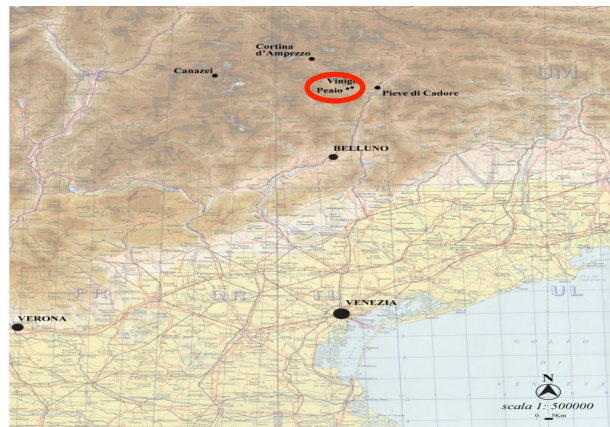


## Italy (Vinigo, Dolomites, Italian Alps).

Vinigo with an elevation of 1,025m (3,363 feet) is one of the oldest settlements in the Ladin area (*Vinego Paes Laden*) in the Dolomites, which have been included in the Unesco World Heritage List in 2009 (Seville, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009), when nine areas have been designated as a 'Serial Heritage Site.' Although the Dolomites have been recognized as the heritage of humanity, the role of local inhabitants is neglected in the Declaration, as several authors have highlighted, stressing the underlining assumption of a rigid boundary between natural space and human space. The geographer Mauro Varotto remarks that such

“little or no consideration of the role of the people and local communities appears all the more jarring, even in the face of the fact that the legal ownership of the Unesco heritage in some cases belongs to the people themselves, through the *regolieri* institutions and ASUC (Amministrazioni Separate Usi Civici). During the nomination process, the promoters stressed the difficulty to make understanding the positive role of the human presence in preserving the same environment, thanks to the management systems developed by a secular agro-pastoral civilization (Guichonnet 1986), of which one has become less and less aware, since the same local society has embraced new models of development and behavior (2012a: 288).”

Cesare Lasen of the Fondazione Dolomiti-Dolomiten-Dolomites-Dolomitis Unesco clarifies that the nine sites have been recognized on the basis of two criteria: aesthetic-landscape and geologic-geomorphologic components. The Italian dossier included two further criteria, the biological-naturalistic and ecological-succession components, however, “for these last two aspects, it was impossible to demonstrate their uniqueness, a fundamental requirement together with that of integrity.”



**Figure 1:** The Fieldsite: Vinigo in the Veneto Dolomites.

Vinigo is included in the area called Cadore, an historical region which borders Austria. The nearest town is Vodo, in the Boite Valley, which is home to the municipality which also includes Peaio and Vinigo. The village lies between two creeks: the Rudan (to the West) and the Ruinian (to the East), the latter was in the past home to three windmills. Vinighesi (as local people are called) say that Rudan (*ru*=creek) means “*torrente/fa danno*” ‘creek/makes damage,’ while Ruinian means “*torrente/fa rumore, e non fa danno*” ‘creek/makes noise and not damage.’ Even the most recent event of a *roa* ‘landslide’ in the area (August 2015) caused by heavy rain, has provided evidence that

this seems to be the case. The Rudan is a tributary of the Boite, a right tributary of the Piave, a river that flows entirely in the Veneto Region and one of the most artificial waterways in Europe (creeks and rivers harnessed, artificial lakes, dams). Both creeks originate in the Antelao (the second highest peak in the Dolomites, 3,234 m), which is located to the north of the village. The other imposing mountain (to the west) is the Pelmo, 3,168 m, locally named *el caregon del Padreterno* ‘the throne of God.’ (Figure 2). Both mountains are relevant to the life of the people of Vinigo and in their daily talk they often make reference to them. To the south lies Mt. Rite (2,160 m). and to the east Col Maò (1,470 m).



**Figure 2:** The Pelmo seen from Vinigo, November 2014 (Photo © A. Paini).

Vinigo is connected to the rest of Cadore by a paved road. One of our interviewers recalled when in the past people from Vinigo would be preparing to get off the bus in Peaio and the bus driver would announce in an ironic way: “For Vinigo. You change here: Eagle service.” In time of heavy snow the road with a steep slope and sharp turns is closed as was the case for the unexpected snow storm at the end of January/early February 2014: the village remained isolated, cut off from electricity for 48 hours, and cell phones became useless.

Analyzing the relevant issues concerning contemporary Alpine spaces, Varotto underlines the role of “intermediate spaces that act as buffers between protected areas and areas of strong touristic and agro-industrial development” (2012b: 325). Vinigo could be considered one of such intermediate spaces.

In the first half of the XX century Vinigo was entirely surrounded by cultivated fields: wheat, rye, corn, potatoes, barley, and hemp. A cultivated landscape which is still alive in people’s memory and documented by old photographs. Then meadows took over in order to produce hay to feed the cattle. Nowadays no local family raises cows nor pigs and fields are fallow. “Everyone had animals: cows, goats and also pigs” recalls Riccarda. And Mario adds: few families, “the more wealthy ones,” also had one or two horses. As Dario says: “*stalla e bosco*” ‘stable and woodland’, from these two sources came what you needed to survive. As the *bosco* ‘woodland’ is no longer maintained and used for woodcutting, it is expanding and encroaching the village. Alps are an “exceptional wealth of biodiversity compared to the entire European continent” (Lasen 2012: 273). The

spread of the woodland involves a loss of such biodiversity (Varotto 2012a). Retreating glaciers are also participating in creating an unfamiliar landscape in the area.

Until the 60s/70s Vinighesi derived their main source of livelihood from agriculture, breeding and timber. Itinerant activities such as *calderai* ‘coppersmiths’ and *vetrai* ‘glaziers’ were added as an essential source of income. The village has felt the dramatic impact of different waves of emigration in the 1900s. In some cases they were seasonal movements, in others (particularly between the two World Wars) migration was definitive and permanent (e.g. to USA, Argentina). People also emigrated to Germany, Holland and the former Czechoslovakia to be ice cream makers. However, they always make a point in stressing that they left to be *gelatieri* ‘ice cream makers’ and not *gelatai* ‘ice cream sellers.’

Vinighesi of a certain age remember the *colonie di vacanza* ‘holiday camps’ that animated the village in the summer time during the fifties and early sixties. For example, la Locanda dal Gobbo, the inn which Emma Pivrotto opened in 1957 and was in business for almost thirty years, hosted guests in rented rooms in the village, a forerunner of the “*albergo diffuso*” ‘diffused hotel,’ as one of our interlocutors put it. As her daughter recalls: “Parents came to visit their children and then they used to come back bringing their friends.” People have very fond memories of that period. The arrival of young people, often from the cities, animated the life of the village during the summer; it allowed to make new acquaintances, which sometimes turned into long-lasting friendships, to find out about things and practices of the city, and for families was a way to get some revenues. People remember when during those summers their parents made them and their siblings give up their bedroom in order to use it to host guests. Ettore, in his mid-seventies, adds that for *ferragosto* ‘August 15’ even the barns were used to accommodate guests.

When *occhialerie* ‘manufacturers of glasses’ opened in the area in the late 1960s, these factories provided a major source of income for many families from Vinigo. To get a better understanding of the importance of this industry, one needs to be reminded that 80% of the glasses made in Italy are produced in Cadore. Yet depopulation has continued; today the village has only 115 inhabitants (58 males and 57 females) compared to 359 in 1929; and during winter time they are down to less than 100 residents. Some houses are abandoned, some have become *seconde case* ‘vacation homes.’ The archival data kept in the town hall show that in the early 1900s Vinigo had 177 heads of families. When we consider that the average family was made up of 4 or 5 people, we get an idea of the strong impact of depopulation. The last grocery store closed its doors in December 2013, a few months after our first fieldwork. In the past, there were 5 *osterie* ‘family restaurants’ and a restaurant. Today none survive. One element stressed by several interviewees as characterizing the Cadore, is that in the past both boys and girls went to primary school. “The school in Cadore was ahead of the school of the plain” says Enrica, born in the early fifties. A consideration backed by historical studies.