

Grazia Calabrò, Sonia Gambino, and Olimpia State (Eds.)

Identity, Sustainability, and Resilience: Paradigms for Territorial Tourism Development



Geographies *of the*
Anthropocene

OPEN
ACCESS 
PEER-REVIEWED
SERIES

IL Sileno
Edizioni

ISSN 2611-3171

Identity, Sustainability, and Resilience: Paradigms for Territorial Tourism Development

Grazia Calabrò, Sonia Gambino, and Olimpia State (Eds.)

is a collective volume of the Open Access and peer-reviewed series
“Geographies of the Anthropocene” published by Il Sileno Edizioni

www.ilsileno.it/



Cover: Michela Damiano

Copyright © 2025 by Il Sileno Edizioni

International Scientific Publisher, VAT 03716380781

Via Piave, 3/A, 87035 - Lago (CS), Italy, e-mail: ilsilenoedizioni@gmail.com

This work is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - No derivative 4.0 International License.



The work, including all its parts, is protected by copyright law. The user at the time of downloading the work accepts all the conditions of the license to use the work, provided and communicated on the website

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

ISBN 979-12-82557-01-6



Geographies *of the* Anthropocene

OPEN
ACCESS



PEER-REVIEWED
SERIES

ISSN 2611-3171

Geographies of the Anthropocene

Open Access and Peer-Reviewed series

Editor-In-Chief: Francesco De Pascale (Department of Human and Social Sciences, eCampus University, Italy).

Associate Editors: Salvatore Cannizzaro (Department of Humanities, University of Catania, Italy); Sebastiano D'Amico (Head of Department of Geosciences, University of Malta, Malta); Fausto Marincioni (Department of Life and Environmental Sciences, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Italy), Leonardo Mercatanti (Department of Culture and Society, University of Palermo, Italy); Francesco Muto (Department of Biology, Ecology and Earth Sciences, University of Calabria, Italy), Charles Travis (School of Histories and Humanities, Trinity College Dublin; University of Texas, Arlington, U.S.A.); Eleonora Guadagno (Department of Human and Social Sciences, eCampus University, Italy).

Editorial Board: Mohamed Abioui (Ibn Zohr University, Morocco), Valentina Castronuovo (Italian National Research Council – Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development, Italy); Andrea Cerase (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy), Valeria Dattilo (University “G. D’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara, Italy), Lorenzo D’Agostino (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, U.S.A.); Dante Di Matteo (University E-Campus, Italy); Jonathan Gómez Cantero (Departamento de Meteorología de Castilla-La Mancha Media, Spain); Davide Mastroianni (University of Siena, Italy), Giovanni Messina (University of Messina, Italy), Joan Rossello Geli (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain), Gaetano Sabato (University of Palermo, Italy), Carmine Vacca (University of Calabria, Italy), Nikoleta Zampaki (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece), Alessandra Colocci (University of Brescia, Italy).

International Scientific Board: Marie-Theres Albert (UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies, University of Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany), David Alexander (University College London, England), Lina Maria Calandra (University of L'Aquila, Italy); Salvatore Cannizzaro (University of Catania, Italy), Fabio Carnelli (EURAC Research, Bolzano, Italy); Carlo Colloca (University of Catania, Italy), Gian Luigi Corinto (University of Macerata, Italy), Girolamo Cusimano (University of Palermo, Italy), Bharat Dahiya (Director, Research Center for Integrated Sustainable Development, College of Interdisciplinary Studies Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand); Sebastiano D'Amico (University of Malta, Malta), Armida de La Garza (University College Cork, Ireland), Elena Dell'Agnese (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy; Vice President of IGU), Piero Farabollini (University of Camerino, Italy), Massimiliano Fazzini (University of Camerino; University of Ferrara, Italy; Chair of the "Climate Risk" Area of the Italian Society of Environmental Geology); Giuseppe Forino (Bangor University, Wales, UK), Virginia García Acosta (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, CIESAS, México); Cristiano Giorda (University of Turin, Italy), Giovanni Gugg (LESC, Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, CNRS – Université Paris-Nanterre, France), Luca Jourdan (University of Bologna, Italy), Francesca Romana Lugerì (ISPRA, University of Camerino, Italy), Cary J. Mock (University of South Carolina, U.S.A.; Member of IGU Commission on Hazard and Risk), Enrico Nicosia (University of Messina, Italy); Gilberto Pambianchi (University of Camerino, Italy), Silvia Peppoloni (Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Italy; Secretary General of IAPG; Councillor of IUGS), Isabel Maria Cogumbreiro Estrela Rego (University of the Azores, Portugal), Andrea Riggio (University of Cassino and Southern Lazio, Italy), Jean-Claude Roger (University of Maryland, College Park, U.S.A.; Terrestrial Information Systems Laboratory, Code 619, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, U.S.A.); Vito Teti (University of Calabria, Italy), Bruno Vecchio (University of Florence, Italy), Masumi Zaiki (Seikei University, Japan; Secretary of IGU Commission on Hazard and Risk).

Editorial Assistant, Graphic Project and Layout Design: Michela Damiano.

Website: www.ilsileno.it/geographiesoftheanthropocene;

The book series *Geographies of the Anthropocene*, published by Il Sileno Edizioni International Publisher in collaboration with the GeoRiskEcoLab – Geography, Risks, Ecologies Research Centre of the Department of Human and Social Sciences at the University eCampus, explores the transformative processes characterising the Anthropocene epoch through the diverse perspectives of geoscientists and scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

The series promotes dialogue across Geosciences, Geography, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology of Environment and Territory, Psychology, Economics, Environmental Humanities and related disciplines, fostering an integrated and transdisciplinary approach to contemporary environmental challenges.

Particular attention is devoted to the contribution of the Environmental Humanities and Disaster Studies, whose multiple and intersecting perspectives help illuminate both the cultures shaped by the Anthropocene and the cultural frameworks through which the Anthropocene itself is interpreted. By analysing how humans perceive, narrate and respond to environmental transformations and disasters, the series aims to deepen critical understanding of the complex interactions between society and the geosphere, addressing issues such as climate change, natural hazards, sustainability, resource management and territorial vulnerability within a broader cultural and ethical horizon.

The book series *Geographies of the Anthropocene* publishes online volumes, both collective volumes and monographs, which are set in the perspective of providing reflections, work materials and experimentation in the fields of research and education about the new geographies of the Anthropocene.

Geographies of the Anthropocene encourages proposals that address one or more themes, including case studies, but welcome all volumes related to the interdisciplinary context of the Anthropocene.

Published volumes are subject to a review process (double-blind peer review) to ensure their scientific rigor.

The volume proposals can be presented in English, Italian, French or Spanish.

The choice of digital Open Access format is coherent with the flexible structure of the series, in order to facilitate the direct accessibility and usability by both authors and readers.

Normally, two collective volumes are published each year, in the months of April/May and November/December. Usually, the collective volumes are linked to Calls for Book Chapters (proposed by scholars identified by the editors and the editorial board), which are disseminated in the scientific community at least one year before the publication of each related volume.

The monographic volumes are published without precise timing, but according to the proposals submitted during the year.



eCAMPUS
UNIVERSITÀ

GeoRisk
Ecolab

Centro Ricerca
Geography, Risks, Ecologies

Contents

<i>FOREWORD</i>	28
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	32

SECTION 1: IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

<i>1. Cultural heritage as a value element in tourist attraction in Petra</i>	36
--	-----------

Sonia Gambino

• Abstract	36
• 1. Petra: an impressive historical and artistic heritage	38
• 2. The exceptional universal value of Petra	43
• 3. Tourism-related effects and constant geopolitical instability	46
• 4. Conclusions	49
• References	50
• Sitography	53

2. Agricultural Heritage Systems and Tourism Development in Mount Etna's Volcanic Landscape

55

*Antonio Licastro, Carlotta D'Alessandro,
Andrea Morana, Katarzyna Szopik-Depczyńska,
Roberta Arbolino, Giuseppe Ioppolo*

• Abstract	55
• 1. Introduction	57
• 2. Context and Conceptual Framework	59
• 3. Findings	63
3.1 Agricultural Resources Leveraged for Tourism	63
3.2 Stakeholder Ecosystem	63
3.3 Governance Structures	66
3.4 Integration Mechanisms	66
• 4. Discussions	68
4.1 Success Factors for Integration	68
4.2 Challenges and Barriers	69
4.3 Implications for Policy and Practice	70
• 5. Conclusion	72
• Acknowledgments	73
• References	74

**3. *In search of Sicilian gastronomic identity:
a sociolinguistic and discursive journey
through French-speaking travel blogs*** **84**

Loredana Trovato

• Abstract	84
• 1. Introduction	85
• 2. Corpus and methodology	88
• 3. Use of the adjective typique	89
• 4. Tradition: A User's Guide	97
• 5. Conclusion... Typical or Traditional?	102
• References	103
• Websites and blogs cited	104

**4. *Cultural tourism and heritage management
in the Aeolian Islands: UNESCO recognition
as a resource for territorial sustainability*** **108**

Giuseppe Rombo

• Abstract	108
------------	-----

• 1. Introduction	109
• 2. Theoretical background	111
2.1 The side effects of UNESCO	112
• 3. The UNESCO case of the Aeolian Islands: between criticality and visibility	115
• 4. Results and discussion	119
• 5. Conclusion	122
• Funding	123
• References	124

SECTION 2: TOURISM IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

5. <i>Local communities and Their Impact on Natural Landscape: Case Study of Beclean and Its surroundings</i>	130
--	------------

Cristina-Maria Roman

• Abstract	130
• 1. Introduction	131
• 2. Geographical Position of Bistrița-Năsăud County	133
2.1. Beclean: Urban Area and Local Geography	133
• 3. History of Beclean and Surroundings	135
• 4. Natural Resources and Their Importance for the Community	138
• 5. Economic activities	140
5.1. Historic Economic Activities in Beclean	140
• 6. The Cultural Heritage of Beclean	144
6.1. Ethnic Structure	144
6.2. Events and Cultural Institutions in Beclean	145
• 7. Discussions	148
7.1. Quantitative Environmental Indicators	148
7.2. The Numeric Evolution of Population in Beclean	152
7.3. Indicators for Assessing the Quality of life in Beclean	153
7.4. Impact of Human Activities on the Natural Landscape	154
» 7.4.1. Current Environmental Challenges in Beclean and Surrounding Areas	154
7.5 Measures and Methods for Environmental Reconversion	155
• 8. Conclusion	158
• Acknowledgement	158
• References	159

**6. *Tourism Sustainability Indicators System
and its Application to the Urban Context
in Mozambique***

164

Pelágio Maxilhaieie, Isequiel Alcoleite

• Abstract	164
• 1. Introduction	166
• 2. Literature Review	168
• 3. Materials and Methods	171
3.1 Case Study	171
3.2 SISAT Evaluation Procedure	173
3.3 Delphi Method	173
• 4. Results	177
• 5. Discussion	181
• 6. Conclusion	183
• References	185
• Funding Sources	188

7. Mountain Territories and Climate Change: Beyond Tourism Monocultures and Toward Post-Touristic Resilience **190**

Giulia Vincenti

• Abstract	190
• 1. Introduction: Mountains, Margins, and the Climate Crisis	191
1.1 Methodological Note	193
• 2. The Winter Tourism Crisis and Territorial Vulnerability	194
• 3. Beyond Tourism: Territorial Resilience and the Post-Touristic Approach	197
• 4. Towards Integrated Strategies for the Post-Tourism Transition	199
• 5. Resilience as a Cultural and Political Transition	201
• 6. Conclusions	204
• References	207

**8. *Urban Symbols and Ecotourism:
Cross-Cultural Strategies Revitalizing Local
Identities and Resilient Landscapes in Bekaa
(Lebanon) and Garfagnana (Italy)*** **210**

Rim Mourtada

• Abstract	210
• 1. Introduction	211
• 2. Theoretical Framework	213
2.1 Urban Symbols: Pillars of Spatial Identity	213
2.2 Resilient Landscape Planning and Community-Based Ecotourism	214
• 3. Methodology and Comparative Framework	216
3.1 Case Study Justification	216
3.2 Data Collection Tools	217
3.3 Analytical Approach	218
• 4. Case Study-1: Ecotourism in the Bekaa, Socio-Cultural Resilience and Symbolic Landscape in Hermel, Taanayel, and Rachaya	219
4.1 Hermel: The Revitalization of Riverine and Highland Symbols	220
4.2 Taanayel: Agroecology, Monastic Stewardship, and Landscape Pedagogy	222

4.3 Rachaya: Craft Heritage, Memory, and the Politics of Place	224
• 5. Case study-2: Rural Tourism in Garfagnana, Italy, Institutional Frameworks for Heritage-Led Revitalization	227
5.1 Spatio-Cultural Identity and Tourism Governance	227
5.2 Heritage Branding and Territorial Marketing	228
5.3 Symbolic Landscapes, EcoMuseums and Slow Tourism	229
• 6. Comparative Discussion:	230
6.1 Reciprocal Learning and Symbolic Strategy in Peripheral Ecotourism	230
6.2 Policy Implications for Resilient Landscape Planning and Ecotourism	232
• 7. Conclusion: Towards Situated Models of Resilient and Inclusive Ecotourism	234
7.1 Hybrid planning strategies:	235
7.2 Socio-culturally-rooted development:	235
7.3 Regional vision and scaling through intersections:	236
• References	237

9. *The need for a hybrid legal framework to tackle all the issues surrounding sustainable tourism* **243**

Lisa Pinamonti

• Abstract	243
• 1. Introduction	244
• 2. Hard Law: A Binding Framework for Responsible Tourism	248
2.1 General regulatory framework	248
2.2 Combating over-tourism	248
2.3 Protecting natural areas	249
2.4 Illustration: managing cruise tourism	250
• 3. Soft Law: Incentivizing Instruments to Support Transition	252
3.1 Codes of conduct and recommendation	252
3.2 Label signs	254
• 4. Synergy Between Hard and Soft Law	258
4.1 The training requirement	258
4.2 Financial incentive tools	258
4.3 Experimentation	259
4.4 The social and solidarity economy as support for sustainable tourism	259
• 5. Conclusion	260
• Aknowledgements	260
• References	261

SECTION 3:

TOURISM: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

10. *Actors in the cultural and creative sector in the island of Mozambique: experiences, challenges and opportunities* **267**

*Isequiel Alcoleite, Pelágio Maxlhaieie,
Tomás Cristóvão, Aiúba Ali Aiuba*

• Abstract	267
• 1. Introduction	269
• 2. Materials and Methods	271
2.1. Research Design	271
2.2. Area of study	271
2.3. Data collection	273
• 3. Culture and creativity as strategic resources	274
• 4. The Island of Mozambique as a cultural ecosystem	276
• 5. Community tourism: opportunities and ethical challenges	279

• 6. Discussion	282
6.1. The island of Mozambique as a living cultural ecosystem	282
6.2. Cultural and creative industries as mediators of heritage and development	282
6.3. Community-based tourism: between empowerment and ethical risk	283
• References	285

11. *Yak Farming: A Symphony of Resilience and Resourcefulness for Highland Rural Communities in China and Pakistan* **291**

Muhammad Ammad Khan

• Abstract	291
• 1. Introduction	293
1.1 The Present Study	294
• 2. Methodology	296
• 3. Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Approach	297
• 4. Literature Review	299
4.1 Yak Farming in China	299
4.2 Yak Farming in Pakistan	302

• 5. Comparative Insights	306
• 6. Conclusion and Recommendations	309
• References	311

12. “Sotto il sole di Riccione”: Between heritagization and overtourism **322**

Eleonora Guadagno, Gennaro Lettieri

• Abstract	322
• 1. Introduction	323
• 2. The context of the research, from “paradox” to “identity”	326
• 3. (Over)tourism and heritage	330
• 4. Conclusion	334
• Acknowledgments	335
• References	336

**13. Disaster Tourism as Dark Anthropocene:
In-between Spectral Geotrauma and Necro-Aesthetic** **342**

Rangga Kala Mahaswa

• Abstract	342
• 1. Introduction	343
• 2. Theoretical Framework	346
2.1 <i>Spectral Geotrauma</i>	346
2.2 <i>Necro-Aesthetic</i>	349
• 3. The Attraction of Disaster: Indonesian Cases	351
3.1 The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami	352
3.2 The 2010 eruption of Merapi	353
3.3 The 2006 Lapindo Mud Disaster	355
• 4. Rethinking Morbid Attraction: Qui Bono?	357
4.1 Aceh Tsunami Museum	359
4.2 Sisa Hartaku	360
4.3 Lapindo Mudflow Site	361
• 5. Final Reflection	363
• Acknowledgement	364
• References	365

14. *Equestrian sport in Sicily. A geographical survey* **371**

Leonardo Mercatanti, Giovanni Messina, Gaetano Sabato

• Abstract	371
• 1. Introduction and methodology	372
• 2. Equestrian clubs in Sicily	374
• 3. The case of the Ambelia Mediterranean Equestrian Center	379
3.1 Tourism and educational visit	380
3.2 La Fiera Mediterranea del cavallo (The Mediterranean Horse Fair)	381
3.3 Discussion	382
• 4. Conclusions	383
• References	384

15. *Digital Geo-Storytelling for an integrated socio-tourist valorisation of complex territories: the case of the Phlegraean Fields* **388**

Ivan Pistone, Stefania Palmentieri

• Abstract	388
• 1. Contemporary landscape and tourism in transition: challenges of usability and valorisation	389
• 2. From functional transects to digital narratives: a methodology for situated landscape exploration	392
• 3. Operationalizing digital geo-storytelling: insights from the Phlegraean Fields' transects	397
• 4. Operational implications of geo-storytelling: between community engagement and reflexive tourism	404
• 5. Conclusions and future directions for digital landscape valorisation	407
• Acknowledgement:	408
• References	409

16. Identifying Overtourism at the EU Level: The Case of Romania **415**

Iuliana Tudose-Pop, Delia Popescu, Olimpia State, Georgică Gheorghe,

• Abstract	415
• 1. Introduction	417
• 2. Theoretical framework for analysis	419

2.1. Overtourism – a new challenge at the beginning of the 21st century	419
2.2. Addressing overtourism at EU level	420
2.3. Overtourism in Romania	422
• 3. Overtourism in the EU and Romania	423
3.1. Romania’s position among EU Member States in relation to overtourism	423
3.2. Manifestations of overtourism in Romania	426
• 4. Protective measures in Romania and the EU	432
• 5. Conclusions	433
• References	434

<i>THE AUTHORS</i>	439
---------------------------	------------

14. *Equestrian sport in Sicily. A geographical survey*¹

Leonardo Mercatanti², Giovanni Messina³, Gaetano Sabato⁴

Abstract

The spread of equestrian sport and activities linked to the presence of riding schools and stables in the area represent an unprecedented field of interest for geographic studies. In this sense, the contribution, divided into four sections, has several objectives: to carry out a first theoretical-analytical survey on horse riding in Sicily, to prepare a mapping of the structures present, to think about the territorial dynamics that this sport embodies. From a methodological point of view, the proposal is structured on the intertwining of statistical and documentary analysis and qualitative research on the ground at the Equestrian Institute for Sicily in Ambelia (Catania), considered the cornerstone of the strategy of strengthening the sector in the Region⁵.

Keywords: *Sport, Horse Riding, Sicily, Tourism, Ambelia*

¹ This contribution is a reasoned, rethought and revised version of the original study *Lo sport equestre in Sicilia e il caso di Ambelia. Una prima indagine geografica* published in 2024 in issue no. 74 of the Italian class A journal «Geotema». In this version, the sections are attributed to their three authors as follows: Section 1 was written by Giovanni Messina, Section 2 by Gaetano Sabato, and the other sections by Leonardo Mercatanti; finally, conclusions are shared.

² Leonardo Mercatanti, Department of Cultures and Societies, University of Palermo, leonardo.mercatanti@unipa.it

³ Giovanni Messina, Department of Ancient and Modern Civilizations, University of Messina, giovanni.messina@unime.it

⁴ Gaetano Sabato, Department of Psychology, Educational Science and Human Movement, University of Palermo. *Corresponding Author: gaetano.sabato@unipa.it

⁵ Here and below, especially when capitalised, the terms “Region” and “Sicilian Region” refer to the first-level administrative territorial entity into which the Italian State is divided. In this sense, there are 20 Italian administrative regions, and Sicily is one of them. Furthermore, as is the case for various reasons with four other Italian regions (Sardinia, Valle d’Aosta, Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia), Sicily, by virtue of its island status and its geographical and historical-cultural characteristics, has a degree of partial political and administrative autonomy in certain legislative and decision-making areas.

1. Introduction and methodology

This work, which falls within the scope of research in the field of sports geography, aims to fill a certain gap in geographical thinking about the importance of equestrian sports and their many spatial, economic, medical, social, and even geopolitical implications (Bale, 2003; Bale, Dejonghe, 2008; Pioletti, Bettoni, 2020; Raento, 2017).

Equestrian activities cover a wide range of areas, from sport—with various disciplines, horse trekking, riding lessons, competitive training, etc.—to health, given the recent recognition of the therapeutic value of various activities carried out in facilities, such as hippotherapy, equestrian rehabilitation, para-reining, psychomotor therapy, and physiotherapy with and on horses, but also other emerging practices (Frank, Dole, McCloskey, 2011; Ajzenman, Standeven, Shurtleff, 2013; Battagliese, Battagliese, 2021).

In the scientific field, the most detailed analysis, despite not focusing on strictly territorial applications, seems to be that put forward by Nosworthy (2013): it focuses in particular on the medical, rehabilitative, and psychological importance of equestrian practice and the sympathetic relationship between horse and rider. From a perspective more closely linked to tourism and horse racing events, we would like to mention the recent volume *Humans, horses and events management* edited in 2021 by scholars Dashper, Helgadóttir, and Sigurðardóttir.

With particular reference to Sicily, this contribution, based on data provided by the Federazione Italiana Sport Equestri-FISE (Italian Equestrian Sports Federation), aims to provide quantitative information on the number and distribution of equestrian sports clubs in Sicily, taking into account the main and diverse disciplines practiced, registered hippotherapy initiatives, and existing equestrian tourism projects.

As far as the density of facilities is concerned, as we shall see, the results are not uniform. The unevenness of the data obtained therefore triggers a reflection on the interactions between equestrian sports, developed in riding schools, and the connotations of specific spatial contexts.

However, the application of this reasoning will focus on equestrian sports in the broadest sense. In particular, we want to conduct an initial survey to hypothesize, including through a case study, how and whether the concentration of riding schools and equestrian sports clubs, especially outside urban areas, is connected to the material and planning infrastructure that supports sustainable forms of land use. So-called *equestrian tourism* represents a well-documented

area of research in the literature (Ollenburg, 2005; Helgadóttir, Sigurðardóttir, 2008; Castagnetti *et al.*, 2012; Magalhães, Antunes, Barroco, 2014) as well as a defined classification of sustainable tourism products, sometimes in standalone form and sometimes integrated with additional eco-tourism and sports-tourism formulas (Singh, Dash, Vashko, 2016).

As part of its three-year tourism development program for 2022-2024 (2022), the Sicilian Region⁶ has identified sports tourism, which explicitly includes equestrian sports, as a new avenue for local development capable of complementing the region's tourism offering (Regione Siciliana, 2022, p. 26) and pointed to the organization of a Prima Fiera del turismo sportivo (First Sports Tourism Fair), the well-established Fiera Mediterranea del Cavallo (Mediterranean Horse Fair) in Ambelìa (Catania), and the historic *Coppa degli Assi* ("Cup of Aces") show jumping competition as key events on which to base the sector's development strategy. Four horse trails were then identified on the island - from Cefalù to Taormina, through the Madonie mountains, from Sciacca to the Monti di Palazzo Adriano e Valle del Sosio and, in the Messina area, as far as the Peloritani mountains - as the backbone for enjoying the area on horseback.

From a methodological point of view, this contribution is based on a quantitative analysis of the primary data collected and on Document Analysis (Bowen, 2009) of institutional sources (see section 2). Furthermore, the case study integrates, from a qualitative perspective, the document analysis with an in-depth interview conducted in the field (cfr. section 3) (Baxter and Eyles, 1999; McCormack 2004; Kitchin and Tate, 2013): no questionnaire was used, but questions (open-ended and decided in advance by the authors) were asked to the interviewees during guided conversations on topics of interest related to the research topics developed here.

⁶ See footnote n. 3.

2. Equestrian clubs in Sicily

To begin our analysis, we believe it is useful to provide a synoptic diachronic overview of the consistency of equestrian sports in Sicily (Table 1) which, despite a slight increase in the number of clubs, recorded a 57% growth in the number of licenses issued between 2017 and 2021, which are necessary to practice the sport even at a non-competitive level. The most likely explanation for this data is that, during periods of less intense restrictions, the pandemic has encouraged outdoor sports that do not involve gatherings and contact between individuals. However, between 2022 and 2023, the number of clubs experienced a slight decline, while the number of licences has decreased more significantly.

Year	Clubs	Licenses issued
2017	87	4,479
2018	81	4,302
2019	79	4,384
2020	84	5,701
2021	95	7,826
2022	94	5,986
2023	90	5,460

Tab. 1: Equestrian sports in Sicily between 2017 and 2023

Source: FISE a, www.fise.it/federazione/i-nostri-numeri.html

The difficulty in finding reliable quantitative data for Sicily, due to the scarcity of specialized sources outside those of the Italian Equestrian Sports Federation, would make it problematic to map the centers where equestrian activities are practiced on a regional scale. For this reason, it was considered useful to collect and organize data from FISE relating to the island (FISE b), in order to work on a basis that was as reliable as possible.

Using the data provided by FISE for Sicily, it is possible to reconstruct a detailed picture of the geographical distribution of the clubs/facilities affiliated with the Federation and, therefore, recognized by it. In 2021 there were a total

of 94⁷ clubs operating in the region (and in 2022 the situation was almost the same). Tables 2, 3, and 4 show that the spatial distribution by province is varied but consistent with the size and centrality of the main Sicilian cities (already provincial capitals). Considering the total number of facilities, the top four places are occupied by Palermo (24), Catania (22), Messina (16), and Syracuse (10). However, if we consider the municipal territories of the island's top four cities, Palermo ranks first with 16 recognized clubs, followed by Messina with 8 facilities, Syracuse with 6, and Catania with 3. The provincial figures vary greatly from the municipal ones because, for example, in the territory of Catania, the vast majority of equestrian clubs are scattered throughout the territory, with a widespread presence in various municipalities of the province: out of 22 surveyed, 19 are located outside the municipal territory of Catania. On the contrary, in the Palermo area, almost all of them are concentrated in the municipal territory (16 out of 24). Based on the presence of equestrian clubs, the other provinces can be listed in this order: Trapani (9), Ragusa (6), Agrigento and Caltanissetta (both with 3 units), Enna (1). Another fact is also worth considering: the areas where most of the clubs active in equestrian sports are concentrated are often affected by the main tourist flows on the island. The consistency of the research hypothesis set out in the opening section therefore seems to be confirmed; it would therefore be appropriate to investigate, in future studies, the connections between the spatial distribution of facilities where equestrian sports can be practiced and its implications in terms of tourism supply/demand.

⁷ The data on the FISE website contain slight discrepancies: the pages and online documents consulted show two different figures for the total number of facilities in Sicily, namely 94 and 95. In Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, we have reported the figures that can be obtained from the sources cited, in the belief that this is a minimal discrepancy, probably due to a failure to update or a mere typographical error.

Province of Palermo		Province of Catania		Province of Messina		Province of Siracusa	
Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club
Palermo	16	Catania	3	Messina	8	Siracusa	6
Cinisi	1	Misterbianco	2	Tremestieri	1	Floridia	1
Terrasini	1	Ramacca	1	Villafranca Tirrena	1	Solarino	1
Misilmeri	1	Caltagirone	2	Nizza di Sicilia	1	Avola	1
Bagheria	1	Aci Castello	1	Giardini Naxos	1	Augusta	1
Casteldaccia	1	Acireale	1	Gaggi	1		
Sciara	1	Valverde	1	Milazzo	2		
Cefalù	1	S. Giovanni La Punta	1	Torrenova	1		
Castellana Sicula	1	Tremestieri Etneo	1				
		Mascalucia	1				
		Belpasso	3				
		Viagrande	1				
		Santa Venerina	2				
		Linguaglossa	1				
		Bronte	1				
Total	24	Total	22	Total	16	Total	10

Tab. 2: Distribution of Sicilian equestrian clubs by province in 2021 (I)

Source: FISE b, www.fise.it/sicilia/it/home/circoli.html; our elaboration.

<i>Province of Trapani</i>		<i>Province of Ragusa</i>		<i>Province of Agrigento</i>	
Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club
Trapani	1	Ragusa	2	Favara	2
Erice	1	Modica	1	Sciacca	1
Valderice	1	Vittoria	2		
Marsala	1	Ispica	1		
Alcamo	2				
Castelvetrano	3				
Total	9	Total	6	Total	3

Tab. 3 - Distribution of Sicilian equestrian clubs by province in 2021 (II)

Source: FISE b, www.fise.it/sicilia/it/home/circoli.html; our elaboration.

<i>Province of Caltanissetta</i>		<i>Province of Enna</i>	
Municipality	Club	Municipality	Club
Caltanissetta	1	Leonforte	1
San Cataldo	1		
Niscemi	1		
Total	3	Total	1

Tab. 4: Distribution of Sicilian equestrian clubs by province in 2021 (III)

Source: FISE b, www.fise.it/sicilia/it/home/circoli.html ; our elaboration.

The greater or lesser prevalence of equestrian clubs in the area is relevant to our investigation because it has an indirect impact on the protection of all areas outside the facility (internal roads, trails, and tracks) that are consistent with equestrian activities. The facilities themselves are usually located in areas

characterized by high-profile natural and landscape features. In this sense, equestrian activities contribute, albeit marginally, to the control of areas that are difficult for public administrations to manage and increasingly subject to degradation due to littering. Equestrian activities carried out outside the facilities—excursions, rides, and trekking on horseback—require an ideal landscape that is not compromised by environmental offenses of any kind. In this regard, we can mention the possibility that illegally or improperly discarded waste may be found along equestrian tourism routes. In such cases, it is the primary responsibility of the equestrian club itself to report the matter to the competent authorities or to notify the most active environmental associations in the area, such as Legambiente, which often organize environmental volunteer campaigns to remove waste. The case of hazardous waste (e.g., corrugated asbestos sheets or asbestos containers) is more complex, as the disposal procedure is lengthy and costly and can lead to a stalemate between the need to make the landscape fully accessible and the need to ensure safe disposal (Chaudhary, Polonsky, McClaren, 2021). It is also worth mentioning the work of the National Association of Environmental Equestrian Guides (Guida Equestre Ambientale-ENGEA), which since 1997 has been responsible for training Environmental Equestrian Guides, who play an important role in promoting natural environments and in protecting and monitoring them.

3. *The case of the Ambelia Mediterranean Equestrian Center*

In the heart of Sicily's largest plain, specifically in the territory of Militello in Val di Catania, lies Tenuta Ambelia, an important center for equestrian activities managed by the Istituto Incremento Ippico per la Sicilia (Sicilian Horse Breeding Institute). The facility, which has been the subject of several inspections and an in-depth interview with two privileged witnesses who manage it, is significant from a historical, cultural, social, educational, sporting, and tourist point of view. Accessibility to the facility is guaranteed by excellent signage and a series of directions.

The sparse literature on the origins and evolution of the area, based essentially on the precious 17th-century manuscripts of Filippo Caruso, attests that the current structure boasts historical origins of great interest, since its use as the summer residence of Francesco Branciforte Barresi (1575-1622), Marquis of Militello, and Giovanna d'Austria, granddaughter of Charles V of Habsburg. Here, the two nobles not only held cultural gatherings attended by famous guests, but also refined their passions, including equestrian art, facilitated by the geographical characteristics of the area. For centuries, this area has been predominantly dedicated to wine production, as evidenced by both its first name, Vignazza, and its subsequent variation, refined by the priest Don Nicolò Colosso: Ambelia, from the Greek ἀμπέλος, vine. The sixteenth-century farmhouse of Ambelia was also part of the Rasinech fiefdom, which refers to the word *racina*, meaning grape. Upon the death of Francesco Branciforte, the property passed to the Benedictine Fathers, but only until 1866. With the enactment of Royal Decree No. 3036 of July 7, 1866, religious orders and congregations were abolished. Law No. 3848 of August 15, 1867, provided for the confiscation of all agricultural real estate owned by various religious entities (Natale, 1837, p. 100; Majorana, 1913, pp.119-120; Abboto, 2008, p. 77). The facility was thus entrusted to the Ministry of War, established in the aftermath of Italian unification. In the meantime, the landscape was partly transformed by the decision to allocate large areas of the surrounding land to olive groves, partly due to the changing production needs of the area.

In 1884, a branch of the Regio Deposito Cavalli Stalloni (Royal Stud Farm) of Catania was established with the aim of promoting the breeding of horses with characteristics suited to military needs (in particular the Oriental Thoroughbred). With the end of the Second World War and the abolition of the Ministry of War, the Istituto Incremento Ippico per la Sicilia di Catania (Catania Horse Breeding Institute for Sicily) was founded in Catania in 1959.

It was an organization that now operates within the Regional Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Mediterranean Fisheries and manages the Ambelia Estate, its territorial offshoot and complementary structure, as well as serving the objective of offering a wide range of services. One of the main aims of the Institute and the Estate is to preserve certain Sicilian horse breeds, such as the Oriental Thoroughbred, the Anglo-Oriental, the Sanfratellano horse, and the Ragusano and Pantelleria donkeys, the latter of which is at high risk of extinction. The Institute arranges for the periodic transport of stallions to regional public breeding stations (known as 'erariali'), about five times a year, and private stations, about a hundred times a year. It also issues five-year authorizations for the management of public or private breeding stations and handles the formalities related to mandatory periodic inspections. The protection of the territory finds one of its most concrete rewilding actions in the preservation of native horse breeds (Naundrup, Svenning, 2015).

The estate, covering approximately fifty hectares, features two dressage arenas, the renovated buildings of the small 16th-century village, covered stands (seating approximately 700 people), horse stables, and parking, as well as other multifunctional spaces where cultural events can be held or exhibition stands can be set up. The historical and cultural aspect, as confirmed by the results of the interview, is the basis of any educational and tourist experience hosted in the area.

3.1 Tourism and educational visit

The following information emerged from the interview conducted in December 2022. The staff of the Institute and the Estate have been trained to ensure an adequate visitor experience of the facilities. Visits are mainly aimed at school groups from the metropolitan city of Catania and enthusiastic tourists. As far as schools are concerned, the Institute's premises have been constantly promoted for several years. The educational program highlights the wide range of places (both at the Catania headquarters and on the estate), techniques, oral tradition, customs, and traditions of a rural world inextricably linked to the presence of horses and donkeys. The landscape of the estate plays a fundamental role in the educational visit, with centuries-old olive trees, vineyards, pasture land for horses, and rural houses. All this, together with the timeless sounds of nature, adds strength and value to an all-round sensory experience.

The small 16th-century rural village on the estate is of ethno-anthropological interest and is a typical architectural example of what was not destroyed by

the 1693 earthquake in the Val di Noto. In recent years, the estate has seen a growing number of visitors, both because the buildings have been undergoing redevelopment for some time and because it is a complementary stop on a visit to Militello in Val di Catania, a town included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2002 (The Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto). An important role is played by tourist guides, tour operators, and independent tourists themselves who are looking for new destinations. In this sense, it is believed that communication about the site and the various activities should be implemented on specific web channels. Tourist flows are increasing, although the numbers are not yet significant. Admission requires a ticket, the price of which varies according to the day of the week, the number of participants, and any events taking place.

The offer is truly extensive: at the headquarters of the Istituto Incremento Ippico, in the historic center of Catania, the MusCa-Museo delle Carrozze (Carriage Museum) has been established, with its vehicles and objects related to the world of horses that hark back to a time when horse management was accompanied by rituals and a way of life that has now almost completely disappeared, but which is highly evocative for tourists. The same institute also organizes conferences, seminars, and exhibitions on various topics. In 2022, the photographic exhibition Blocco 200. Anime sospese (Block 200. Suspended Souls), the result of a photography course for inmates at the Caltagirone Prison, was particularly successful. The multifunctional activities implemented ensure a level of use of the two structures that can be described as growing and constant. The need to record the number of visitors, their origins, and other information has been reported, in order to have a minimum annual statistical picture on which to reflect in order to implement improvements.

3.2 La Fiera Mediterranea del cavallo (The Mediterranean Horse Fair)

The most important event organized and funded by the Sicilian Region at Tenuta Ambelia is undoubtedly the Mediterranean Horse Fair. The event, which reached its fourth edition in May 2022, was held for the first time in the same month at the Favorita racecourse in Palermo. This created a useful synergy between Sicily's two main urban centers. The event is aimed at both professionals in the sector - athletes, judges, race directors, hippotherapy instructors, equine veterinarians, farriers - and tourists, families, and curious visitors. It followed two main themes: the main equestrian disciplines (driving, endurance, western gymkhana, and show jumping) and the presence of stands,

food and wine tours, exhibitions, parades, and shows. The fourth edition of the event, with around 40,000 visitors, recorded a higher number of visitors than previous editions and involved around 500 professionals, 700 horses, and 60 exhibitors. The facility often hosts national and international competitions. The calendar of events, available on the facility's website (www.cavallisicilia.it/30/news) or on the FISE website, is always packed with events. In September 2022 alone, at the end of this field survey phase, both the FISE international competition *Ambelia Internazionali di Sicilia* - Gran Premio Coppa degli Assi (show jumping) and the MIPAAF competitions for the classic show jumping circuit and breeding circuit took place. The Institute sponsors various regional events and conferences. Several television crews (in 2022 Mediaset, Rai, Sky) visited the Institute's premises to make documentaries and conduct interviews.

3.3 Discussion

As described in the previous sections, Ambelia is a complex and spatialized hub for policies aimed at promoting horse culture in conjunction with the local area. The term 'policies' in this case is also used in the most literal sense: in recent years, although not without controversy - arising from the alleged territorial link in the promotion of the area by the previous President of Sicily, Sebastiano Musumeci, who is from Militello in Val di Catania - the Sicilian Region has invested considerable resources in the redevelopment of the estate and in financing various activities. Leaving the political controversy in the background, it is clear that, in accordance with the programmatic documents referred to at the beginning, the focus on the development of horse culture and the promotion of new ways of enjoying the territory are, in the governance of regional tourism, a very coherent part of the overall strategy for promoting local tourism. The very location of the estate, at the crossroads between several highly attractive macro-systems—the Etna area and the Val di Noto, both UNESCO sites—seems to underline the intention to insist on the promotion of new practices of sustainable tourism, far from the logic of mass tourism. This impression will certainly have to be verified in subsequent work.

4. Conclusions

This contribution aims to provide an initial critical overview of the spread of equestrian sports in Sicily and the role they play or could play in tourism-driven development, as envisaged in the Region's strategic documents. Spatial analysis of the data seems to confirm the hypothesis of a link between equestrian sports and tourism, which, along with other aspects, will certainly be explored in greater depth in future work.

Instead, we chose to focus on the case study of the Ambelia Estate because the facility, which is a point of reference not only at the regional level but also for the entire South, represents a significant example of a successful initiative that started with the public (specifically, the Sicilian Region) and is part of the discourse on the eco-sustainable enhancement of the territory. The latter is particularly suited, as we have seen, to equestrian activities in all their facets. It has been established that the structure under consideration plays an important role within the territorial context in question and acts as an intermediate stop that facilitates connections with Militello in Val di Catania, but also with Mineo, Grammichele, and Caltagirone. A strategic stopover offering new ideas for forms of integrated tourism.

There are high expectations for the facility and challenges related to its development. The economic aspect is no less important in this regard. The facility has a significant impact on the regional coffers. In 2022, costs (not only energy costs) increased significantly. Several initiatives are underway, such as the enhancement and completion of the area dedicated to sports activities. Over €1 million has been committed in 2022 to the construction of a new area for horse shelter, a necessary flagship for such a facility, especially with the arrival of the many participants in sporting competitions that increasingly see the estate as a protagonist, even at an international level.

For the Sicilian Region, the strategic objective is to become a destination of excellence for equestrian sports in southern Italy, capable of creating a tourist industry that can extend the island's tourist season and therefore its use, especially during the months less crowded by summer tourism. In this sense, the characteristics of the offer are consistent with the objective of deseasonalizing tourism.

References

- Abbotto, M.A., 2008, *Militello in Val di Catania nella storia*, Edizioni Novecento, Mascalucia.
- Ajzenman, H.F., Standeven, J.W., Shurtleff, T.L., 2013, “Effect of Hippotherapy on Motor Control, Adaptive Behaviors, and Participation in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Pilot Study”, *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 67, 6, 653-663.
- Battagliese, G., Battagliese, M., 2021, *Disabilità intellettiva e disturbo dello spettro dell'autismo*, Edra, Milan.
- Bale, J., 2003, *Sports Geography*, Routledge, London.
- Bale, J., Dejonghe, T., 2008, “Editorial. Sports geography: an overview”, *Belgeo*, 2, 157-166.
- Baxter, J., Eyles, J., 1999, “The utility of in-depth interviews for studying the meaning of environmental risk”, *Professional Geographer*, 51, 307-320.
- Bowen, G., 2009, “Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method”, *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9, 2, 27-40.
- Caruso, F., 1674, *Breve Relazione delle tre famiglie di Barrese, Santapau, e Branciforti annodate in un nodo indissolubile in Sicilia, fatta da D. Filippo Caruso fu Francesco della Terra di Militello V. di N.*, manuscript.
- Castagnetti, C., Capra, A., Bedostri, I., Bedostri, T., 2012, “Mappatura GPS delle ippovie e individuazione siti di interesse culturale. Un WebGIS per il turismo equestre”, *Geocentro*, 23, 26-32.
- Chaudhary, A.H., Polonsky, M.J., McClaren, N., 2021, “Littering behaviour: A systematic review”, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45, 4, 478-510.
- Dashper, K., Helgadóttir, G., Sigurðardóttir, I., 2021 (Eds.), *Humans, horses and events management*, CABI, Wallingford.

- Frank, A., McCloskey, S., Dole, R.L., 2011, “Effect of Hippotherapy on Perceived SelfCompetence and Partecipation in a Child with Cerebral palsy”, *Pediatric physical therapy*, 23, 301-308.
- Helgadóttir, G., Sigurðardóttir, I., 2008, “Horse-based Tourism: Community, Quality and Disinterest in Economic Value”, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8, 2, 105-121.
- Jackson, P. (directed by), 2002, *Il Signore degli Anelli - Le due torri*, New Line Cinema-WingNut Films.
- Kitchin, R., Tate, N., 2013, *Conducting Research into Human Geography*, Routledge, London.
- Magalhães, N., Antunes, J., Barroco, C., 2014, “Potencialidades do Turismo Equestre em Portugal”, *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento*, 5, 21-22, 187-189.
- Majorana, G., 1913, “Le cronache inedite di Filippo Caruso”, *Archivio storico per la Sicilia orientale*, 10, 113-135.
- McCormack, C., 2004, “Storying stories: a narrative approach to in-depth interview conversations”, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7, 3, 219-236.
- Natale, V., 1837, *Sulla storia de' letterati ed altri uomini insigni di Militello nella Valle di Noto*, Tipografia di Francesco Del Vecchio, Naples.
- Naundrup, P.J., Svenning, J.-C., 2015, “A Geographic Assessment of the Global Scope for Rewilding with Wild-Living Horses (*Equus ferus*)”, *PLoS ONE*, 10, 7:e0132359; DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0132359
- Nosworthy, C., 2013, *A Geography of Horse-Riding: The Spacing of Affect, Emotion and (Dis)ability Identity through Horse-Human Encounters*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Cambridge.
- Ollenburg, C., 2005, “Worldwide Structure of the Equestrian Tourism Sector”, *Journal of Ecotourism*, 4, 1, 47-55.

- Pioletti, A.M., Bettoni, G. (Eds.) 2020, *Geografia, geopolitica e geostrategia dello sport. Tra governance e mondializzazione*, Quaepeg, Rome.
- Raento, P., 2017, Geopolitics, Identity and Horse Sports in Finland. In: Koch, N. (Ed.), *Critical Geographies of Sport: Space, Power and Sport in Global Perspective*, Routledge, London and New York, 15-21.
- Regione Siciliana, 2022, *Programma triennale di sviluppo turistico 2022-2024*, https://www2.regione.sicilia.it/deliberegiunta/file/giunta/allegati/N.254_17.05.2022.pdf.
- Singh, S., Dash, T.R., Vashko, I., 2016, "Tourism, ecotourism and sport tourism: the framework for certification", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 34, 2, 236-255.
- FISE a, Accessed 11st September 2024 www.fise.it/federazione/i-nostri-numeri.html.
- FISE b, Accessed 11st September 2024
- www.fise.it/sicilia/it/home/circoli.html
- UISP, Accessed 11st September 2024
- www.uisp.it/palermo/files/principale/Attivita%20equestri/Equiturismo%20in%20Sicilia.pdf