plant, animal and human. [...] Life is a supra-sensible reality» (Marti 2001:15-16). Such definition was developed by Ernst Marti (2001), an anthroposophist who elaborated the discussion on the concept of *etheric* all along his life. Such elaboration constitutes a common inspiration both for many anthroposophists and for Nastati. The anthroposophical concept of “etheric” can be approximately compared to the not anthroposophical concepts of ch’i, prana, orgone, vril, or morphogenetic fields (cfr. Schiller Files

<https://books.google.it/books?id=NJicZHSFIycC&pg=RA1-PA3&dq=marti+ernst+etheric&hl=it&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi5-aWWkufRAhUsLsAKHcXWBw-gQ6AEIzAB#v=snippet&q=ch%27i&f=false>.

¹⁹ In the anthroposophical system, the relationship between the water and the sounds is particularly tight, as explained by Marti (2001).

²⁰ They are in fact the same definitions that homeodynamics use to identify itself.

²¹ An anthropological attention to this community laboratory is inspired by Science Studies, which show science in the act of being built, rather than as a 'ready made' product. As Houdart writes, laboratories are spaces of production and intense transformation; they invite us to study the sited practices rather than their representations, the experiments rather than the protocols, the communities of practice rather than the paradigms, the little stories rather than large explanations. It is with this kind of interest that I investigate the laboratory activities of the homeodynamic community (see Houdart, in Houdart, Olivier 2011: 193-194; see also Houdart 2007).

²² A survey of the experiments here conducted is at: <http://arcadellavita.it/files/istituto-eureka---dossier-disinquinamento-22-11-2013.pdf>. It is possible to identify areas, places, institutions, and companies where the laboratory intervened. The obtained results are reported, testifying all the experiences of successful resolution of the problems for which the intervention was requested. All the experimental activity can be seen in this report: <http://arcadellavita.it/files/Eureka---ITA---21-11-2013-completo.PDF>

²³ An internal hierarchy exists in the laboratory, based on tasks, skills and responsibilities of the different community members.

²⁴ In my field research I did not have access yet to this building.

²⁵ The methods are shown here: <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/metodi-di-indagine/>. They are classified as follows: Measuring ORP (Redox), Photoluminescence, Sensitive Crystallization, Magnetic Resonance Analyzer, GDV (Gas Discharge Visualization), Spectrophotometer, Chemical and Biological Analysis. Yet it is clear that the discourse on the applied method, from a "homeodynamic" definition to a "Farming of life" or, as in other documents, "Agriculture of love", it is much broader, encompassing all the esoteric part that cannot be evident in the methods' list.

²⁶ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/atrazina/>

²⁷ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Dossier-Irrigazione-Acqua-Salmastra.pdf>

²⁸ Nastati actually uses the word "prototype" for the laboratory products.

²⁹ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/desalificazione-dei-terreni/>

³⁰ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/desalificazione-dei-terreni/>

³¹ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/video/>

³² <http://arcadellavita.it/files/Articolo-premiazione-AL-BIOS-50.pdf>

<http://www.acadprivsciences.fr/en/>

<http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/video/>

³³ <http://www.dimensione-eureka.it/nitrati-in-rucola-coltivata/>

³⁴ The laboratory activity is included in the large topic of AS's relationship with Science, recognized and discussed at the time by Rudolf Steiner. In this interesting excerpt by *The Schiller file* we can read: «Anthroposophy has manifold roots in natural science. Rudolf Steiner never tired of saying that the development of scientific awareness had given people the possibility of freedom, that the way to cognizing the spiritual world is based on the natural scientific attitude, and that certainty of such knowledge is comparable to the certainty found in mathematics and natural science. The Schiller File, for instance, is an important resource for those who wish to better understand how to approach and practice natural science from the perspective of spiritual science. Consequently, in 1920, a special institute was established with departments for physics and biology in Stuttgart. Though the institute eventually closed, due to financial difficulties, in 1926 on the initiative of Guenther Wachsmuth, Paul Eugen Schiller took most of the materials to Dornach. There, he set up a simple physics laboratory where he worked for several years. [...]» (in: http://www.rudolfsteinerpress.com/pages/viewbook.php?isbn_in=9780880107204). *The Schiller file* describes natural scientific research by scientists working at the Goetheanum and following suggestions from Rudolf Steiner.

³⁵ «Faced with the disembodiment of intelligence, taxonomies, conglomerates of all sorts, banalizations and wild consumption, the discipline and perfectionism that accompany the study of esotericism are a guarantee of true tolerance. Bastions, at a time, against indolence, laziness and ridicule, they can testify in favour of a true reconciliation of the human being with his environment» (Cor-

setti 2003: 287). On the problem of the ridicule, in the study of esoteric objects, see the article de Viktor Stoczkowski, 2001. I thank Filippo Zerilli for suggesting this lecture.

³⁶ An attitude well understandable once acknowledged the history of marginalization and persecution perpetrated against Western esotericism (Corsetti 2003).

³⁷ To go into details: Anthroposophy establishes the existence (from above) of “elemental beings” that are to be guided to the appropriate behaviour, and (from below) of a “cosmos” made of constellations and planets constituting a reservoir of life and vitality to which we can draw from, for the Earth’s survival. The homeodynamic work involves a constant dialogue with these two levels (a grounded, and a cosmic one), a constantly open relationship with all the beings, forces, forms and spirits that inhabit them. Thus the homeodynamic dialogue produces spiritual-material proceedings (their laboratory products) capable -according with needs and emergencies - to remove/neutralize the negative elements (pollutants, salts etc.), or to enrich the vital elements for water, soils, or plants. The pages 18-20 of Nastati’s text – *Water Dossier* – specially examine the issue of the “purification” and “revitalization” of water, yet the discussion is spread throughout the whole text.

³⁸ For a broader framing of the issue, referring to my analysis of Anthroposophy as an Analogism in a “karstic” relationship with Naturalism (Breda 2016), I recall here that Anthroposophy (and therefore the homeodynamic method) lives and practices an “asymmetrical double track”, recognizing the correctness of the scientific principles (applicable to the physical world), but limiting and confining them, yet afterward expanding them (Marti 2001) by taking in charge other multiple cosmic dimensions (those defined etheric, animic, and spiritual), as we have seen above.

³⁹ A metaphor taken from geographical Karst topography, namely: appearing and disappearing, prosecuting its life at times hidden or concealed, in visible and invisible traits.

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Picture 1: Animas River pollution, August 2015

Dossier Acqua

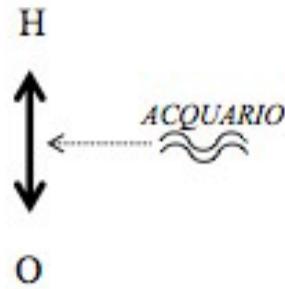
Un esempio molto particolare di vitalizzazione dell'acqua lo possiamo trovare in Perù presso la cittadina di Cantayo.

Qui le popolazioni Inca hanno realizzato qualcosa di incredibile. Una successione continua di ben 13 pozzi a spirale in modo di portare forze cosmiche alla vena d'acqua che scorre sul fondo. Questi pozzi hanno diametro di circa 15 metri e sono uno di seguito all'altro: ciò ci aiuta a comprendere che non sono stati realizzati per prelevare l'acqua, infatti non ha alcun senso realizzare un pozzo dopo l'altro di quelle dimensioni (inoltre ci sono due "coppie" di pozzi per così dire "siamesi"!).

Uno dei pozzi a spirale

La sequenza dei pozzi a spirale

Picture 2: Peru, Spiral wells (Nastati, *Dossier acqua*, sd: 14)



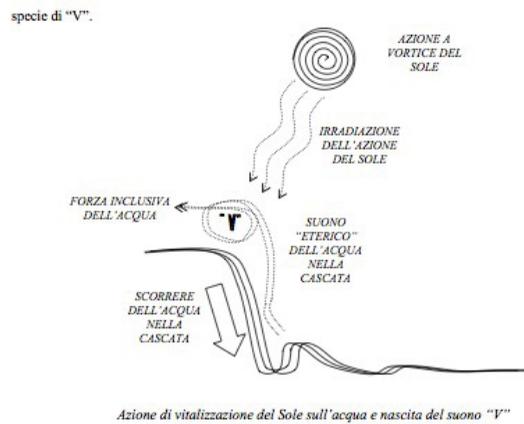
La formazione dell'acqua e l'azione catalizzatrice dell'Acquario

Picture 3: The Aquarium constellation (Nastati, *Dossier Acqua*, sd: 7)



La croce zodiacale della proteina

Picture 4: Life/Death and Nitrogen/Hydrogen cross (Nastati, *Dossier acqua*, sd: 8)



Azione di vitalizzazione del Sole sull'acqua e nascita del suono "V"

Picture 5: Water's sounds (Nastati, *Dossier acqua*, sd: 28)



Picture 6a: The straw bunch



Picture 6b: Sensitive crystallization in the Laboratory



Picture 7a: Tunnel experiments at La Nuova Terra Ecovillage



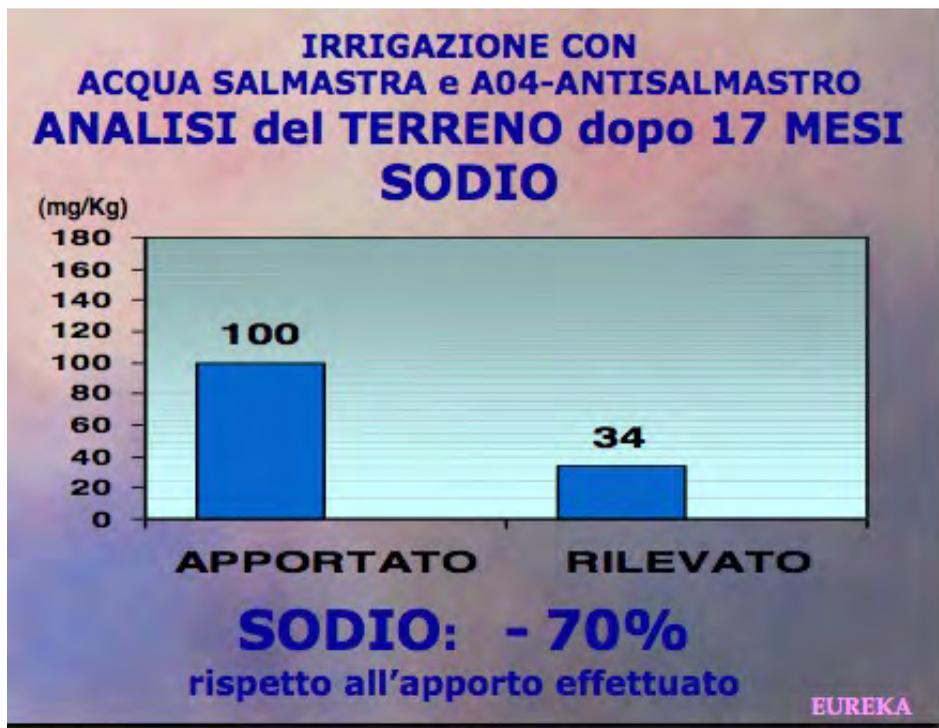
Picture 7b: Tunnel experiments at La Nuova Terra Ecovillage



Picture 8: Field experiments at La Nuova Terra Ecovillage



Picture 9: Spain, presence of salt in the soil, experimentation by Enzo Nastati



Picture 10: Desalination Treatment