

Department of Business and Management

Master Degree of Management

Chair of Tourism Management

Handling small cities development.

Tourism as a driving force for the growth and development of a community and its territory.

The case of the Valnerina and the need for a single DMO.

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*“Queste montagne non sono una
barriera bensì un punto
privilegiato da cui vedere il
mondo.”*

Finauro Rita

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Introduction

I grew up with a phrase that my father, at the time a hotel manager, repeated to me almost every day: "Before the hotel you have to promote the territory." Very often this phrase was followed by a digression about the evolution of the hotel and tourism concept that had occurred. I always had this statement printed firmly in my head, but I did not fully understand the meaning until several years later.

By this claim, my father meant to point out that the success (or failure) of a hotel is determined primarily not by the services offered by the hotel itself but by what is offered by the tourist destination.

It is from this view that the concept of tourism destination competitiveness emerges. Dwyer and Kim (Dwyer L. K., 2003) offer a detailed exploration of the concept of destination competitiveness, which they define as "the ability of a destination to meet the needs of tourists and to maintain and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of its residents over time."

Over the years, as a result of more work-experience in the field, participation in trade and territorial associations, I realized that this concept could undergo a small evolution. While fully valid in large urban and metropolitan cities, I believe that in small towns such a concept fails to accurately describe what tourism can mean for these areas.

Tourism planning devoted to an emphasis on territorial typicality has, as its main effect, the enhancement of all the aspects that make such a destination unique: agro-food traditions, folklore and landscape beauty.

Professor Lew's framework (Ćorluka, 2021) outlines three perspectives that provide complementary approaches to understanding tourism and tourism experiences. The ideographic perspective aims to understand the subjective facets of individual tourism experiences. The organizational perspective focuses on analyzing tourism organizations, such as hotels, airlines, travel agencies, and tourist attractions. The cognitive perspective analyzes tourists' decision-making processes and their perceptions of the tourism destination. These perspectives are not limited to tangible aspects, but also consider intangible aspects such as the cultural heritage of the territory, its image and reputation, and the skills and experience of local actors and stakeholders. Thus, the importance of tourism as a driving force for development and social cohesion emerges.

Tourism activities, through sustainable exploitation of the resources provided by the area, can give new life and hope to the local population by creating a virtuous circle of investment and new services through a renewed consciousness of certain areas. This is an increasingly relevant theme, given the depopulation of more inland areas, such as the Valnerina, in favor of larger urban centers.

The objective of this research is to analyze the critical issues and resources of a given territory to develop a new model of sustainable territorial development. Specifically, it is intended to conduct a systematic survey of the territory, taking into consideration its geographical, cultural, social and economic characteristics, in order to identify its challenges and opportunities. Based on the data collected, it is intended to develop an innovative and sustainable territorial development model that can foster the economic, social and environmental growth of the territory under consideration. In this way, it aims to make a significant contribution to the academic literature on the topic of territorial development and to offer concrete ideas for the promotion of public and private policies to support the sustainable development of territories.

It is in this context that a need emerges for a territorial destination management organization that encapsulates different entities under a single brand, but at the same time enhances the peculiarities of each area. This should result not only in the development of services directly related to the tourist experience, but also in the development of essential services, such as those related to health and education, that can make living in these areas more attractive and easier.

This research is divided into four sections. The first section will analyze the evolution of tourism over the years, with a particular focus on the concept of experiential tourism, an approach that places active participation and immersion in the culture, history and nature of the destination visited at the center of the traveler's experience. Such a method can provide opportunities for the enhancement of the area and its resources, not only from a tourism perspective, but also from a cultural, environmental and economic one.

In the second section, the territory of the Valnerina will be explored through a geographical, economic and socio-cultural analysis.

In the third section, the case study of the Valle d'Aosta territory will be proposed, highlighting the work of the Association of Hoteliers of the Valle d'Aosta (ADAVA). For this purpose, Luigi Fosson (ADAVA president and hotelier in Ayas), Mirco Pellissier (delegate district

Rhemes), Davide Perrin (delegate district Torgnon) and Giorgia Vigna Lasina (president Young Hoteliers and hotelier in Donnas) were interviewed on the topic of the connection between tourism development and social development and the importance that tourism enterprises play in certain areas.

In the fourth and final section, the creation of the Valnerina DMO (Destination Management Organization) will be proposed, with a special emphasis on the eco-museum theme. The conclusions of the analysis carried out in the first sections will provide the basis for the proposal of the creation of this organization. The DMO will have the task of promoting the tourist destination through the enhancement of territorial resources and the creation of path focused on the experience of the area. The eco-museum will be a central element of the project, as it allows the entire territory and its history to be enhanced through the creation of experiential routes and the networking of the various sites of interest.

Section 1. Tourism industry

1.1 Tourism evolution

1.1.1 From the Fremdenverkehr to post-industrial society

“In the way of spending leisure time and the way of traveling, the social character of a group, of a social class, of an entire society characterized by a certain stage of development is reflected.¹”
(Savelli, *Sociologia del Turismo*, 2012)

Since the dawn of time, the foreigner has always been the object of special attention. One of the earliest attentions to the subject dates to the Greek and Roman worlds. "Xenos" and "Barbaros" denoted two completely different groups of foreigners. Hosts or enemies. Status depended on whether the other recognized the same level of dignity and worth in the other.

Over the years the study has evolved reaching the 20th century where the figure of the foreigner has taken on a highly relevant role and studies have increasingly taken on a sociological connotation. In this context, it was German scholars who defined currents of thought that sought to define the foreigner and his movements.

In the first instance, the focus was placed, not so much in the motivations that prompted travel, but so much in the social relationships that travel enabled. It is in this centrality of the social aspect that in 1935 Robert Glücksmann, as well as his colleague Bormann, defined the tourism phenomenon as the sum of all relationships created between the traveler and the local inhabitants of the destination². (Savelli, *Sociologia del Turismo*, 2012)

It is in this context that the figure of the tourist we know today begins to emerge. The differentiation between a "Xenos" traveler from a "Barbaros" traveler consists in the consideration of the economic functions that result from the movement. This aspect is crucial to the discussion because the economic benefits of engaging with the traveler-tourist eliminate the component of hostility inherent in the concept of the foreigner. More importance is first given to the economic aspect by two different scholars: Morgenroth in 1927 emphasized the function of the tourist as a consumer of economic goods and cultural resources (Morgenroth, 1927); Ogilvie in 1935 specified an additional aspect, the money spent during travel must come

¹ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

² Ibidem

from their usual residence and ordinary activity³.

Finally, it is the scholars Hunziker and Krapf who in 1942 come up with a definition of the outsider movement (Fremdenverkehr) that synthesizes all the areas mentioned so far. The Fremdenverkehr is: <<*the complex of relations and phenomena which originate in the travel and sojourn of strangers, when no form of permanent residence is configured and there is no connection with any work activity*⁴.>> (Hunziker, 1942)

It is from this definition that Knebel's 1960 analysis moves. It, in fact, extrapolates from it the key concepts (movement of people, time-limited territorial mobility and relationships with the local population) and enhances them by attributing a subjective connotation to travel and the motives that drive the tourist. This view of the tourism phenomenon completely distances him from the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme, which in 1953 attributed the "*realization of the propensity for movement innate in every individual*" as the main driver of tourism. According to Knebel, it is not an ancient heritage derived from our nomadic ancestors that is the reason why we experience the tourist phenomenon but rather it is through the "*pleasure of travel*" that individuals are driven to move for a limited period of time to another location and to maintain ties with the local population⁵ (Savelli, *Sociologia del turismo*, 2012). Thus begins the interpretation of travel as a real experience that can enrich the cultural background of each individual and give them the opportunity to grow humanly.

<<*Tourist behavior begins only beyond the bare minimum; it is oriented toward the satisfaction of luxury needs.*⁶>> (Knebel, 1960)

This interpretation is captured and enhanced by Cohen; the desire to satisfy non-instrumental motivations distinguishes tourism from all other types of travel. The tourist character of a trip is thus determined by the subjective characteristics for which it takes place.

In order to conclude the sociological analysis of the tourism phenomenon and to better understand the connection between the words "*tourism*" and "*experience*," it is appropriate to make a further analysis of the phases of tourism and the causes behind its evolution.

³ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

⁴ Hunziker, W., & Krapf, K. (1942). *Outline of General Tourism Theory*

⁵ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

⁶ Knebel, H. J. (1960). *Soziologische Strukturwandlungen in modernen Tourismus*. Stuttgart: Henke.

1.1.2 Historical evolution of tourism

Based on the model of historical analysis formalized by Weber and on Riesman's interpretive model, Knebel traces the history of the tourism phenomenon whose changes are a reflection of structural changes affecting the entire society. Weber's model involves the division of history into three periods corresponding to three distinct forms of power. This theory is taken up by Riesman who, studying different patterns of leisure behavior, distinguishes three patterns of social type character and associates them with each period. We will thus have a social type directed by tradition, a self-directed social type, and a heterodirected social type.

Given the ability of such theses to describe the dominant features of society, Knebel integrates them into his own theory in order to interpret the social significance that travel and the tourism phenomenon has assumed over the years.

As anticipated just above, the U.S. sociologist Riesman divides history into three major eras based on common demographic, economic, and social conditions and by a certain social type: pre-industrial society, classical industrial society, and advanced industrial society⁷. (Riesman, 1950)

Pre-industrial society is an era with a low life expectancy and in the economy relies mainly on hunting, fishing and agriculture. Interpersonal relationships are controlled by precise dictates and rules that are provided by the culture that characterizes a particular caste or class. The individual must behave appropriately in order to be considered part of a particular social group. Thus, the functional relationship between an individual and other member of the group becomes apparent. Moreover, the possibility of change is absolutely limited. This is the era where customs and traditions define the social order.

It is precisely in this context that travel takes on, thanks to a customary practice of young aristocrats, the connotations ever closer to the current definition of tourism. That custom is the Grand Tour.

In the seventeenth century this custom was intended to educate the young noble for future diplomatic life and sanctioned the transition to adult life as well as belonging to one's social class⁸. Although it was a trip devoted to political and diplomatic training there were times when

⁷ Riesman, D. (1950). *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

⁸ Savelli, A. (2012). *Sociologia del Turismo*. Milano: Hoepli.

art and culture played a main role. The young aristocrat also did not usually set out alone. The journey, which often retraced the route taken by his father, was undertaken together with several expert figures necessary for the purpose of training but also for the purpose of solving organizational issues. This allowed for the celebration of the power and values of one's family⁹.

What is important to analyze is the mutation that the Grand Tour underwent: from an aristocratic prerogative to an established habit of the middle class.

The signing of the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt, ending the wars of succession to the Spanish throne, redefined national borders and laid the foundation for an era of greater security. This generalized feeling stimulated intellectual production, which also resulted in an increased pursuit of pleasure.

It is thus from the second half of the 1700s that the Grand Tour experiences a phase of strong democratization strongly driven by what has just been highlighted but also by the desire on the part of the emerging social classes to emulate the wealthier classes. Therefore, a real habit begins to establish itself, which turns out to be and, as a result, the infrastructure needed to meet the needs of new travelers begins to develop¹⁰.

As for accommodations, in the 16th and 17th centuries travelers used to use the services offered for traders and pilgrims. From the second half of the seventeenth century, the phase of not only quantitative but also qualitative development of facilities that housed travelers began. To give an idea of this, certain neighborhoods in some cities begin to become famous for the accommodations that were offered. Piazza di Spagna in Rome was one of them¹¹. (Towner, 1985)

The transportation service has also undergone a major transformation to meet new needs. The first changes involved greater structuring and capillarization of the mail service, so it was possible to change tired horses with new rested ones at each stage. These increased the speed of the journeys themselves. The new coach service began to take hold; a contract was signed between traveler and a carriage hirer and the latter would accompany him for a period or between two destinations. These two main aspects were complemented by other services such as a more efficient guidance service and a smoother exchange service¹².

In the era of the pre-industrial society, to connect with those initially mentioned, it seems clear

⁹ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

¹⁰ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

¹¹ Towner, John. *The Grand Tour. A key phase in the history of tourism*. Annals of Tourism Research. Vol. 12, pp. 297-333. 1985

¹² Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

how crucial social drive was in determining the emergence and structuring of a phenomenon that until a few years earlier was the prerogative of a small circle.

The historical period just dealt with sets the stage for a decidedly dynamic and revolutionary era.

“He has no precise information to give, [...]. Yes, he traveled through France, but the road often crossed his mind, and his main adventures were not with brigands and precipices but with the emotions of his own heart.”¹³ (Woolf, 1979)

With this quotation mark above belongs to Virginia Woolf, British writer and activist, who described Lawrence Sterne's work published in 1768 with which he recounted his trip to France and Italy. During the Grand Tour, a diary was written in which only the objective aspects that were encountered during the trip were sported. Absolutely no space was given to one's subjectivity. In the second half of the 18th century this custom began to be abandoned, and Sterne is an example of this.

We are at the dawn of a new societal model where what dictates the new social balances is the relationship that each individual has with the means of production. It is the fruit of the industrial revolution that begins to make the various social strata permeable, albeit with some difficulty. Man's capacity for self-determination is thus amplified, and the concept of experience takes on an increasingly central role. Experience as a path, a journey, in which one's consciousness and self is enriched¹⁴.

Therefore, it is appropriate to quote the thoughts that Herman Hesse, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946, used to make explicit about his travel experiences. Thoughts that reflect the spirit of the romantic traveler.

It is in these contexts that experiences gained during a trip take on an increasingly central role. Discovering the territory, understanding the needs and peculiarities of the local community allows the traveler to rediscover himself. The effort to understand and analyze new places involves asking questions, involves enriching oneself with new knowledge, involves learning to know oneself more and more deeply through the experiences of others.

We therefore enter the last age described by Riesman. Its beginning is made to coincide with one fact, the decline in the birth rate. The advance of the rate of industrialization and

¹³ Woolf V. (1979), Il “Viaggio sentimentale”, in La signora dell'angolo di fronte, Milano, Il Saggiatore

¹⁴ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

urbanization are the main drivers of definitions of the social type typical of this period. The quality of life is significantly higher than the previous ones, leisure time increases, and the ability to dispose of material goods increases. The element that best describes this social group is the influence the outside world has on it and the way it feels and interprets every experience. Quoting Marcuse, this is the society of one-dimensionality¹⁵ (Marcuse, 1964). A society in which the difference between what is given and what is not given is increasingly thin. The increasingly powerful means of communication increasingly define the patterns of behavior to be adopted. We refer to it as a totalitarian society in that the economic demands of the productive apparatus define how work time and leisure time is experienced¹⁶. This uniformity therefore does not take into consideration the exteriority of experience but, on the contrary, it is the inner interpretation of experience that must be uniform with the rest of society. As a result, the intrinsic value of travel also changes profoundly.

In this period the conditions occur whereby the tourism phenomenon begins its process of diffusion, organization and standardization. There is a need for an individual who support travelers during their journey and welcome them once they arrive at their destination. Thus, we see the "industrialization" of the figure of the travel preceptor typical of the Grand Tour era. Thus, the first travel agencies are born, which do not limit their activities to organization but are concerned with marketing planned trips. It is at this stage that travel begins to take on more and more the features of an industrial product that is manipulated by multiple parties before reaching the final consumer. This sharp division of labor results in the emergence of the tourism industry. Improvements in the transportation system have also played a crucial role in the development of the tourism industry through increasingly safe and comfortable travel. Or perhaps it is precisely the development of the tourism industry that has increased the profitability of transportation. In fact, the huge investments needed for long-distance transportation require the sale of large quantities. Thus, the process of democratization is initiated, which enables the enlargement of the consumer audience of the transportation system¹⁷.

Also benefiting from the emergence of this new industry are industries that use tourism to complement and strengthen their value offerings.

¹⁵ Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

¹⁶ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

¹⁷ Ibidem

One thing becomes immediately clear and evident. From its earliest beginnings, tourism is shown to be a cross-sectoral field that can benefit many other industries but also shapes the social type of a particular nation. The latter aspect is further confirmed by the lived experience of the United States D America of the 1930s and Germany of the Third Reich.

Overseas, tourism plays a key role within in the New Deal, the plan of economic and social reforms promoted by Roosevelt to cope with the Great Depression. The tourist experience is recounted as the perfect remedy to overcome the general state of anxiety and, at the same time, as the personal contribution that citizens were making to the economic revival of their country. The growing importance of this industry is sealed by the creation in 1937 of the national tourism agency, United States Travel Bureau, and the American Guide Series.

Many experts and protagonists of the New Deal begin to consider tourism as a solution to economic instability because of its impact on land development and stimulation of business activity resulting in more jobs.

In Third Reich Germany, Kraft durch Freude, an organization established in 1933 by the German Labor Front to manage leisure time, played a crucial role. The action of this organization followed the logic that the progressive improvement of the workers' way of life could eliminate internal dissension, strengthen national identity and sustain the racial project by giving birth to the Continental Empire. Tourism was one of the main systems of convincing the German people about the Third Reich's ability to restore their people to a period of prosperity.

A key role in the spread of custom touring has been the advent and spread of the car. Paraphrasing Baudrillard, the automobile becomes not only one of the symbols of man in this period because of its functional value but especially its sign value. Beyond the mere function of transportation that makes the usability of travel more immediate and personalized, the automobile gives the man of this time a sense of power and control. With this invention, man once again becomes master of the machine.

Thus, we have described those phenomena that led to the birth and development of the tourism industry. The term "industry" is perfectly fitting with the era of industrial society. The goal of opening to an ever-widening public necessitated the creation of increasingly standardized travel, both in terms of timing, mode of use and the feelings and emotions it triggers in the individual. Travel seems to have lost that intimate aspect and function of inner growth that

distinguished it in earlier eras.

1.1.3 Burgelin and the three axes of postmodern tourism

The 1970s and 1980s ushered in a new era. Profound crises mark the advent of new technologies controverting the order that had been created. New technologies that stimulate creativity and redefine, at least in part, relationships with the means of production. There is a rediscovery of one's own subjectivity that allows experiences to be lived from a different perspective than previously analyzed.

As it has been in the past, tourism in this era is also experiencing a metamorphosis that starts first from its symbolic meaning and, therefore, its function.

Burgelin, a sociologist of contemporary tourism, identifies three paths that tourism can take to enable the individual to reconcile with the present, the world and nature¹⁸. (Burgelin, 1967) Types of tourism that enable and stimulate the traveler's personal growth. Burgelin speaks of "impregnation," "discovery," and "adventure," which, in turn, call into the case the dimensions of time, participation in social life, and enjoyment of the environment.

By "impregnation" is considered in a kind of integration that the individual experiences with the territory. As mentioned earlier, the consideration of "time" takes on a very important connotation. The focus is not on the length of the journey but on the approach, one has to it. It is the slow living that allows the creation of an authentic relationship. The consumerist dimension of images is abandoned and tourism becomes once again a process of integration with new places¹⁹.

It also speaks of "discovery," or the creation of an authentic relationship with the people and the local social environment. The big difference with sightseeing, pre-packaged travel, is that the tourist attraction is not something to be seen but something to be experienced. Local customs, folklore and stories become the real heart of the experience. This new conception reminds us of the function of travel in the era of the Grand Tour, tourism reclaims its divulging dimension and travel once again becomes the communicative medium of country and local people²⁰.

The last path theorized by Burgelin considers "adventure" understood as the discovery of the unknown, and therefore more authentic, areas of the tourist location. To achieve this end, it is

¹⁸ Burgelin, O. (1967). *Le tourisme, juge de communication*. Paris, France: Éditions Ouvrières.

¹⁹ Ibidem

²⁰ Asterio, Savelli. *Sociologia del turismo*. Milano. Hoepli, 2012

sometimes necessary to abandon standard paths to routes that, however, lack the guarantees and comforts of the previous ones.

This desire for escapism is triggered by the "loss of symbolic efficacy of the masses." Social belonging is no longer the factor that makes an individual recognizable and identifiable. Now, it is what does not allow the complete realization of one's person as it prevents the exaltation of one's individuality. It returns to take a central role in one's self to create an own identity through specific experiences. The ability to enjoy experiences other than those offered by the tourist package results in the ability to self-determine oneself. As we have seen in the past, the renewed social order brings about profound changes in how one's leisure time is spent. The tourism dimension no longer belongs to the destination but rather to the relationship the tourist establishes with it. That is, to the local community's ability to create services that are capable of giving visitors unique experiences that allow them to experience and discover an area for what it has been in the past and what it is in the present²¹.

1.2 Tourism and community

1.2.1 Experiential tourism

Previously, we have often talked about experiential tourism without ever defining its key concepts precisely.

Following what Ritchie and Tung defined in 2011²² (Tung, 2011), the tourist experience is the subjective evaluation of a series of events that the tourist experiences before, during and after the trip. It is therefore possible to identify, already from this definition, three different moments that make up and define a journey.

First, it is necessary that the image that a certain destination conveys should match the interests and passions of the tourist. It should be noted that, at this stage, the easier it is to gather information about the destination the more likely that destination will be chosen.

The second stage occurs when the tourist arrives at the destination and begins to experience the area through the available activities. At this stage, it is crucial that what was previously communicated in terms of quality and safety of treatment is adhered to.

In conclusion, the last stage takes place as soon as the journey is over. This stage is very

²¹ Ibidem

²² Tung, V. W. S., & Ritchie, J. B. (2011). Exploring the essence of memorable tourism experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, **38**(4), 1367–1386.

important as the determination of the final evaluation and total satisfaction level takes place. Emotions plays a crucial role in influencing the willingness to return to that particular location.

In an article in the Harvard Business Review were identified four distinct types of experiences that can be differentiated along two dimensions. (Pine B. J., 1998) These dimensions include:

- Absorption vs. Immersion: This dimension refers to the level of mental and emotional engagement a person has during the experience. Absorption-based experiences involve intense focus and deep immersion in the moment, while immersion-based experiences involve being surrounded by a stimulating environment that captures attention.
- Active vs. Passive: This dimension reflects the level of participation and involvement of the individual in shaping the experience. Active experiences require the active participation and contribution of the individual, while passive experiences involve being a passive recipient of the experience.

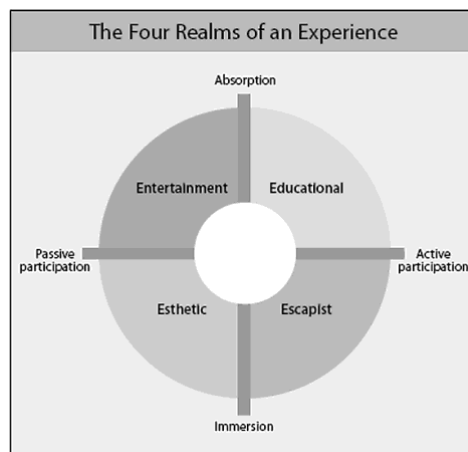


Figure 1 Pine B. J., Gilmore J.H., *Welcome to the Experience Economy Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1998

By considering these two dimensions, Pine and Gilmore categorized experiences into four types²³:

1. Entertainment: These experiences are characterized by high absorption and passive participation. They aim to provide entertainment and amusement to individuals through spectacles, performances, or recreational activities.
2. Educational: Educational experiences involve high absorption and active participation.

²³ Pine B. J., Gilmore J.H., *Welcome to the Experience Economy Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1998

They focus on providing knowledge, learning, and personal development through guided tours, workshops, or interactive exhibits.

3. **Esthetic:** Esthetic experiences entail high immersion and passive participation. They aim to evoke emotions, appreciation, and sensory pleasure through the enjoyment of art, music, nature, or aesthetics.
4. **Escapist:** Escapist experiences involve high immersion and active participation. They provide individuals with an opportunity to escape from reality, engage in role-playing, or immerse themselves in fictional worlds through activities like theme parks, virtual reality, or gaming.

We have therefore briefly outlined the key concepts that define experiential tourism. Now it is appropriate to conclude this discussion by going on to highlight where we can act so that what we have just written can be translated into real services and activities.

Creating meaningful engagement in tourism experiences requires in-depth investigation to identify effective strategies. Therefore, it is essential to understand how to organize tourism services to generate experiences that are capable of eliciting emotions. This issue is of great importance because of the significant role that emotions play in individuals' memories. Indeed, study demonstrates that the greater the emotional intensity of an event, the more easily it will be remembered over time²⁴. (Zimmerman, 2010)

The research identified seven dimensions that tourists tend to consider when evaluating a tourism experience. These dimensions include hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaning, engagement, and knowledge²⁵. (Kim, 2012)

1. **Hedonism** refers to the desire to experience pleasure and enjoyment during the tourist experience. Tourists seek activities that provide positive and rewarding feelings.
2. **Novelty** refers to the discovery of something new and different during travel. Tourists are attracted to unique experiences that stimulate them intellectually and take them away from the daily routine.

²⁴ Zimmerman, C.A. and Kelley, C.M. (2010), "I'll remember this! Effects of emotionality on memory predictions versus memory performance", *Journal of Memory and Language*, Vol. 62 No. 3, pp. 240-253.

²⁵ Kim, J.-H., Ritchie, J. and McCormick, B. (2012), "Development of a scale to measure memorable tourism experiences", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 12-25.

3. Local culture refers to tourists' desire to connect with the culture, traditions and customs of the places they visit. They are interested in experiences that allow them to immerse themselves in the local cultural environment.
4. Refreshment refers to the need to regenerate physically and mentally during the tourist experience. Tourists seek activities that promote relaxation and rest.
5. Meaningfulness relates to the pursuit of tourism experiences that have personal value and can enrich tourists' lives. These experiences may be related to goals of personal growth, spirituality or inner development.
6. Involvement refers to active participation and total immersion in the tourist experience. Tourists seek experiences that engage them emotionally, creating a sense of belonging and connection to the place they visit.
7. Knowledge refers to tourists' aspiration to acquire new information, skills and knowledge during the tourist experience. They are interested in experiences that provide opportunities for learning and cultural enrichment.

1.2.2 A sustainable model for Community Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) (Mtapuri, Advancing community-based tourism approaches for the sustainable development of destinations, 2022) is an approach that aims to promote responsible tourism development by placing local communities at the center and paying special attention to the conservation of natural and cultural resources. This model is based on key principles, including active community participation, social and economic equity, and environmental and cultural sustainability²⁶. In the CBT context, local communities are involved in all stages of the tourism process, including planning, management, and sharing the benefits of tourism. This involvement implies that communities have a role in tourism policymaking, creation of tourism products and services, management of activities, and distribution of tourism-generated revenue. The goal is to ensure that local communities have an active voice in decisions affecting their area and to create a sense of responsibility and involvement in tourism development.

Social and economic equity is a key element of the sustainable model for CBT. This implies a fair distribution of the benefits of tourism among community members, ensuring employment opportunities, access to resources and sharing of profits in an equitable manner. The goal is to

²⁶Mtapuri, O., Camilleri, M. A., & Dłużewska, A. (2022). Advancing community-based tourism approaches for the sustainable development of destinations. *Sustainable Development*, 30(3), 423–432.

promote the socio-economic development of local communities in an equitable and sustainable manner²⁷. In addition, the sustainable model for CBT aims to prevent or mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on local culture by promoting the enhancement and preservation of cultural heritage. Environmental sustainability is another key element of the sustainable model for CBT. This involves adopting responsible natural resource management practices, promoting low-impact tourism, conserving fragile ecosystems, and raising environmental awareness among communities and visitors. The goal is to preserve the natural environment and minimize the negative impact of tourism activities on the ecosystem.

In conclusion, the sustainable model for Community-Based Tourism aims to promote tourism development that meets the needs and aspirations of local communities, contributing to their socio-economic well-being and the preservation of natural and cultural resources. This model provides an alternative to conventional tourism, which can often have negative effects on communities and the environment, by offering a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable approach²⁸.

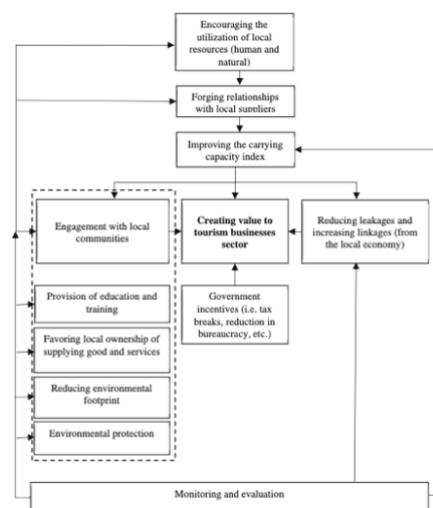


Figure 2 Mtapuri, O., Camilleri, M. A., & Dłużewska, A. (2022). Advancing community-based tourism approaches for the sustainable development of destinations. *Sustainable Development*, 30(3), 423–432.

1.2.3 The senses based model

Throughout the different ages there have been different currents of thought regarding the role our senses play in relation to knowledge formation. One of the earliest thinkers in history, Aristotle, argued that perception of the external world through the senses enabled the individual to formulate theories and, therefore, knowledge. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the significance of the body in shaping our perceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). This concept aligns with

²⁷ Mtapuri, O., Camilleri, M. A., & Dłużewska, A. (2022). Advancing community-based tourism approaches for the sustainable development of destinations. *Sustainable Development*, 30(3), 423–432.

²⁸ Ibidem

Damasio's theory, which suggests that our understanding of the world is not solely based on visual images but also incorporates all five senses. Damasio posits that our minds translate knowledge through a multisensory framework, acknowledging the interplay of various sensory modalities in our cognitive processes. Again, the role that the body plays in the interpretation of sensations is emphasized.²⁹ (Meacci, 2018)

For an experiential product such as tourism to be consumed, an interaction between subject and object, between activity and tourist, is necessary. As previously stated, to create an experience that elicits strong emotions in the tourist and thus increases the likelihood that the tourist will judge the experience he or she has just had as positive, intense perception is necessary. Perception, that is, interpretation of stimuli through one's senses and mind. Thus, we have concluded the path we started previously, but more importantly we have highlighted how important it is to design activities that involve all our senses.

The above conclusion needs an explanation about the ways through which the senses can be stimulated. Rossi and Goetz call them "experiential points"³⁰ (Rossi, 2011) in that they are the moments of interaction between subject and object that therefore contribute to the final judgment of the tourist experience. Following this reasoning, we can say that creating an experience involves the design of the different experiential points. To this end, it is very useful to adopt the senses-based model. This model theorizes the creation of multisensory experiences that can engage the tourist by distinguishing 5 different stages. The path that is taken consists of: creation of numerous experiential points that intervene with all of our five senses; association of the experiential points with the sense that is intended to be stimulated; evaluation of the overall experience considering the contribution that each sense made; evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the experience; analysis of the experiential points, possible removal and replacement of the experiential points with low involvement.

In concluding the first part of this paper, it is worth highlighting how tourism plays a major role within social dynamics. The evolution it has undergone over the centuries makes it possible to see its absolute correlation with the determination of the social character of each individual and, therefore, of each society. From this evidence arises the need to communicate how central,

²⁹ Meacci, L., & Liberatore, G. (2018). A senses-based model for experiential tourism, *Tourism & Management Studies*, 14(4), 7-14.

³⁰ Rossi, A. & Goetz, M. (2011). *Tourist Experience Design*. Milano: HOEPLI.

especially in a country like ours, the tourism industry is not only as a driver of economic development but also as a pivotal point of social development through the rediscovery and enhancement of those factors that make a destination unique. We are therefore discussing culture, history, natural heritage and food and wine traditions.

Recent news events have dispossessed us of much security but, on the other hand, has given us an awareness of the value of time and the value of life. Hence, we speak of slow tourism and experiential tourism since the resulting travel ideas involve the creation of relationships through the range of activities and services that the area provides. This renewed vision of tourism implies from the supply side an increasingly in-depth study about the territorial essence to create a rich tourist offer that is able to attract a demand of tourists that does not "consume" resources but is able to enhance them by giving them the right importance.

This theme is supported by a study published in the "Revista Venezolana de Gerencia" that focuses on experiential tourism and economic development of the Peruvian inhabitants of Ramadilla-Lunahuaná³¹. The results of the study indicate that experiential tourism has had a positive impact on both economic development and on improving the quality of life of the inhabitants by providing greater cultural awareness, promoting the appreciation of local traditions, and creating a sense of pride and belonging in the community (Flores Quispe, 2022). The increased flow of tourism has generated new employment and income opportunities for residents, particularly in activities related to hospitality, gastronomy, and recreation.

Part Two will analyze the territory of the Valnerina from a morphological, historical and sociological point of view so as to be able to lay the groundwork for what will then be the purpose of this paper: to demonstrate how careful tourism planning to enhance natural resources, folk traditions, history and food and wine culture can create a multidimensional tourism offer that gives the possibility of interpreting an area from different points of view. This would generate greater dynamism that results in increased possibilities and quality of life as experienced in Perù.

³¹ Flores Quispe, B. M., Yangali Vicente, J. S., & Cuba Carbajal, N. (2022). Experiential tourism and economic development in the Peruvian inhabitants of Ramadilla-Lunahuaná. *Revista Venezolana de Gerencia*, 27(7), 404–416.

Section 2. La Valnerina

2.1 Territory

2.1.1 Morfology

The Valnerina is a mountainous region wedged between Umbria, Marche and Lazio that takes its name from the important river that rises at the foot of the Sibillini Mountains and flows through it, the Nera River. Before flowing into the Tiber River, the flow of the Nera River is enriched by several rivers such as the Ussita River, the Corno River, the Vigi River, and the Velino River. The latter, flowing into the Nera, generates the Marmore Falls artificially created in 271 B.C. by the Romans to favor the outflow of the Velino waters that overflowed, creating marshy and noxious areas. Shielding the river from which the valley takes its name are several mountain complexes characterized by a downward trend if one proceeds from the Upper Valnerina to the Terni area. The highest mountain system is that of the Sibillini Mountains, which consists of about thirty peaks above 2,000 meters above sea level. Prominent among them are Mount Redentore (2,448 m.) and Mount Vettore (2,476 m.), which represent the highest mountains in Umbria and Marche. To conclude the morphological and orographic presentation of the territory, it is necessary to mention the Castelluccio di Norcia highlands and the Piano di Santa Scolastica, two plains that are part of the Sibillini mountain system. The Castelluccio di Norcia highlands, between 1250 and 1350 meters above sea level, are composed of four basins: Pian Perduto, Pian Grande, Pian Piccolo and Pian dei Pantani. The Pian di Santa Scolastica, on the other hand, is between 650 and 600 meters above sea level and surrounds the settlement of Norcia.

2.1.2 Valnerina, recognized as an internal area

Following the 2016 earthquakes that deeply affected this area, the Valnerina was recognized as an inland area. This designation is given to those territories distant from essential services understood as health, education and transportation³². The inland Valnerina area is composed of the following 14 municipalities divided between the province of Perugia and the province of Terni: Cascia, Cerreto di Spoleto, Monteleone di Spoleto, Norcia, Poggiodomo, Preci, Sant'Anatolia di Narco, Scheggino, Sellano, Vallo di nera, Arrone, Ferentillo, Montefranco,

³² <https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/strategia-nazionale-aree-interne/la-selezione-delle-aree/>

Polino. The spatial classification model divides the 14 municipalities into 54 percent as intermediate municipalities, 46 percent as suburban municipalities and a municipality is defined as "cintura". This distinction translates into the time distance that each municipality gives with respect to a pole, that is, a municipality that simultaneously offers an articulated upper secondary school offer, at least one hospital home to d.e.a. Level I, and at least a silver-type train station. The classification updated in 2022 provides for the intermediate municipality a distance of 27.7 minutes from the pole, for the suburban municipality a distance of 40.9 minutes from the pole and a distance of less than 20 minutes for the municipality "cintura".³³ The inland area of the Valnerina consists of about 1060 square kilometers of land, a population of just under 20,000 and an average population density of 18,6 inhabitants per square kilometer³⁴.

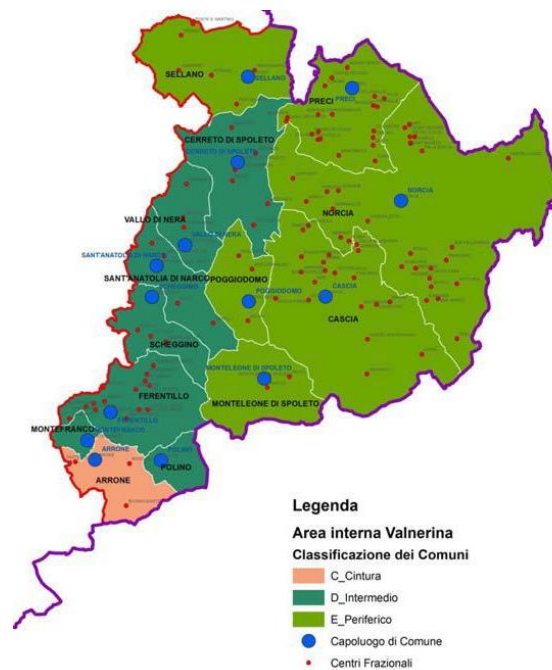


Figure 2 Preliminare rafforzato di strategia d'area, Valnerina 14 comunità una sola idea

³³ <https://www.openpolis.it/parole/che-cosa-sono-le-aree-interne/>

³⁴ <https://www.regione.umbria.it/la-regione/politiche-integrate-territoriali-strategie-arre-interne/area-interna-valnerina-terza-area>

2.1.3 Depopulation, cause or effect?

Depopulation is one of the main problems in this area, which has been exacerbated by the severe earthquake that hit central Italy in 2016.

Two types of graphs will be shown below for each municipality in the inner Valnerina area, describing the evolution of the population from 2001 to 2021 from two perspectives: the first graph considers the demographic trend of the population residing in the 14 municipalities; the second graph considers the analysis of the age structure by considering three age groups: young people 0-14 years old, adults 15-64 years old, and the elderly 65 years old and over. Based on the different proportions among these age groups, the structure of a population is referred to as progressive, stationary or regressive depending on whether the young population is greater than, equivalent to or less than the elderly population.

CASCIA

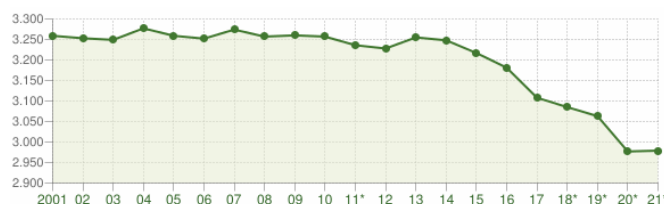


Figure 3 Population trends
Municipality of Cascia (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

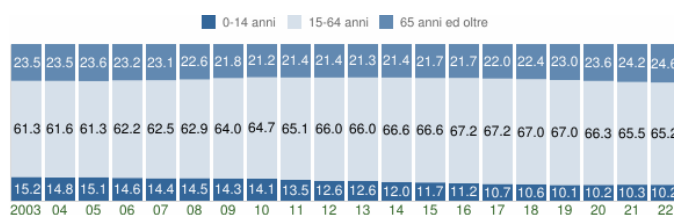


Figure 4 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Cascia (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing

NORCIA

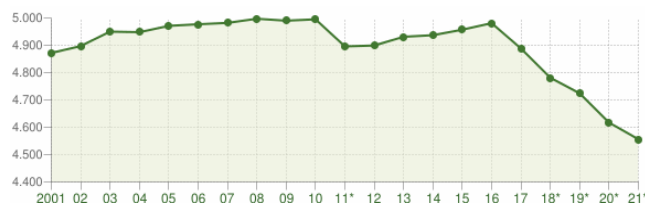


Figure 6 Population trends
Municipality of Norcia (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

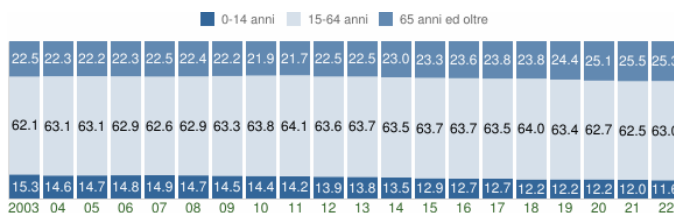


Figure 5 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Norcia (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

PRECI

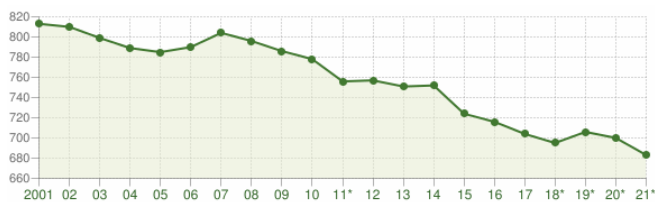


Figure 8 Population trends
Municipality of Preci (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

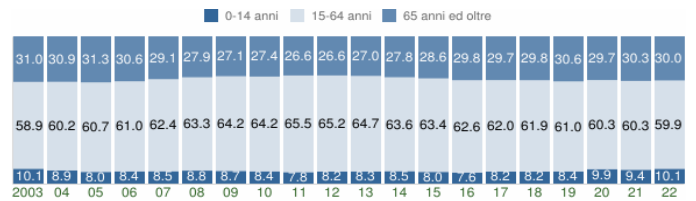


Figure 7 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Preci (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

FERENTILLO

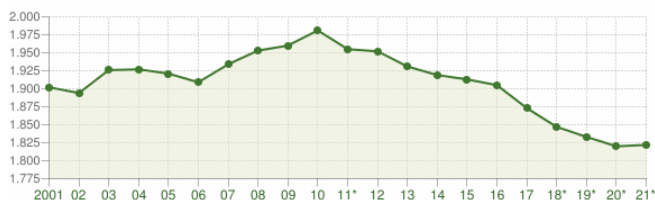


Figure 10 Population trends
Municipality of Ferentillo (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

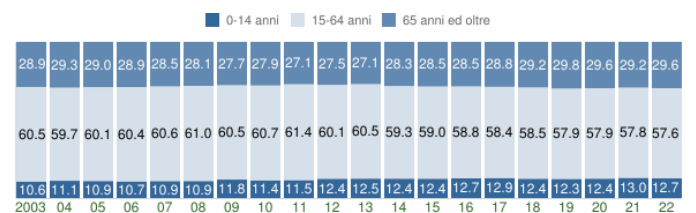


Figure 9 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Ferentillo (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

POLINO

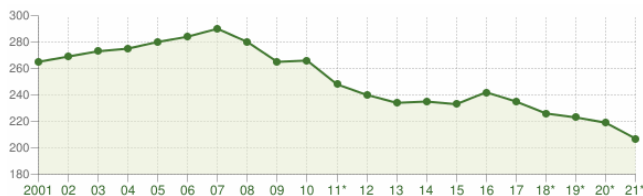


Figure 11 Population trends
Municipality of Polino (TR) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

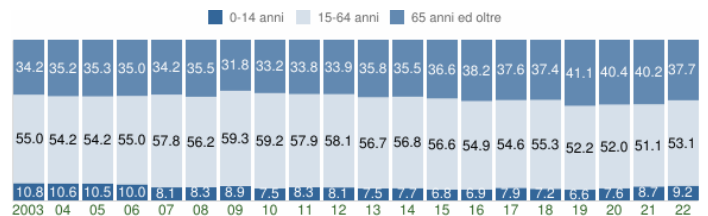


Figure 12 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Polino (TR) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

SCHEGGINO

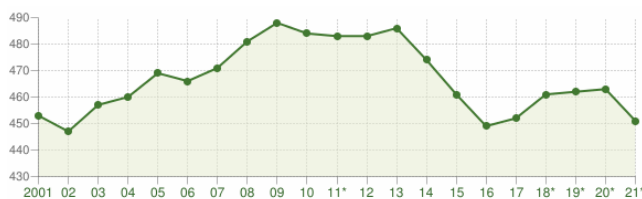


Figure 14 Population trends
Municipality of Scheggino (TR) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

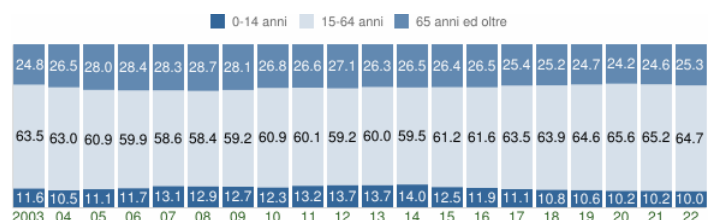


Figure 13 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Scheggino (TR) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

SELLANO

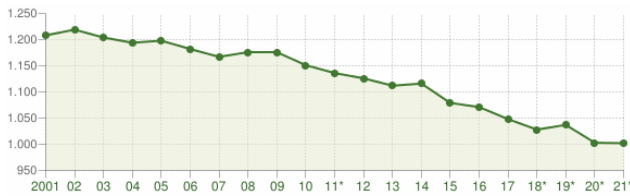


Figure 16 Population trends
Municipality of Sellano (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

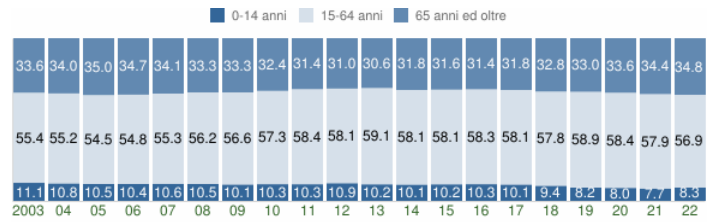


Figure 15 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Sellano (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

MONTEFRANCO

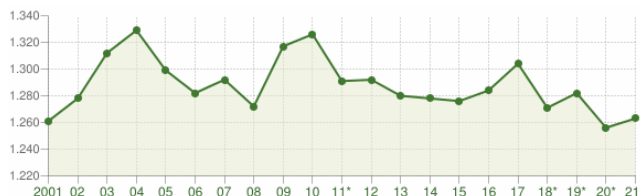


Figure 18 Population trends
Municipality of Montefranco (TR) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

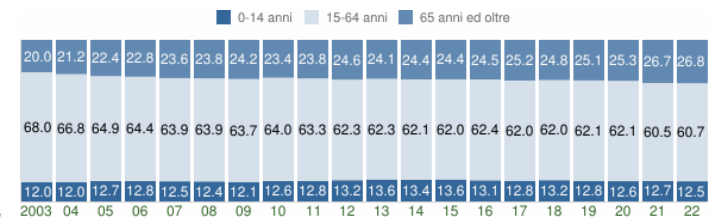


Figure 17 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Montefranco (TR) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

ARRONE

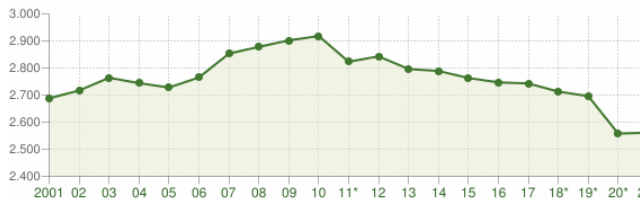


Figure 19 Population trends
Municipality of Arrone (TR) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

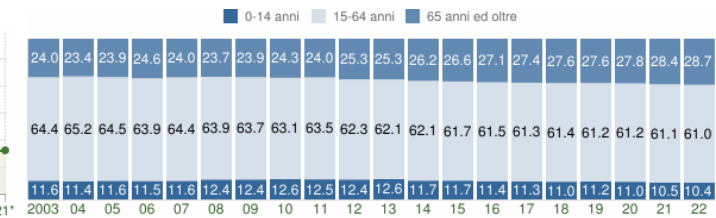


Figure 20 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Arrone (TR) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

VALLO DI NERA

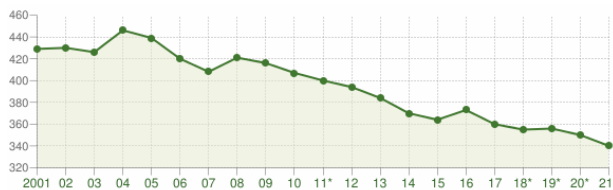


Figure 22 Population trends
Municipality of Vallo di Nera (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

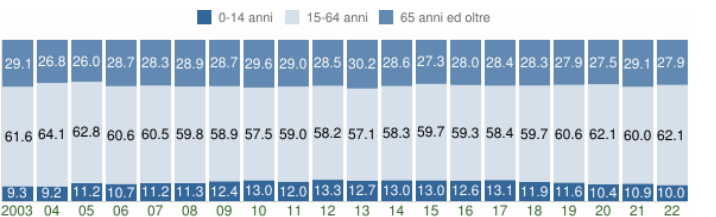


Figure 21 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Vallo di Nera (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

SANT'ANATOLIA DI NARCO

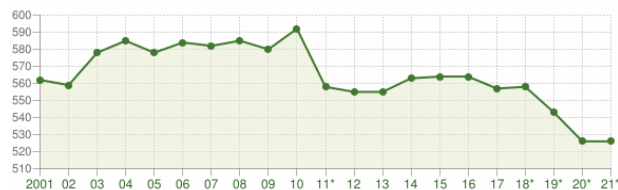


Figure 24 Population trends
Municipality of Sant'Anatolia di Narco (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

CERRETO DI SPOLETO

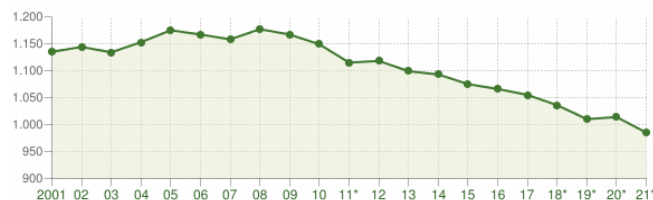


Figure 25 Population trends
Municipality of Cerreto di Spoleto (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

MONTELEONE DI SPOLETO

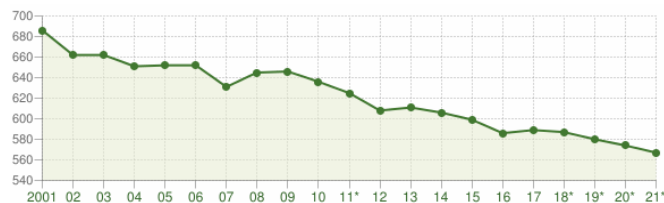


Figure 28 Population trends
Municipality of Monteleone di Spoleto (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

POGGIODOMO

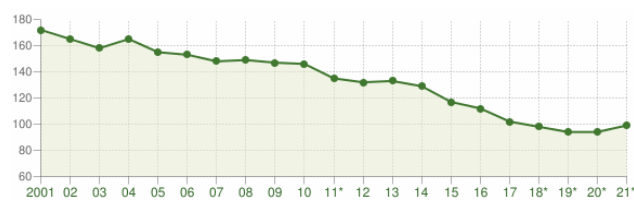


Figure 30 Population trends
Municipality of Poggiodomo (PG) - ISTAT data as of December 31 each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

(*) POST-CENSUS

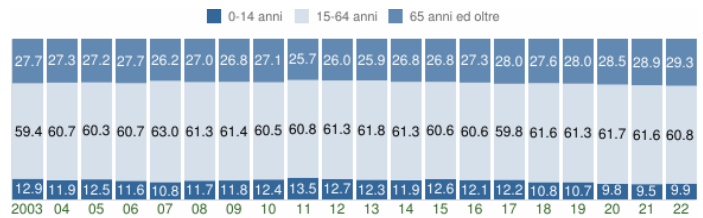


Figure 23 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Santa 'Anatolia di Narco (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

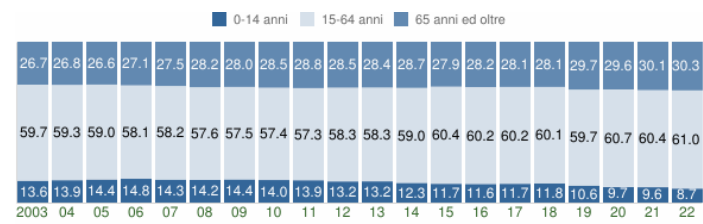


Figure 26 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Cerreto di Spoleto (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

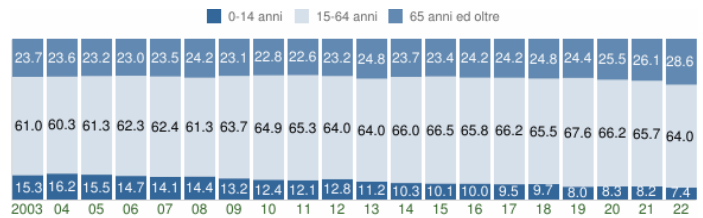


Figure 27 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Monteleone di Spoleto (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

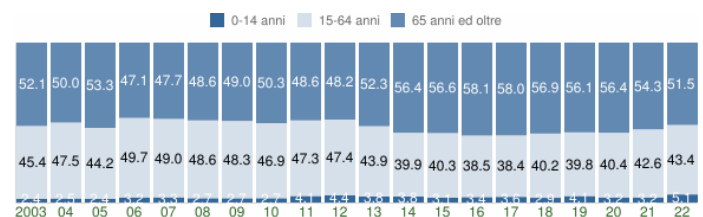


Figure 29 Age structure of the population (% values)
Municipality of Poggiodomo (PG) - ISTAT data as of 1 January each year

TUTTAITALIA.IT processing.

As is evident by analyzing the graphs describing the evolutionary trend of the population in each of the 14 municipalities, the Internal Valnerina Area has undergone over the past 20 years, and is still undergoing today, a profound phase of depopulation. This issue can be analyzed from two perspectives: the absolute level of population and the level of population aging. The document "The population in Umbria in 2022," prepared by the regional directorate for resources, planning, culture and tourism, shows that in social zone 6, which represents 10 municipalities in the Valnerina valley, the old-age index (percentage ratio between the number of over-65s and the number of young people up to 14 years of age) is well above the regional average. On Jan. 1, 2022, the 10 municipalities report an old-age index of 251.8 percent³⁵ against regional and national averages of 223.1 percent³⁶ and 187.6 percent³⁷, respectively. The old-age index is a demographic indicator that measures the ratio of the elderly population to the working-age population in a given society. In summary, there are about 64.2 more elderly people for every young person in Valnerina than the national average. This indicator is very important as it allows, although not exhaustively, to outline how population aging may affect the economy and social protection systems. A high old-age index may indicate a greater demand for health and social care which contrasts with the current situation that the Valnerina is experiencing for which the creation of the inland area was necessary.

One of the causes we can attribute to depopulation can be found in two factors that may have a direct connection: social isolation and lack of job opportunities. Very often young people living in these localities feel distant from everything the world has to offer, and in an historical period dominated by social media this seems increasingly evident. Factor that emerged from a series of qualitative studies conducted as part of a European project entitled Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration and Markets (GEMM) with the aim of investigating the underlying motivations behind the decision to migrate of individuals from Italy, Spain, Romania and Bulgaria. These representations give rise to a collective imagination in which these areas are not perceived as resourceful but rather as locations with few professional outlets and few opportunities to express their skills and abilities. All of this has an impact on the sustainability of essential services such as schools, hospitals and transportation, which have a direct impact on residents' quality of life.

³⁵ Direzione regionale risorse programmazione cultura turismo. (2022). *La popolazione in Umbria nel 2022*

³⁶ Ibidem

³⁷ Istat data

In conclusion, public and private entities should work on a two-pronged development plan. First, it is necessary to increase the supply of essential services so as to facilitate life in these localities. Second, it is important to provide motivation for which to build one's future in these lands. This is possible by creating in residents, starting with the youngest, a deep knowledge of the area to create a dynamic environment that is able to leverage the naturalistic, cultural, historical and eno-gastronomic resources it can offer.

2.1.4 Accessibility

Accessibility is one of the main issues in Umbria and the Valnerina since, despite its central position in the national geographic landscape, it turns out to be decidedly disconnected from the country's main attractive poles. As explained earlier, the establishment of the inland area was also made possible because of an absent, or insufficient, rail connection. The main regional railway junction is the station of Foligno, which is on average 50 to 60 minutes away from the towns of the Valnerina. The nearest railroad is Spoleto, which, however, has much less frequent connections than the first one. The International Airport of Umbria - San Francesco d'Assisi is the regional airport that in the years has been at the center of a policy of expansion and renewal. It is about 80 km from the valley of the Nera River. It therefore appears evident that wheeled transport is the main means of movement in the area. Arrone, the locality closest to the A1 highway, is 40 minutes from it. Cascia and Norcia, two of the most distant localities, are 1 hour and 30 minutes from it. The connections to the main national highways, considering the geographical location and morphology, are therefore quite effective. The Valnerina State Road 209 originates in the center of Terni and, before merging into the Val di Chienti State Road 77, it skirts all the municipalities belonging to the Nera Valley.

2.2 Valnerina and its resources

2.2.1 Eno-gastronomy

Research conducted by Symbola and Coldiretti, shows that 92 percent of protected origin products (PDO, and Protected Indication of Origin, PGI) are produced in the more than 5,000 small Italian municipalities where fewer than 5,000 people live³⁸. Through a series of measures and simplifications aimed at promoting quality tourism and short supply chain agribusiness, the law on small municipalities (Realacci law) has made it possible to spread broadband to these areas previously considered marginal, thus offering the prospect of expanding the communicative and productive universe of these territories. In addition, the law has invested in the rationalization and efficiency of services, maintenance of the territory, paying special attention to environmental protection, as well as the safety of roads, schools and the public building stock, which also requires energy improvements³⁹.

It is good to highlight the role that typical food and wine, protected origin and otherwise, play within a community. Importance that is manifested not only through employment and direct economic impact, but also and above all through all those related services and events that allow the 360-degree exaltation of what a given product is and of what it can mean to a community. Again, the close connection between territorial resources, tourism and development emerges. Below is an overview of the typical food products of the Valnerina.

Black truffle

The Valnerina region is home to three species of truffle, the Norcia fine Black Truffle (*Tuber Melanosporum Vittadini*), the Summer Truffle (*Tuber Aestivum*) also known as scorzone, and the Winter Black Truffle (*Tuber Uncinatum*), which are harvested from December 1 to March 31, June 1 to August 31, and October 1 to November 31, respectively. The truffle is a species of hypogenous fungus that lives underground in symbiosis with green plants, particularly downy oaks, holm oaks and beech trees, and lacks photosynthetic activity. Quarrymen say that for good truffle production three days with a large temperature range in July are required. The truffle hunter's trade requires skill and sensitivity gained through experience, which involves identifying signs in the ground and establishing a partnership with the dog⁴⁰.

³⁸ Alfano, F., Falcioni, P., Masini, S., Renzi, F., & Sturabotti, D. (2018). *Piccoli comuni e tipicità*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*

⁴⁰ www.lavalnerina.it

Pure saffron from Cascia

The historical importance of saffron in medieval Umbria has been documented through the penalties for stealing or damaging crops of this precious spice in the Statute of Cascia from the communal period. The high importance of this spice is also evident from the fact that it was used as a form of payment and was part of the dowry that nuns had to bring to enter the Monastery of Cascia. However, in the late 16th century the cultivation of saffron mysteriously disappeared from Umbria, and it was only in 2000 that this spice was reintroduced in the Valnerina thanks to the collaboration of the Municipality of Cascia, the University of Perugia, Cedrav and several small producers united in the Cascia Saffron Association. The red stigmas of saffron contain the active ingredients of the spice, including crocin and safranal, which give it its characteristic orange-red color and intense, lingering aroma. The process of extracting saffron is very delicate and requires great care and attention, as each flower contains only three stigmas, which must be manually harvested and separated one by one. The amount of flowers needed to produce one kilogram of saffron is about 150,000, and the process of harvesting and separating the stigmas requires many hours of manual labor. Because of the extremely labor-intensive extraction process, saffron is considered one of the most expensive spices in the world, but its unique flavor and intense aroma make it highly valued in cooking. Saffron is used to flavor many dishes, including meat, fish, rice, pasta, and vegetables, and can also be used in the preparation of desserts and drinks. In addition, this spice also has therapeutic properties, and is used in several traditional medicines for its calming and anti-inflammatory effect⁴¹.

Roveja from Civita di Cascia

In Cascia, along the Nera River, grows an ancient legume called Roveja from Civita di Cascia, which became a Slow Food Presidium in 2006. It is a legume with valued nutritional values, growing mainly on the high peaks of the Sibillini Mountains. Some scholars consider it a progenitor of the common pea, while others classify it as a separate species (*Pisum arvense*). Due to the high height of the plants, which exceeds one meter, the stems curve and bend toward the ground, making mechanized harvesting with a combine harvester difficult. Therefore, Roveja is still harvested by hand, and only a few farmers engage in its cultivation, mainly in the Valnerina and around Cascia. Roveja is sown in spring-summer, does not need much water, and is harvested between late July and early August. After drying, it is threshed, and the grain

⁴¹ www.zafferanodicascia.com

is freed from impurities by ventilation⁴².

Spelt of Monteleone DOP

Farro di Monteleone di Spoleto DOP represents a variety of cereal suitable for planting in mountainous regions. Characterized by a remarkable tolerance to poor soils and cold, this variety seems to be specially developed for the mountainous environment of Valnerina. Its history dates to the 16th century when generations of farmers followed one another selecting the physical characteristics of the cereal to achieve a perfect match with the environmental and climatic conditions of the region⁴³.

Spelt of Monteleone was granted Protected Geographical Indication in 2007⁴⁴.

Seasoned ricotta cheese from Valnerina

This product originated from the need to preserve products derived from sheep's milk, such as cheese and ricotta. Specifically, ricotta salata originated during transhumance, when the ricotta was placed in a hemp bag, salted and left to dry. This curing process, which can last from 15 days to 5 months, led to the creation of a product with a white, compact paste and a typical pear shape due to the canvas bag. A variation of ricotta salata involves covering it with bran or wild herbs, which promote the natural preservation of the product.

Depopulation in the 1960s and 1970s and the 2016 earthquake led to the gradual reduction of pastoral activities in the Nera Valley. The Valnerina Salted Ricotta Presidium, with the support of the Parmigiano Reggiano Consortium, is committed to supporting the recovery of this sector. The salted ricotta produced by the Presidium comes exclusively from farmers who process their own milk, strictly raw, and raise their herds on the pastures of the Valnerina throughout the year⁴⁵.

Norcia IGP Ham

“Prosciutto di Norcia IGP” is a cured meat produced in and around Norcia from the leg of the Italian heavy breed of pig. The product is processed with sea salt and natural flavorings, cured

⁴² www.umbriatourism.it

⁴³ www.umbriatourism.it

⁴⁴ www.lavalnerina.it

⁴⁵ www.fondazioneSlowFood.com

for at least 12 months and has an elongated shape with a weight ranging from 6 to 10 kg, with a typical outer rind that protects the inner meat of deep red color and delicate flavor. The “IGP” mark guarantees the quality and authenticity of the product, in line with precise production and processing criteria defined by the production specification.

Salting is done in two stages, using only sea salt. Initially, the ham is completely covered with salt and left to rest for a week, in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. Next, the salting is removed and a massaging phase is carried out, before a second salting that will last for 14 to 18 days.

After brushing and massaging, the legs are hung and left to rest for a period of 2-5 months. The “sugnature” represents the next stage, an essential phase to protect the ham from external agents and to ensure its internal softness and homogeneous seasoning, during which a layer of finely ground and seasoned pork fat is applied to the exposed part of the muscle.

Curing takes place in specially equipped rooms, where adequate air exchange and the right thermo-hygrometric balance are maintained. During this period, ventilation, exposure to light and natural humidity is allowed, depending on the climatic conditions of the production area. The duration of aging, from salting to marketing, cannot be less than 12 months, as stipulated in the production specification. At the end of the curing process, Prosciutto di Norcia IGP is subjected to checks by the certifying entity, after which it is ready to be branded with the logo of the “Consorzio di Tutela del Prosciutto di Norcia IGP”, a synonym of guarantee of absolute compliance with the production specification for the consumer⁴⁶.

Lentil from Castelluccio di Norcia

The region under analysis has a predominant crop of lentil (*Lens culinaris* Medikus), one of the oldest food plants known to man. Native to the Middle Eastern region of the Fertile Crescent, lentil has spread throughout the world. The variety cultivated in the area is an ecotype known as "Castelluccio di Norcia lentil," which is characterized by a high level of resistance to cold and drought due to its short life cycle from planting in late April to harvesting in early August.

The plant's habit is gracile and branched, with a taproot equipped with numerous lateral fibrous roots. Microsperm seed with high nutritive value and post-harvest straw residues with high forage value represent additional unique characteristics of the ecotype. In addition, the high percentage of limestone in the area's soils is an indispensable condition for Castelluccio di

⁴⁶ www.prosciuttodinorcia.com

Norcia lentil, as it contributes to the variety's unique organoleptic properties along with other causes, including altitude.

Because soils with a high percentage of limestone produce a grain with cotyledons that are too leathery for culinary use, they are used for seed crops. In contrast, soils with an average percentage of limestone are used for a different crop rotation.

The Castelluccio di Norcia lentil production cycle involves specific agronomic practices, which also depend on the microclimate created in relation to the location and morphology of the land. These practices include pre-sowing tillage such as not too deep plowing and harrowing, sowing at an average depth of 5 cm in the second half of April, post-sowing rolling to facilitate easy mechanical harvesting, and the harvest itself, which takes place by the first half of August.

Harvesting takes place in several stages: a mowing with light machinery when the plant is dry, a raking with comb rakes, and a special manual operation of dividing the pre-established rows into closely spaced piles for slow drying. This process affects the particular pigmentation of Castelluccio lentil. After a drying period monitored by a local method of testing the seed's consistency between the teeth, the seeds are separated from the straw residue by threshing. Some farmers still use old threshers with slow beaters for greater product cleanliness and less seed breakage⁴⁷.

Castelluccio di Norcia lentil was granted Protected Geographical Indication in 1997⁴⁸.

Buckwheat from Valnerina

The presence of buckwheat in the Valnerina is attested as early as the Middle Ages, and in some writings of the time it is also mentioned as a medicinal plant.

In the first decade of the 20th century, buckwheat cultivation in the Valnerina declined due to the abandonment of mountainous areas, laborious and expensive harvesting, the introduction of more productive crops, and the massive import of buckwheat from abroad. Over the following decades, buckwheat almost disappeared from the area, but some small-scale crops still survive above 600 meters above sea level. Despite its importance for human and environmental health, buckwheat has been almost forgotten. It is a "pseudo cereal" that allows sustainable agronomic practices and does not require chemical weeding, fertilization or phytosanitary treatments.

⁴⁷ www.castellucciadinorcia.it

⁴⁸ www.lavalnerina.it

To support the reintroduction of buckwheat in the Valnerina and to restore the local supply chain for this product, the Slow Food Presidium was created to stop the abandonment of the lands affected by the 2016 and 2017 earthquakes and to reestablish the value of this product. Local producers market buckwheat grain, dehulled grain, and buckwheat flour⁴⁹.

2.2.2 Valnerina and its aquatic heritage

Nera River

The Nera River basin is the highest of the Umbrian basins and covers more than 4200 km² in area. The river originates at an elevation of 902 m on the border between Umbria and Marche and has a total length of about 125 km. Most of the basin consists of highly permeable limestone soils, which results in low drainage density⁵⁰.

The main tributary of the Nera is the Velino River, which has a basin of 2357 km² extending into Lazio and Abruzzo. Tributaries in the mountainous area of the Nera with catchments of more than 100 km² include the Corno River, which receives water from the Sordo River, and the Vigi River.

The Nera River has a significant impact on the hydrological regime of the Tiber, both by increasing the average annual runoff and by reducing the seasonal variability of runoff. Moreover, it is the only Umbrian watercourse with a typical fluvial regime: the average natural annual flow, calculated at the confluence section with the Tiber, exceeds 100 m³/s, and the average monthly flows during the year do not deviate much from this average value. This characteristic is common to all streams in the Nera River basin and ensures an abundant basic water supply to the surface water circulation⁵¹.

Marmore Waterfalls

The Marmore Falls are a complex of waterfalls located in Umbria, Italy. Originally built by the ancient Romans in 271 B.C., these man-made waterfalls were designed to manage flooding and harness the water resource for both agriculture and as a source of energy.

With a total height of 165 meters, the Marmore Falls are the largest waterfalls in Europe. However, much of the water in the Velino River is used for power generation, resulting in a

⁴⁹ www.fondazione Slow Food.com

⁵⁰ Della Bella, V. (a cura di), 2019. *Caratterizzazione e diffusione delle specie aliene acquatiche e di ambienti umidi in Umbria*. Arpa Umbria, Perugia, pp 290.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*

reduced minimum flow rate of only 0.3 cubic meters/second at certain times of the day. To create a more spectacular experience for visitors, water is released at certain times of the day, raising the water flow rate to 15 cubic meters/second and creating a breathtaking spectacle⁵².

The Marmore Falls is a magnificent example of hydraulic engineering that has seen the succession of great works over more than two millennia. This long history began with the successful land reclamation work carried out by the Roman consul Curio Dentato in 271 B.C. and then saw several attempts by the Papal State, between 1422 with the creation of the Cava Reatina and 1793 with the creation of the Canale Pio, to try to regulate the waters of the Velino River and prevent periodic flooding in the plain of the same name. The first legal conflict originating from a hydraulic hazard occurred between the inhabitants of ancient Terni and those of nearby Rieti. The dispute arose because of flooding caused by the Velino River, which flows into the Nera through the Curiana Quarry, which caused damage to the inhabitants of Terni. On the other hand, the people of Rieti considered the Curiana Quarry an essential hydraulic work for their territory.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that the disputes between the people of Terni and the people of Rieti found a solution, when water, which had been a problem for millennia, became a fundamental resource for the industrialization of the area⁵³.

From the seventeenth century, the waterfall becomes one of the main stops on the Grand Tour made to complete the education of gentlemen and intellectuals from all over Europe⁵⁴.

Terni municipality tourism councilor Elena Proietti announced that in 2022 Marmore Waterfalls reached 500,000 visitors.

Marcite of Norcia

The Marcite, seemingly common meadows, instead hold an artificial character.

They are in fact a masterpiece of human hydraulic engineering, as they constitute lawns that are perpetually irrigated by a sophisticated hydraulic system of sluices and canals. This system, which makes it possible for the turf to grow even during the winter months, allows up to 10

⁵² www.cascatadellemarmore.info

⁵³ Lo, R. I., & Federico, V. (2021). *La cascata delle Marmore : uno straordinario scenario per artisti di ogni tempo presinpre*. 108, 271–290.

⁵⁴ Ibidem

grass cuts per year. Located in the western sector of the St. Scholastica Plain, in lowest elevation (570-590 m approx.), the Marcite extends over the area where the groundwater of the Torbidone, Madonna di Capregna and Salicone rivers resurface, which then flow into the Sordo River. These lands are divided into small plots, called cortinelle, separated by man-made canals that convey water and are blocked with wooden sluice gates to prevent stagnation. The water flows through small dripping ditches, ensuring an even distribution over the lawn surface. The origin of these agricultural cultivation techniques is traced by some scholars to the sixth century A.D., thanks to the agricultural practices practiced on the site by the religious order of St. Benedict. However, according to more recent studies, the birth of this irrigation system lies between the late 13th and early 14th centuries, inspired by the Lombard Marcite introduced by monastic orders. An additional factor contributing to the Marcite's uniqueness is the temperature of the water at the springs, which fluctuates between 6° and 12°. This characteristic, together with the constant and even flow, made possible by human intervention, means that these meadows are always green and lush⁵⁵.

Bagni di Triponzo

The thermal baths of Cerreto di Spoleto were first mentioned in 1488, although they are believed to have existed since Roman times. Initially belonging to the municipality of Norcia, they later passed to Pasquale Forti and the bishop of Norcia Bucchi-Accica, who donated them to the municipality of Cerreto. Today, these baths are the only spa in Umbria fed with calcium-rich sulfur water, with therapeutic properties independent of the season. Eighteen springs of emerald green-colored sulfur thermal water gush here. The water, which begins in the Sibillini Mountains Park, collects after each rain and some drops reach rivers and streams, while others choose a path that takes them deep into the earth, where they bind to porous rocks and begin a long journey. Along the way, the water acquires the properties of the substances of which the rock is composed and heats up as it descends into the depths of the Earth⁵⁶.

2.2.3 Walks and Natural Beauties

"Piccoli Comuni e Cammini d'Italia" is a project by Symbola Foundations and IFEL that brings together the 44 itineraries identified in 2016 by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities

⁵⁵ www.lavalnerina.it

⁵⁶ www.umbriatourism.it

that represent a very important local development asset⁵⁷.

The itineraries that lap the Valnerina territory will be presented below.

Benedict's Way

This path has a length of 300 km, laps 2 regions, 4 provinces, 56 municipalities and 4 parks. The path begins in Norcia, the birthplace of St. Benedict, and ends in Cassino, where the saint died. The starting point of the journey is the Basilica of St. Benedict in Norcia, which was largely destroyed by the 2016 earthquake. During the journey, you will stop in Roccaporena, a hamlet of Cascia, where the home of St. Rita is located, and then continue on to Monteleone di Spoleto, the highest municipality in Umbria, located 978 m above sea level⁵⁸. The path then enters Lazio territory and ends in Cassino.

Francis Way

This route has a length of 500 km, laps 3 regions, 5 provinces, 59 municipalities and 6 parks. The Way of Francis is one of the longest and most complete routes that crosses the stages of St. Francis' life, touching on the fundamental places of Franciscan worship such as the Sanctuary of La Verna in Tuscany, the Basilica of Assisi and Rome, the center of Christianity. It can be divided into three different routes: the Via del Nord, which runs from Chiusi della Verna to Assisi; the Via del Sud, which starts from St. Peter's Basilica and arrives in the saint's hometown; and the Via di Roma, which starts from the Sanctuary of La Verna and crosses Umbria to arrive in the capital. The latter route passes through the Valnerina, touching on Sant'Anatalio di Narco, Scheggino, Vallo di Nera, Arrone, Montefranco and Ferentillo⁵⁹.

The Way of st. Francis

The Way of st. Francis, designed by a German association, covers a distance of 500 km and crosses 3 regions, 6 provinces, 52 municipalities and 9 parks. This Franciscan itinerary starts from Sant'Ellero, a hamlet of Florence, and reaches Rome passing through some of the most important monasteries and hermitages in central Italy, crossing Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio. The route touches the Valnerina valley with the towns of Scheggino, Arrone, Montefranco and Ferentillo where the path stops to visit the mummy museum⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ Bordini, F., Renzi, F., & Sturabotti, D. (2018). *Piccoli comuni e cammini d'Italia*.

⁵⁸ Ibidem

⁵⁹ Ibidem

⁶⁰ Ibidem

Nera Greenway

“The Nera Greenway project is designed to provide the tools to get to know and experience the territory of the municipalities included in the perimeter of the former Valnerina Mountain Community and NATURA 2000 areas not only as a naturalistic emergency to be preserved and experienced with respect for the ecological balance, but as a tool for direct learning about Nature and its articulated forms and as a place to experiment with a "creative" and engaging approach toward new forms of tourism and knowledge of the territory.”⁶¹

The Nera Greenway consists of unpaved trails, which can be traveled on foot, bicycle or horseback that run along the Nera River.

This infrastructure is the combination of the following routes: Benedictine routes, the Via Francigena of St. Francis, and the former Spoleto Norcia railway, and which today are all connected to form a well-marked ring of about 180 km. A mountain route has been connected to this mostly flat stretch, which, passing through Preci, touches Norcia, Cascia, Monteleone di Spoleto, the Salto del Cieco, Piediluco, the Prati di Stroncone and then returns to the Cascata via Campacci di Marmore.

Santa Rita Cycleway (in progress)

The Santa Rita bike path is an ongoing project made possible through funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Institutional Cohesion Contract. The route, which is about 10 km long, will connect the city of Cascia to the following existing bicycle and pedestrian paths: the former Spoleto-Norcia railway, an old railroad operating from 1926 to 1968, which was converted into a bicycle path in 2006, with a total length of 34 km; the Way of St. Francis; and the Way of St. Benedict⁶².

Castelluccio flowering

Castelluccio flowering, a natural phenomenon that occurs annually in June and July in the plateau of the same name located in the Sibillini Mountains National Park, is an event characterized by the explosion of wild herbaceous plant blooms that cover the entire plateau. The phenomenon is caused by the interaction between the geomorphological characteristics of

⁶¹ www.lagreenwaydelnera.it

⁶² Comune di Cascia, *presentazione Ciclovía di s. Rita*.

the plateau, its altitude and the chemical composition of the soil, which favors the growth of plants adapted to these conditions. Among the species that contribute most to flowering are Mountain Carnation, Apennine Cornflower, Gentian, Mustard and Lentil flower.

Sibillini's National Park

The Sibillini Mountains National Park is a protected natural area located between the Marche and Umbria regions in central Italy. Its mountain system is part of the Umbro-Marchigiano Apennines and includes 72 peaks, twenty of which exceed 2,000 meters in height, including Mount Vettore (2,476 m a.s.l.) and Mount Redeemer (2,448 m a.s.l.), which are the highest peaks in the mountain complex. The park was established in 1993 and covers an area of more than 70,000 hectares. The territory of the Sibillini Mountains Park can be divided into four different slopes: the flowering slope, the historical slope, the sacred slope and the magic slope. The flowering slope, which extends on the eastern side of the park, is characterized by the presence of numerous flowers and plants, such as the famous tulip tree, which color the meadows and hills in spring. The historical side, located on the western side of the park, is characterized by numerous medieval villages, churches, castles and monasteries that testify to the history and culture of the region. The sacred side, on the other hand, is characterized by the presence of important places of worship, such as the Sanctuary of St. Francis in Montefalco Appennino and the Hermitage of San Leonardo al Volubrio, which attract numerous visitors every year. Finally, the magical slope, located in the southern part of the park, is characterized by the presence of caves, lakes, waterfalls and gorges, including the Gola dell'Infernaccio, one of the most striking and fascinating places in the park⁶³.

2.2.4 Artistic and cultural heritage

Arrone

Arrone is situated along ancient routes that connected the Valnerina and Rieti. The inhabited center is composed of two nuclei, the oldest of which, called "la Terra," corresponds to the feudal castle of the Arroni. Between the 11th and 12th centuries, the Arroni extended their control over a large area of the lower Valnerina, but were finally subdued to the city of Spoleto in the 13th century. The castle is situated on the top of the hill and is surrounded by mighty walls with circular ramparts. Inside the castle is a main road leading to the square where the

⁶³ www.sibillini.net

church of St. John the Baptist is located, Gothic in style and internally decorated with a series of 15th-century frescoes.

Cascia

Archaeological evidence shows that Cascia's origins lie in the pre-Roman age. In 553 it was besieged and conquered by the Byzantine general Narsete and became part of the Lombard Duchy of Spoleto. In the 10th century, it became an independent republic with its own currency and, because it sympathized with Ghibelline currents, was the scene of long wars with Spoleto and the Church. Subsequently, Cascia came under the rule of the lordship of the Trinci family of Foligno. In 1228, it was occupied by Frederick II of Swabia, and in 1300 it was devastated by an earthquake, but was later rebuilt and fortified. In 1516, the town was again besieged and conquered, with the destruction of its fortress. In the 16th century, Cascia surrendered to the Papal States, which maintained control of the town until 1860.

The first church dedicated in Cascia to the Saint of Assisi was to St. Francis founded in 1247, twenty-one years after his death while the present building was erected by Antonio Elemosina of Cascia, a Franciscan and bishop of Nebia in Corsica, whose work began in 1339 and ended in 1424. The facade is characterized by the imposing aerial rose window, formed by 18 trefoil arches and 18 small columns extending from the central quadrilobe, where Mary in glory with the Child is depicted. The interior of the church has a Latin cross plan and a truss roof. On the sides are altars, including the first on the left dedicated to the Conception, the second to St. Rita, while the third houses a canvas depicting St. Bartholomew, St. Peter and St. Paul. In the left transept is a large altar display painted in the late 16th century, with the painting of the Ascension by Pomarancio in the center, while the side canvases are attributed to Guido Reni and Perino Cesarei. On the right side of the transept is a large canvas depicting Christ with the Virgin and Angels Appearing to St. Francis in the Pornizucola.

During Rita's time, the monastery was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene and the oldest part dates to the late 13th century. During the 18th century, the monastery was expanded thanks to donations from John V, King of Portugal, who was cured of cheek cancer through the saint's intercession. In 1937, on the site of the former Augustinian church adjacent to the monastery where St. Rita died in 1457, the monastery was further expanded with the construction of the

shrine⁶⁴.

The building was designed by Vatican engineer Monsignor Spirito Maria Chiapetta but was modified during its construction by Giuseppe Martinenghi. St. Rita's chapel, which houses her body, is located behind a large wrought-iron gate. Under the altar of the Consolation Chapel, in the high altar, is the body of the Augustinian Blessed Simon Fidati (1295-1348), a famous writer and preacher who brought "Corpus Christi" to Cascia.

Every year, on the night of May 21-22, Cascia celebrates a great feast in honor of St. Rita⁶⁵.

During the 1920s and 1930s, excavations were carried out under the Church of Villa San Silvestro, located in the mountain hamlet of the municipality of Cascia, a few kilometers from the border with the province of Rieti. These excavations brought to light the podium and some architectural and decorative elements of a large Roman temple dating back to the 3rd century BC⁶⁶.

Cerreto di Spoleto

The Church of St. James, together with the adjacent monastery, currently constitutes the headquarters of CEDRAV (Center for Anthropological Documentation in Valnerina). The facade, which corresponds to the left wall of the nave, has a pointed arch portal.

The Church of Santa Croce, now known as the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Stella, is in the valley of the Noce, not far from the village. The present building, dating from 1308, was built on top of an ancient 8th-century oratory. According to tradition, the oratory was originally owned by the Abbey of Farfa and later passed to the Abbey of San Pietro in Valle, where the monks settled and dedicated it to St. Benedict. In 1294, the oratory and monastery were acquired by the Lateran chapter. The 14th-century church was originally a hermitage for Augustinian monks. The complex was abandoned in 1652 and remained in poor condition until 1833, when it was restored following miraculous events and took the name Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Star⁶⁷.

Ferentillo

⁶⁴ www.santaritadacascia.org

⁶⁵ www.umbriatourism.it

⁶⁶ www.lavalnerina.it

⁶⁷ www.umbriatourism.it

The town of Ferentillo is situated on the Nera River and consists of two villages, Matterella and Precetto. In 774, Ferentillo was annexed to the Kingdom of the Franks and later became part of the Papal States. In the 15th century, the town experienced a period of prosperity under the rule of the Cybo family, which fostered the cultural, commercial and socio-political development of Ferentillo. The Cybo seigniory lasted until 1730 and then the fiefdom was inherited by other families until the Unification of Italy in 1860, when Ferentillo became a municipality.

The Abbey of San Pietro in Valle, founded by the hermits John and Lazarus, was expanded by the Duke of Spoleto Faroaldo II between the 6th and 9th centuries. The abbey became an important monastery and mausoleum for the dukes, surrounded by a system of more than forty defensive buildings.

The Church of Santo Stefano is a building located in the upper part of the village of Precetto, built at the request of the Cybo-Malaspina Family in the 15th century. The church was built on the remains of a pre-existing 13th-century place of worship, and the old building was incorporated into the new structure, becoming the burial crypt of the upper church. In 1805, following a Napoleonic edict forbidding any burial within the city walls and ordering the exhumation of the bodies kept in the crypt, some 20 mummies of men, women and children were discovered, which can currently be seen inside display cases. The oldest dates back about four centuries; the most recent is from the 19th century⁶⁸.

Montefranco

Its origins date back to the ancient Bufone Castle, which was already present in 1228. It became an independent municipality in 1258, but suffered various dominations before falling under the jurisdiction of the Church until the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. The historic center is characterized by the two medieval gates, Porta Franca and Porta Spoletina, and the outer walls. Important churches include the church of Madonna del Carmine, the church of Santa Maria Assunta, and the church of San Bernardino. The latter church was built in Romanesque times on the remains of an ancient oratory dedicated to the martyr Primianus, and was rebuilt in the 15th century, with the addition of a convent of the Observant Fathers. Also, on Mount Moro,

⁶⁸ www.umbriatourism.it

there is an archaeological site with remains of a Roman building⁶⁹.

Monteleone di Spoleto

In 1902, Isidoro Vannozzi accidentally found a valuable archaeological find, the "Etruscan chariot," in a necropolis a few kilometers from the town at Colle del Capitano. It is an ancient parade chariot made of walnut wood completely covered with gilded bronze sheets decorated with embossed application of ivory plates dated around the mid-6th century B.C.

The church of St. Francis, built in the 14th century on an earlier Benedictine oratory, is dedicated to St. Mary but commonly known by the name of the Franciscan saint who settled there in 1280. Subject to several restorations over the centuries, the church has undergone several modifications, including the raising of the floor between 1395 and 1398, which reduced the original height of the church by a third and resulted in the creation of a new worship space in the lower part of the structure. The main façade is adorned with an ogival portal in clear Roman-Gothic style, while the interior is divided into two naves by stone pillars and decorated with numerous cycles of frescoes created between the 14th and 16th centuries. Notable works of art include the painted wooden ceiling by Giuseppe Frigerio da Norcia (1760). From the upper cloister one can admire 9 tempera lunettes made in the first half of the 18th century, depicting the life of St. Francis, and a collection of epigraphic fragments and sculptures from different periods⁷⁰.

Norcia

Nursia, an ancient city of the Sabines, was conquered by the Romans and became an important municipality. During the 11th century, the city obtained the status of a free municipality. Later, in the 15th century, it passed permanently to the Church, which granted it considerable autonomy. Around 480, St. Benedetto was born in Nursia, making the city an important religious center. Despite the various earthquakes that destroyed it over the centuries, Norcia still preserves a remarkable heritage of art and historical memories related to the life of the founder of the Benedictine order. From the artistic, cultural and environmental point of view, Norcia is characterized by an urban structure articulated in districts with an eighteenth-nineteenth-century imprint. Nursia's most important and ancient historic buildings include the

⁶⁹ Ibidem

⁷⁰ www.umbriatourism.it

Castellina, a monumental fortress built in 1554 to a design by Vignola, now home to the Civic and Diocesan Museum, the Palazzo Comunale with double loggia, the Basilica of St. Benedetto, erected on Roman remains from the 1st cent, with a 14th-century Gothic facade, in whose crypt are preserved the remains of an ancient Roman building identified by tradition with the paternal home of the twin saints Benedetto and Scolastica, and the Portico delle Misure, built around the mid-16th century as an indoor grain market. The town is also home to the 14th-century St. Francis complex, now home to the Auditorium, Municipal Library and Historical Archives, the Knights of Malta palace, current home of the Museum of Peasant Art, and the church of St. Augustine, built in the 14th century. Norcia is also located in the heart of the Sibillini Mountains National Park, surrounded by mountains that reach over 2,000 meters in height⁷¹.

The Basilica of St. Benedict was built between 1290 and 1338, erecting itself on the pre-existing crypt. Shortly after its construction, it underwent its first expansion by the monks of St. Eutizio in Valcastoriana. During the 14th century the bell tower was built, which, however, suffered the destruction of the upper part in the 1703 earthquake, being later rebuilt in a more modest size. After the 1859 earthquake, the facade underwent restoration work on the upper part. The last restoration, conducted in the 1950s, allowed the recovery of the triumphal arch dating from the 14th century. In 1570 a portico was added to the side wall of the church, to the right of the facade, which was originally used as a covered space for the grain market. The interior of the basilica, in the shape of a Latin cross with a single nave and polygonal apse, underwent a complete renovation in the 18th century. In the left arm of the transept is a large canvas by Filippo Napoletano (1621), with St. Benedict and Totila. On the altar of the right arm is "Madonna and Nursine Saints," painted by Roman painter Vincenzo Manetti (mid-17th century). In the apse, on the other hand, there is a large 16th-century wooden choir from the Church of the Annunziata. Today, the basilica cannot be visited due to damage sustained in the 2016 earthquake.

The civic and diocesan museum "La Castellina" occupies the entire western side of Piazza San Benedetto, which forms the centerpiece of Norcia's historic center. The building, erected in 1554 to a design by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola at the behest of Pope Julius III, was conceived as a fortified residence for apostolic governors, and from the beginning had the role of

⁷¹ www.umbriatourism.it

garrisoning the peripheral territories of the Church State. When the Mountain Prefecture was established in 1569, Castellina became its natural home. Subjected to numerous earthquakes, the fortress underwent major restoration work in the 18th century. Beginning in 1860, it was used as municipal offices until it was converted into a museum building in 1967. The Castellina, besides being an important cultural container, is of no small architectural importance. A visit to it allows one to appreciate the majestic and compactness of the structure, with its quadrilateral shape, reminiscent of typical Renaissance military architecture. Today, the Castellina houses the Civic and Diocesan Museum, the Massenzi Collection and the Permanent Archaeological Exhibition "Leaving for the Beyond."⁷²

Poggiodomo

The territory of Poggiodomo became part of the Sannio Region after the Roman invasion in the 4th century BC. During the Middle Ages, the powerful feudal lords of the area devoted themselves to its defense and built the four castles of Poggiodomo, Usigni, Mucciafora and Roccatamburo, while it remained under the control of the surrounding towns, first Spoleto and then Cascia. Later, under the rule of the Papal States during the pontificate of Urban VIII, the area experienced its most prosperous period. It became a municipality during the Napoleonic occupation of 1809 and managed to maintain its political autonomy even after the papal restoration. Finally, in 1860, it became part of the Italian state.

The hermitage of Our Lady of the Star is located in the Noce Valley, between Poggiodomo and Cerreto. Founded in the seventh century as a Benedictine monastic cell, it underwent various transformations over the centuries and changed hands several times, passing first to the Abbey of San Pietro in Valle near Ferentillo and then to the Augustinians of Cascia. The church of the hermitage was frescoed in 1416 by artists of the Umbrian school of Sienese influence, while in the 17th century it underwent a major restoration by the municipality of Cascia. The hermitage experienced a period of abandonment during the 17th century, but was recovered in the 19th century thanks to the discovery of ancient frescoes and popular devotion. Over the centuries, the hermitage was the subject of numerous disputes between neighboring towns over ownership, until in 1970 it was established that it belonged to the Separate Administration of Civic Use Properties of Rocchetta⁷³.

⁷² www.umbriatourism.it

⁷³ Ibidem

Pollino

Polino is a fortified center that developed during the late Middle Ages, when it became a fief of the Polini, Arrone and Castelli families. It was an important border center between the Kingdom of Naples and the Papal States and a mint for coins minted with gold from the "Gold Quarry." Surrounded by double walls and overlooked by the superb fortress of Renaissance appearance built on the remains of an earlier fortress, with an imposing cylindrical keep, the urban fabric retains many of the characteristics of the original medieval village. The urban core is developed around the church of San Michele Arcangelo, while on the main square is a monumental fountain erected in 1625 by Marquis Castelli. The castle, located between Mount Petano and the foothills of Mount La Pelosa, was of great importance in the surrounding area⁷⁴.

Preci

Preci, a village in the vicinity of Norcia, arose from primitive settlement that occurred around a pre-Benedictine hermitage founded by the Syrian monk Eutizio in the fifth century. Later, during the second half of the 13th century, the castle of Preci, located on a slope and under the jurisdiction of Norcia, suffered devastation from the 1328 earthquake. During the first half of the 16th century, Preci, a place of refuge for outcasts, was twice destroyed by the Papal Legate of Marche and the Norcia. Only after the peace concluded with the latter in 1555 and the prospering of the surgical school, was there a renewed building impulse that gave the village its present physiognomy. The urban settlement is very compact and has a predominantly 16th-century appearance, with a historic core characterized by the presence of numerous aristocratic palaces, built between the 16th and 18th centuries by Precian medical families. The world-renowned surgical school has its roots in the medical knowledge of Syrian monks who settled in the nearby Castorian Valley. The Abbey of St. Eutizio, equipped with an important library and infirmary, was the hub of this activity, where the art of surgery was developed. The Benedictine monks practiced and developed the use of various medicinal plants, found in abundance in the area, and surgical techniques. Beginning in the 13th century, they devoted themselves to the study and collection of herbs for therapeutic purposes, transferring their knowledge about the surgical art to the people of Preci. The latter, in turn, carried on this surgical practice with great success, handing it down from father to son. The specialties of the Precian physicians included ophthalmology and the surgical extraction of calculi, facilitated by

⁷⁴ www.umbriatourism.it

tradition and skill in the castration of sheep and pigs. Within the village are the parish church of Santa Maria and the church of Santa Caterina, currently home to the Preciana Museum of Surgery⁷⁵.

Sant'Anatolia di Narco

Sant'Anatolia di Narco, born of a medieval castle from 1198, is situated on a river terrace, which rises above the flat area below, known as "le canapine," in memory of the times when hemp was cultivated along the banks of the Nera River. The historic core of the town retains the characteristics of an ancient fortified castle, with its walls, towers and three gates, one of which is still well preserved and served as a checkpoint for the road up from the Nera River. Inside the walls, on the central square, is the former Town Hall, dating from the 16th century, which currently houses the Hemp Museum, and the parish church of Sant'Anatolia, currently closed for restoration work. Inside the church are pictorial decorations dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries, the antependium of the high altar, made of inlaid marble and from the 17th-century Neapolitan school, and several canvases dating back to the 17th century⁷⁶.

Scheggino

The original settlement of Schiaginum consisted of a medieval castle surrounded by triangular walls, with a square watchtower located at the top, the primordial structure of which is still visible today. Built around the 12th century by the Duchy of Spoleto to defend one of three bridges over the Nera River, it played a sentinel role. Loyal to the Duchy, Schiaginum played a very important a strategic and economic role in the 13th century, despite attacks by Spoleto's adversary municipalities. Chronicles record a victorious resistance against a siege led by the leader Picozzo Brancaleoni in 1522, during which the defense was carried out exclusively by the women, who were engaged in forest work and harvesting, thus succeeding in repelling the attacks and saving the town. Schiaginum remained under the control of Spoleto until the 18th century, but it enjoyed a special autonomy, so much so that it endowed itself with its own charter in 1561. The oldest inhabited nucleus, known as Capo la terra, dates from the 13th century and developed around the fortress to accommodate the inhabitants of the nearby castle of Pozzano after its destruction. This first circle of habitation was flanked, sloping towards the valley, by the expansion of the 14th and 15th centuries, which was completed in the 16th

⁷⁵ Ibidem

⁷⁶ www.umbriatourism.it

century with the creation of the village, bordered by the mill feeding canal⁷⁷.

Sellano

Probably founded by the ancient Romans in 84 A.D., this locality played an important strategic role in the Middle Ages for the control of the Vigi valley, and for this reason it was subjected to the Lombards and included in the Duchy of Spoleto. In the 13th century it came under the control of the Papal State, while in the 14th century it became a fief of the Colligola family, lords of Montesanto. In 1860, the population voted in favor of annexation to the Kingdom of Italy.

The church of San Francesco, also known as Madonna della Croce, is located on the outskirts of Sellano. Built in 1538, it has a tanned stone structure adopting an octagonal plan, a pronaos with a tympanum and a rectangular apse body. It is an architecture reminiscent of the typology of many mountain sanctuaries. The interior of the church is divided into three naves, with two 16th-century stucco altars. The high altar houses a 16th-century fresco depicting the "Madonna and Child."⁷⁸

Vallo di Nera

Vallo di Nera has Roman origins and in the 4th century was a Lombard curtis belonging to the Duchy of Spoleto. In 1217, Spoleto granted the construction of the Castle of Vallo, giving rise to the present urban layout. In 1522-23 the condottiero Pietrone da Vallo rebelled against Spoleto, but ended up burned, followed by depredation by the Lansquenets. The castle rose again soon after, still preserving the city walls, keep and mighty tower with gates such as Porta Ranne and Portélla.

The church of St. John the Baptist, built in the 13th and 14th centuries, was enlarged and rebuilt in the 16th century. The historic-artistic context in which it stands, although medieval in origin, is characterized by a strong Renaissance influence, as evidenced by the architectural and decorative elements present, such as the bell tower, portal, and rose window. Its interior houses important works of art, including a 16th-century Baptismal Font and a 1536 fresco by Jacopo Siculo depicting the Transit of the Madonna, a fine example of 16th-century Italian painting belonging to the School of Raphael. The presence of numerous other paintings from the

⁷⁷ Ibidem

⁷⁸ www.umbriatourism.it

Renaissance period, together with the fourteen Stations of the Cross dating back to 1749, testify to the artistic and cultural richness of the church of St. John the Baptist, which constitutes an important testimony to Umbria's historical and artistic heritage⁷⁹.

2.3 SWOT Analysis

2.3.1 Strengths

- **Historical and cultural relevance:** Valnerina has a rich history and cultural heritage that can be attractive to tourists looking for a unique experience.
- **Beautiful landscapes:** The natural beauty of the Valnerina area is a major strength that can attract nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts.
- **Certified quality of food products:** Valnerina is known for its high-quality food products, which can be a major draw for tourists interested in food and wine tourism.
- **Local population welcoming towards tourism:** A population that is welcoming towards tourists can create a positive and welcoming atmosphere that can enhance the overall tourism experience.
- **Various events throughout the year:** The presence of numerous events throughout the year can be an added attraction for tourists looking for unique experiences.
- **Numerous reasons to visit:** Valnerina offers a variety of reasons for tourists to visit, such as history, culture, nature, and food.

2.3.2 Weaknesses

- **Difficulty in obtaining aggregated data:** The lack of reliable and accessible data can make it difficult to understand the tourism market and develop effective tourism strategies. It is challenging to gather data on the number of tourists who visit each year, their demographic profile, and their spending patterns.
- **Poor identification of the Valnerina area:** The lack of common identity among the various municipalities of the Valnerina, which act independently without actively collaborating to promote the area as a single tourism destination. This situation results in reduced effectiveness of marketing strategies, lack of consistency in tourism offerings, and fragmentation of resources and efforts for tourism development. The lack

⁷⁹ Ibidem

of a common marketing strategy among the municipalities of the Valnerina leads to the promotion of tourist attractions in isolation, without an integrated vision of the area. This is an obstacle to building a coordinated and distinctive image of the area and attracting a wider and more diverse audience.

- **Lack of integrated tourism policy management:** The lack of a coordinated and integrated tourism policy can lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities in tourism development.
- **Insufficient road infrastructure:** Poor road infrastructure can limit access to the area and negatively impact the tourism experience.
- **One-dimensional tourism vision:** A narrow or one-dimensional tourism vision can limit the potential for tourism development and diversification.
- **Lack of communication:** Poor communication between stakeholders can lead to confusion and missed opportunities in tourism development.

2.3.3 Opportunities

- **Creation of “Valnerina” brand:** Creating a distinct Valnerina brand can help to differentiate it from other tourism destinations and attract tourists looking for unique experiences.
- **Association with the Umbria brand:** Associating Valnerina with the Umbria brand can enhance its visibility and credibility in the tourism market.
- **Increased collaboration between public and private sectors:** Increased collaboration between public and private sectors can lead to more efficient and effective tourism development.
- **Better integration of the agro-food industry:** The integration of the agro-food industry into tourism development can enhance the overall tourism experience and create new opportunities for local businesses.
- **Improvement of essential services:** Improving essential services such as transportation, accommodation, and information can enhance the tourism experience and attract more tourists.

2.3.4 Threats

- **Natural disasters:** Natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes can negatively impact tourism and limit its potential for development.

- **Increasing depopulation:** The depopulation of the area can lead to a decline in local businesses and services, negatively impacting the tourism experience.

2.3.5 Synthesis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Historical and cultural relevance	Difficulty in obtaining aggregated data
Beautiful landscapes	Low “Valnerina Identity”
Certified quality of food products	Lack of integrated tourism policy management
Local population welcoming towards tourism	Insufficient road infrastructure
Various events throughout the year	One-dimensional tourism vision
Numerous reasons to visit	Lack of communication
Opportunities	Threats
Creation of a Valnerina brand	Natural disasters
Association with the Umbria brand	Increasing depopulation
Improvement of essential services	
Better integration of the agro-food industry	
Increased collaboration between public and private sectors	

Figure 31 Personal processing

Section 3. The case of ADAVA: hotelier Association in Valle D'Aosta

3.1 ADAVA: an overview

The Aosta Valley Association of Hoteliers (ADAVA) was founded for the purpose of representing and promoting the interests of hoteliers in the Valle d'Aosta region, a popular tourist destination in both winter and summer located in northwestern Italy.

The history of ADAVA goes back several decades, when a group of hoteliers in the Valle d'Aosta decided to come together to address common challenges in the industry and work together to improve the quality of services offered to guests. On January 8, 1976, ADAVA joined FEDERALBERGHI (Federation of Italian Hotel and Tourism Associations), which for more than 100 years has been the most representative national organization of Italian hoteliers and coordinates more than 33,000 hotel companies. The association was created with the aim of providing representation to hoteliers, promoting tourism in the region and developing a favorable environment for the hotel industry. Over the years, it has expanded its activities and role, becoming a point of reference for hoteliers in the Valle d'Aosta. The association has promoted the training and professional development of hoteliers, established relationships with government agencies and local institutions to defend the interests of the industry, and worked to promote sustainability and quality in the hotel industry. ADAVA has also played an important role in promoting the tourist destination by collaborating with other industry players, organizing events, and participating in tourism fairs and exhibitions to attract visitors to the region. ADAVA's history is one of commitment, collaboration and growth. The association continues to play an important role in representing local hoteliers, promoting responsible tourism, and contributing to the economic and cultural development of the region⁸⁰.

To date, the association represents about 70 percent of the region's hotel facilities, with 701 current members. Since 2017, the association has grown by more than 220 new members⁸¹.

The young hoteliers association counts over 78 participants.

The previous chapters have sought to highlight the inherent connection between the tourism

⁸⁰ www.adava.it

⁸¹ data provided by ADAVA

industry and the territory. In light of this, the findings from the interviews will be presented in a structured manner. Individuals interviewed include Luigi Fosson, president and hotelier of Ayas; Mirco Pellissier, district delegate of Rhêmes-Notre-Dame; Davide Perrin, district delegate of Antey-Saint-André; and Giorgia Vigna Lasina, president of the Young Hoteliers Association.

3.2 ADAVA and its strategic vision for tourism

3.2.1 The role of tourism

"Tourism is the engine that turns everything around. When hotels are in business, the whole area and the tourism industry benefits, creating a positive impact on the local economy. (...) I believe that tourism also plays an important role in the demographic context, contributing to the formation of families, which I believe bring a positive element to the whole community in the valley." (Mirco Pellissier - Rhêmes-Notre-Dame district delegate)

"ADAVA promotes a vibrant mountain by implementing a series of measures and initiatives that support this vision, demonstrating a strong commitment to the progress and sustainable development of the Valle d'Aosta." (Luigi Fosson - President and hotelier of Ayas)

"Making tourism in the mountain region of the Valle d'Aosta means offering guests a unique and unforgettable experience, putting them in contact with an extraordinary nature and offering them the opportunity to practice sports activities related to the surrounding environment." (Davide Perrin - Antey-Saint-André district delegate)

Interestingly, in the interview with representatives of the Valle d'Aosta hotel system, key concepts emerge such as the link between tourism and land development, progress, sustainability, and the positive impact that translates in terms of fighting depopulation and supporting employment. These key words reflect the orientation of political action conducted by ADAVA. The association's main goal is to promote tourism that not only pursues economic growth but is also environmentally and socially sustainable. The concept of sustainable development implies an approach that takes into account current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this context, ADAVA is committed to promoting responsible tourism that enhances the area and respects its cultural and environmental identity.

3.2.2 ADAVA, local entities, trade associations and school

The testimony of Davide Perrin, delegate of the Antey-Saint-André district, eloquently illustrates the essential coordination between local institutions to promote and develop the tourism sector. Perrin says that in several municipalities the Tourism Commission, chaired by the municipal tourism councillor, plays an active role in this regard by orienting its work according to the aspirations and needs of local stakeholders. The chairman of ADAVA, Luigi Fosson, stresses the essentiality of frequent communication and information sharing to ensure effective connection and synergistic operation with all actors contributing to the growth of the area. This requires close collaboration with other local associations and stakeholders. Issues related to road infrastructure, transportation, and facilities are addressed on a daily basis, finding solutions through direct communication between facility administrators and individual hotels.

This approach underscores the importance of open and continuous dialogue between the various stakeholders in the tourism industry. Collaboration between tourism facility operators, local governments, and associations allows challenges to be addressed early and appropriate solutions to be found. The goal is to maximize the efficiency of tourism activities and ensure synergistic cooperation for the benefit of the entire area.

In addition, collaboration in decision-making is considered of paramount importance. As the Chairman pointed out, before laws are enacted, ADAVA is frequently consulted to assess the implications and impacts on their activities. This involvement in the decision-making process allows the needs and perspectives of tourism stakeholders to be taken into consideration, contributing to more balanced legislation tailored to the needs of the industry.

Involving tourism industry associations in the decision-making process has several advantages. First, it allows them to have a more comprehensive view of the consequences that legislative decisions may have on the tourism industry. This allows them to carefully assess the possible implications and make any changes or adjustments according to the specific needs of the industry. In addition, involving trade associations in the decision-making process promotes greater representativeness and inclusiveness. Allowing them to express their views and share their experiences promotes more participatory and democratic governance. This helps ensure that decisions made take into account diverse perspectives and specific needs.

Collaboration with other associations takes on crucial importance as it fosters synergistic growth that considers the needs and issues of multiple stakeholders. In Valle d'Aosta there is a strong collaboration between several associations, including Confcommercio, Confagricoltura, Coldiretti, Confindustria and the Chamber of Commerce. These entities work in such close synergy that, says the president, *"Every event or situation is communicated and discussed within a WhatsApp group involving the presidents of these associations."* Thanks to this valuable collaboration, issues affecting the entire territory are addressed jointly. *"We have created an important collaboration and we address together the issues that affect us"* (Luigi Fosson - President and hotelier of Ayas)

The president of the young hoteliers' association, Giorgia Vigna Lasina, on the other hand, spoke about some interesting initiatives. The first project, still in the embryonic stage, involves a collaboration with Bu-Net, an e-commerce company that promotes local products from the Aosta Valley and neighboring regions, such as Canavese and Biella. The intent is to offer guests a personalized in-room welcome that includes graphic elements related to Bu-Net and provides a link to their website and e-commerce. *"The goal is to maintain a connection with our area that does not end with the end of the vacation but continues over time through the purchase of local products even after the stay."* (Giorgia Vigna Lasina - President Young Hoteliers)

The second project was initiated at the regional level through the collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Tourism. This project involves the implementation of a certification system represented by a logo, which is awarded to restaurants and hotels that use a significant share of local products. It is believed that this project is of considerable importance, as tourists should be informed about the presence of genuine and certified products from the region. *"It is only fair that businesses that choose to invest in the area and use local products be recognized and valued."* (Giorgia Vigna Lasina - President Young Hoteliers)

The project had been shelved, and the young hoteliers, the president says, intend to ask the councilors to entrust the management to their association, perhaps in collaboration with Confcommercio, to extend it not only to hotels but also to all public businesses.

Collaboration with the hotel school is another established form of synergy. A series of meetings are being organized for next year, during which hoteliers will participate in lectures together with young experts in the field. The goal is to bring young students closer to these emerging

figures so that they understand the importance of continuing education and identification with the region. "This project is still in the development phase, and we are trying to make all professors understand its importance so that they can take time during classes to interact with students. Through this initiative, we are trying to sensitize young people to deepen their knowledge related to the area, making them understand that hospitality and welcoming go beyond mere manual or theoretical work." (Giorgia Vigna Lasina - President Young Hoteliers)

"We are trying to pursue a project involving farmers and tour operators, establishing a partnership with young wine producers and some young fontina producers." (Giorgia Vigna Lasina - President Young Hoteliers)

Finally, the president of the young hoteliers mentioned a project that, again, seeks to stimulate and give rise to collaboration with activities related to the enhancement of territorial resources. The idea is to offer guests experiences that include the presentation of products directly in the hotel, such as a basket of products or a tasting bottle in the room, followed by the possibility of visiting farms and conducting tastings directly in the field. This collaboration has also generated synergies among wine producers, who now work together instead of only conducting tastings with each other.

3.2.3 Tourism as a tool to face depopulation

Hotel operators show a deep awareness of the positive impact tourism can have on society, while also taking into consideration the issue of depopulation and the promotion of a strong cultural identity.

According to statements made by the president of ADAVA, a concern about the staffing situation and the demographic decline of mountain areas clearly emerges. Fosson recognizes the importance of making the entire region attractive not only for tourists, but especially for hotel employees. This implies creating favorable working and living conditions that can attract the interest and permanence of young people and adults in the area.

One of the aspects considered crucial to ensuring housing stability for seasonal and permanent workers is access to housing. ADAVA is aware of the importance of providing adequate and stable housing solutions that meet the needs of tourism workers. The president recognizes that the availability of stable housing can foster greater social cohesion, promote sustainability of employment in the area, and counter depopulation.

"We believe that every single person working in this sector is also a spokesperson and ambassador for our area." (Luigi Fosson - President and hotelier of Ayas)

The issue of training is also central to ADAVA's strategic vision from a social perspective. The president emphasizes the role of his staff as spokespersons and ambassadors of the territory. For this reason, educational programs are underway to provide specific training to the staff of accommodation facilities in the valleys of Valle d'Aosta. "They are often very competent young people who speak several languages, but they do not have a full awareness of the area they are in, as they come from many different places. So, the first thing we do is explain to them the geographical location of the Valle d'Aosta and then we help them understand where they come from, that is, our thousand-year history in a few minutes. It is extremely important that we develop a sense of pride in being from Valle d'Aosta because we have several distinctive characteristics." (Luigi Fosson - President and hotelier of Ayas).

This approach aims to promote a sense of pride and belonging to the Valle d'Aosta, emphasizing its distinctive and unique characteristics.

"Tourism plays a key role in supporting crafts and agriculture in our area. Without tourism, these activities could not thrive" (Mirco Pellissier - Rhêmes-Notre-Dame district delegate).

The significant impact of tourism flows in generating new opportunities should be emphasized. The emphasis on enhancing local resources, traditions and culture is seen as a strategy to sustain the economy of mountain communities and preserve their unique identity. According to remarks by President Luigi Fosson, an emphasis on enhancing local resources, traditions and culture is a key factor in sustaining the economy of mountain communities and protecting their unique identity.

Davide Perrin, Antey-Saint-André district delegate, brings the example of the spread of electric bicycles in the last decade. This development has made accessible places that were previously considered inaccessible because of the physical difficulties required to reach them. Thanks to electric bicycles, even the least trained people can now access these places, paving the way for new activities and creating job opportunities. "This has given rise to new alternative activities that have generated employment and contributed to the local economy." (Davide Perrin, Antey-Saint-André district delegate).

Mirco Pellissier, delegate of the Rhêmes-Notre-Dame district, reports another example of

involving tourists in various events that encourage the discovery and promotion of the area. Events such as "Open Cellars" have played a significant role in promoting collaboration between local producers and tourists. On these occasions, wine producers open the doors of their cellars to visitors, including many tourists, offering them the opportunity to taste wines and to dialogue directly with the producers themselves. This kind of interaction takes on considerable value, as it allows tourists to get to know the area in depth and appreciate the effort and art behind wine production.

It is thanks to the constant influx of tourists that farms can thrive by producing and marketing local products, while artisans can find a market for their creations.

"Without tourism, agriculture and crafts would be severely compromised." (Mirco Pellissier - Rhêmes-Notre-Dame district delegate).

3.3 Conclusion

The broad representation of the hotel business fabric in Valle d'Aosta through the interviews provided an in-depth view of the mindset and strategies that drive hoteliers in the region. Despite different local peculiarities, a strong sense of responsibility and awareness of the crucial role hoteliers play within the community emerged.

The common political vision among respondents reflects the importance of considering social development as an integral part of the strategies adopted at both the association and individual levels. Hoteliers do not just offer hospitality services, but actively engage in promoting the area and enhancing local traditions. This approach results in authentic and sustainable tourism, which focuses on the visitor experience and interaction with the local community.

In addition, the interviews highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in the region's tourism context. Collaboration with local producers, the use of zero-mile products, and attention to environmental sustainability are key aspects in creating a comprehensive and quality tourism offer. This link between tourism and agriculture not only enriches the visitor experience, but also contributes to the economic development of local communities, stimulating employment and growth in the primary sector.

In conclusion, the interviews highlighted the commitment and passion of Valle d'Aosta hoteliers in promoting authentic, sustainable and socially responsible tourism. Their unified political vision and unwavering commitment to social development reflect their desire to create

a unique tourism offering in which respect for the community and the environment are central values. The integration of agriculture into tourism promotion adds further value and authenticity to the overall experience, contributing to economic growth and the preservation of local traditions.

Section 4. Developing Valnerina

4.1 The centrality of tourism: the case of Valle d'Aosta and Ramadilla Lunahuan, Perù

The tourism sector is a key pillar in the socio-economic development of many regions and geographic areas around the world. Tourist destinations, through their natural, cultural and historical attractions, are able to attract significant flows of visitors from around the globe that can generate significant impact on the local economy, contributing to job creation, revenue generation and infrastructure development. In recent decades, tourism has experienced explosive growth, becoming one of the most important economic sectors globally. Relevance that is accentuated in mountainous, rural and remote regions, which often have unique and authentic characteristics. In these particular areas, tourism can play a vital role in promoting socio-economic development and improving the quality of life of local communities.

Ramadilla Lunahuan, a small village located in the Lunahuan region of Peru, is an interesting case study for understanding the importance of the tourism sector in the socioeconomic development of specific areas. This previously little-known rural community has managed to transform its natural and cultural resources into authentic and sustainable tourist attractions by embracing the idea of developing responsible tourism through the adoption of sustainable practices for the preservation of the environment and traditional culture. Through the organization of guided tours led by the residents themselves, visitors have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture, participating in traditional festivals, sampling traditional dishes and learning handicrafts. This approach has enabled the community to generate economic income directly, creating new job opportunities for residents and thus countering the phenomenon of emigration to the cities.

Valle d'Aosta, a mountainous region in northwestern Italy, represents excellence in the tourism sector and offers a good example for understanding the socioeconomic impact of tourism in particular geographic areas. As became clear during the interviews, the continuous and intense collaboration between tourism operators, local authorities and communities has allowed the creation of a system capable of putting the territory and its all-round development at the center.

In both cases, Ramadilla Lunahuan and the Valle d'Aosta, the tourism sector has proven to be crucial to the socio-economic progress of these specific areas. The ability to enhance natural and cultural resources in a sustainable manner, promoting authenticity and participation of local communities, has created opportunities for economic growth, environmental conservation and preservation of cultural traditions. These examples testify to the potential of tourism as a tool for socio-economic development.

4.2 Ecomuseum: definition and goals

"a mirror in which the population contemplates itself in order to recognize itself, where it seeks the explication of the territory in which it is rooted and in which all the populations that have preceded it have succeeded one another, in the continuity or discontinuity of generations. A mirror that the population offers to its hosts to make itself better understood, respecting its work, its forms of behavior and its identity" (Rivière, 1992)

4.2.1 Definition and goals

The official definition of ecomuseum adopted by ICOM (International Council of Museums), based on the connection between heritage, territory and community, identifies ecomuseum as a participatory process aimed at the recognition, care and management of local cultural heritage in order to promote sustainable social, environmental and economic development.

Ecomuseums represent a form of practice that focuses on the interactions between humans and nature, emphasizing the ecological and social relationships that characterize our world (Pappalardo, 2020). The prefix "eco" invokes human/social ecology, emphasizing the importance of caring for our environment and developing a collective narrative that reflects our connection to nature. In this sense, ecology becomes a powerful policy tool for exploring and understanding the complex dynamics between humans and the environment that are manifested through the landscapes that surround us. As highlighted above, ecomuseums develop within a specific spatial context, where the management and organization of space become indicators of our social relations. Through the establishment of voluntary agreements between individuals, groups and institutions, ecomuseums create opportunities to strengthen connections. The focus on space and its critical evaluation invites us to reflect on the central role it plays in our daily experience and human interactions.

From this definition, essential characteristics (Borghi, Ecomuseos y mapas de comunidad: un recurso para la enseñanza de la historia y el patrimonio., 2017) emerge that enable the

identification of an ecomuseum:

1. Adoption of a territory, which can be defined by different characteristics.
2. Identification of specific heritage resources within that territory and celebration of these "cultural landmarks" through in situ preservation and interpretation.
3. Preservation and interpretation of individual sites within the territory through collaboration and cooperation with other organizations.
4. Active involvement of local communities: the ecomuseum is established and managed by local people. Local people decide which aspects of their "place" are important to them.
5. Local community benefits: the establishment of the ecomuseum brings tangible and intangible benefits to the community. These may include increased self-awareness, pride in one's place, recovery of fragments of local heritage, and economic benefits. Often those directly involved in the development of the ecomuseum reap important benefits.

Ultimately, ecomuseums represent a practice at the intersection of ecology, relationships, space, institutional agency and emancipation. They invite us to reflect on our role as custodians of our natural and cultural heritage, highlighting the need to develop a responsible and sustainable approach to our environment. They are a source of inspiration and hope for building a future in which nature and culture can coexist harmoniously, in balance with the needs of present and future generations.

4.2.2 An evaluation framework

This study (Hsu, 2018) proposes an ecomuseum evaluation framework based on a methodology consisting of two main steps: the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) followed the Analytica Network Process (ANPM). Through FDM, experts identified three key dimensions of the ecomuseum: community symbiosis, cultural heritage and regional revitalization. However, it was found that regional revitalization was considered the least relevant dimension compared to the other two. In the ANPM, the three most significant impact factors within the dimensions of community symbiosis and cultural heritage were identified. These factors were identified as cultural heritage preservation, resident identity and community participation. Cultural heritage preservation was recognized as the most important factor within cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of preserving and enhancing community history and culture. Resident identity and community participation were identified as crucial factors in establishing a solid and meaningful symbiosis between the community and the ecomuseum. The proposed ecomuseum

evaluation framework builds on these findings and focuses on the analysis and evaluation of the three key factors identified: cultural heritage preservation, resident identity and community participation. Using specific indicators and appropriate evaluation methodologies, the framework aims to provide an accurate and objective assessment of the ecomuseum's effectiveness in achieving the goals of community symbiosis, cultural heritage, and regional revitalization.

In summary, this ecomuseum evaluation framework is based on the dimensions identified in the context of the study and highlights the most significant impact factors within these dimensions.

4.3 Ecomuseum of the Umbrian Apennine Ridge

4.3.1 State of the art

CEDRAV, engaged in the creation of the ecomuseum, was founded on a need that arose in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake that struck the Nera Valley in 1979. On this occasion, there was a perceived need for documentation and spatial research for faster recovery. In 1986, at the desire of local institutions, the "Center for Documentation and Research on Living Conditions, Work and Cultural Expressions of the Popular Classes of the Valnerina" was born. This body was later recognized by Law No. 24 of April 1, 1990, with the name "Center for Documentation, Anthropological Research in Valnerina and the Umbrian Apennine Ridge." The purposes of CEDRAV are to produce scientific publications, organize paper, sound, photographic, audiovisual and object archives, provide itself with a specialized library, exhibition facilities for temporary and permanent exhibitions, conference halls and rooms for demonstration and educational activities, set up exhibitions, organize conferences, scientific meetings and professional training courses, establish collaborative relationships with other institutions, promote initiatives for schools and associations, perform scientific advisory functions and provide and manage services⁸².

The ecomuseum was created (CEDRAV) with the aim of demonstrating to the resident populations how much these territories are at the center of a system of relationships and exchanges. It assumes the arrangement of a circuit in which the two major Umbrian cities,

⁸² www.cedrav.net

Foligno and Spoleto, are also made participants. Each place takes on the name of "antenna" as it is intended to metaphorically exploit the concept of an instrument capable not only of sending messages but also and above all receiving them.

The territory presents a remarkable variety that is manifested through the twelve identified localities. Each locality is associated with a specific theme represented by a keyword, thus highlighting the diversity and richness of the territory as a whole. There twelve antennas identified are those of Spoleto, Scheggino, Sant'Anatolia di Narco, Vallo di Nera, Poggiodomo, Monteleone di Spoleto, Cascia, Norcia, Preci, Cerreto di Spoleto, Sellano and Foligno.

The Spoleto antenna is associated with the oil and aims to enhance both the techniques of managing the olive plantation with emphasis on traditional systems and the final product itself. The Scheggino antenna is devoted to the topic of truffles, exploring the methods and times of harvesting, the different varieties of undergrowth products and food preservation techniques specific to this prized delicacy.

The Sant'Anatolia di Narco antenna focuses on hemp and the long textile tradition that characterizes the area, highlighting the manufacturing processes and use of this versatile fiber. The antenna in Vallo di Nera celebrates the ancient oral tradition of the place, offering the public important evidence of songs and folk tales passed down through the centuries.

The Poggiodomo antenna is responsible for documenting the urban layouts of the towns on the Apennine ridge, providing an in-depth view of architectural features and urban developments over time.

The Monteleone di Spoleto antenna enhances the region's agricultural landscape and high-quality agricultural production, with a special focus on spelt, a cereal that is a distinctive resource of these mountains.

The Cascia antenna focuses on collecting, cataloging and presenting objects of popular devotion, revealing the deep faith and spirituality of the local community.

The Norcia antenna documents the important norcina activity, enhancing its historicity and delving into the theme of healthy eating and local culinary traditions.

The Preci antenna celebrates the rich tradition of the Precian school of surgery, exploring herbalism and the use of medicinal herbs, which constitute a wealth of knowledge to be preserved.

The Cerreto di Spoleto antenna focuses on the figure of the "Charlatan," exploring the documentation and promoting the popular theater and street performances that have characterized the social and cultural life of the community.

The Sellano antenna is dedicated to the preservation and safeguarding of craft production techniques, preserving traditional skills and promoting the enhancement of manual crafts in the local context.

Finally, the Foligno antenna intends to document the importance of water as a driving force in the development of the area, highlighting water resources, irrigation systems and the use of water for industrial and agricultural purposes.

It is currently only partially initiated and implemented as only a few centers are structured.

4.3.2 A new understanding of the Ecomuseum of the Umbrian Apennine Ridge

Following a preliminary assessment, it appears that the ecomuseum project described above may lack efficiency in relation to the three key factors identified in the evaluation framework: cultural heritage preservation, resident identity, and community participation.

In terms of cultural heritage preservation, I believe that the village-thematic area linkage is not functional in enhancing the area as a whole. In terms of residents' identity, the project may not adequately involve the local community in the decision-making process and development of the ecomuseum's activities. Finally, regarding community participation, there may be a lack of mechanisms and opportunities to actively involve residents in the management, planning, and promotion of the ecomuseum. In addition, another possible critical issue that has emerged is the lack of adequate communication with tourism operators in the area. The lack of active dialogue and collaboration with these actors limits the opportunities to promote the local heritage and attract visitors interested in the ecomuseum.

Through effective communication with tourism operators, the ecomuseum could achieve greater visibility, increased visitor participation, and greater integration into the region's overall tourism offerings. At the same time, it would be worth considering how the project could be redesigned to better accommodate the three key factors of cultural heritage preservation, resident identity and community participation to ensure greater effectiveness and sustainability in the long term.

The proposed idea is to create a Destination Management Organization (DMO) that would serve as a point of convergence for the skills and sensibilities of the various actors involved, including tourism operators, local authorities, trade associations, consortia, and the CEDRAV.

This DMO would be tasked not only with organizing, but above (Gato, 2022) all with creating and promoting tourism experiences in line with a vision of sustainable tourism as an engine for socio-economic development. This new organization, gathering the interests of all stakeholders, would play a crucial role in the strategic planning and implementation of tourism initiatives that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. This would involve the design of tourism routes that promote environmentally conscious enjoyment and respect for the environment, the inclusion of local communities in decision-making, and the promotion of local products and services. In addition, the DMO could play an important role in communicating and promoting the area as a sustainable tourism destination. Through targeted marketing and communication strategies, different target tourists interested in authentic, sustainable experiences in line with the values of responsible tourism could be reached.

“Luxury is no longer the embrace of kings and queens but the mass marketing phenomenon of everyday life. Simply put, luxury has become luxurification of the commonplace” (Yeoman, 2008)

The design of the proposed ecomuseum is based on Yan Yeoman's vision and focuses on three main guidelines: active community involvement, enhancement of food and wine heritage with a focus on the utilization of know-how and on the co-creation of engaging experiences.

To promote greater involvement and a feeling of belonging within the local community, it is suggested that a participatory approach be adopted through the joint creation of community maps. These maps (Borghi, Ecomuseos y mapas de comunidad: un recurso para la enseñanza de la historia y el patrimonio., 2017) represent visual tools that allow community members to represent their local area in a tangible way, highlighting cultural elements, local resources, traditions and distinctive craft skills.

The active involvement of community members in the map-making process offers multiple benefits. First, it allows them to share their knowledge and perception of the area, encouraging a sense of pride and belonging to the community itself. It fosters participation and dialogue among individuals, promoting the exchange of stories, memories and local knowledge. It also helps develop a sense of collective responsibility for the area and promotes greater awareness of local resources and potential. The joint creation of community maps can be facilitated through participatory workshops, consultative meetings or the adoption of interactive digital platforms. Community maps, once created, can be used as tools for communicating and promoting the area. They can be shared with visitors to provide them with an authentic and in-

depth view of the local community, while encouraging responsible and sustainable tourism. In addition, the maps will provide a reference point for local authorities, tourism operators and land management organizations in developing strategies aimed at enhancing local resources while safeguarding cultural identity and the environment.

A further crucial aspect of the ecomuseum would be to implement a strategy to ensure access to individual areas through the enhancement of soft mobility by systematizing identified routes. Soft mobility, which includes sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, cycling, and the use of environmentally responsible public transportation, plays an essential role in facilitating visitor interaction with the ecomuseum. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential to proceed with the systematization of routes, including the establishment of an integrated network of routes, trails, and bicycle paths that connect the various places of cultural and natural interest within the ecomuseum area. This approach facilitates visitor travel, allowing visitors to fully explore and experience the ecomuseum through gentle and sustainable modes of transportation. Emphasizing soft mobility has a number of significant benefits. First, it contributes to the reduction of environmental impact from transportation, thus promoting the sustainability of the ecomuseum in environmental terms. Second, it encourages a slower and more contemplative discovery experience of the area, allowing visitors to fully appreciate its details, natural beauty and cultural peculiarities. In addition, soft mobility facilitates social interaction and active participation of individuals along the routes, promoting cultural exchange and facilitating the acquisition of authentic experiences. To ensure access to individual territories through soft mobility, it is essential to provide appropriate infrastructure, such as clear and informative signage, strategic rest stops, and bicycle or e-bike rental services. In addition, raising visitor awareness of the importance of soft mobility and promoting the adoption of these modes of transportation through communication and education campaigns is of paramount importance.

Considering the path taken in Slovenia, as discussed in the paper by Poljak Istenič and Fakin Bajec (Poljak Istenič, 2021), which addresses the issue of luxurification of local culture in the context of food and wine tourism, it is proposed to implement thematic routes in the Valnerina region in order to maximize the value of its food and wine heritage. Such thematic routes should go beyond simply promoting the final product, focusing instead on the entire production process involved. This approach, in keeping with the concept of luxury outlined by Yeoman, which values the common and the ordinary, requires highlighting the beauty and authenticity

of traditional practices and professions related to the production of food and wine excellence. Proposed activities include educational, tasting and co-creation activities. The educational events, conducted directly at farms and food and wine facilities, offer a unique opportunity for visitors to fully immerse themselves in the experience, gaining specific knowledge and appreciating the commitment and dedication required to create high-quality products. Through such initiatives, visitors will have the opportunity to learn the traditional techniques employed, actively participate in the cultivation and processing activities, and fully grasp the value of local food and wine practices. Tastings are an essential aspect of enabling visitors to discover and appreciate the unique flavors and peculiarities of local food and wine products. This sensory experience allows them to immerse themselves in the essence of the Valnerina and fully understand the quality and diversity of local food and wine. In addition, organizing co-creation activities in food and wine tourism actively involves visitors, allowing them to participate in the creation of personalized experiences. This involvement fosters a deeper connection with the area, increases the likelihood of repeat visits, and stimulates positive word-of-mouth (Javed, 2022).

Through the adoption of this approach, it will be possible not only to enhance local traditions and preserve the food and wine heritage of the Valnerina, but also to promote sustainable socio-economic development of the region. In addition, the active participation of visitors will contribute to the dissemination of local food and wine culture and the building of a reputation of excellence for the Valnerina as a renowned food and wine destination.

Conclusion

The historical evolution of the tourism industry has highlighted its inherently social character and its ability to reflect the needs and peculiarities of different social classes. Initially confined to a privileged elite, tourism has gradually transformed into a phenomenon accessible to an increasingly broader public, regardless of social status. In its early manifestations, tourism was a luxury reserved for the wealthy classes, who could afford educational trips, wellness treatments or visits to places of cultural interest. However, thanks to structural changes such as the advent of mass transportation and the development of tourism infrastructure, tourism has opened up to the middle classes and the broader segment of the population. The expansion of air routes, the construction of road networks, and the development of affordable lodging options have contributed to the democratization of tourism, providing a wider audience with the opportunity to travel and enjoy leisure time. This has led to greater diversification of tourist destinations, proposed activities, and accommodation options to meet the needs and desires of different social classes. In addition, the historical evolution of tourism has revealed a growing awareness of the social and economic implications of the industry. The tourism industry has been recognized as an important driver of economic development, capable of generating employment, promoting local development and preserving cultural traditions. Local communities have begun to take advantage of the opportunities offered by tourism as a source of income and have adapted their resources to meet the needs of visitors. Awareness of environmental problems and the need to preserve natural resources have prompted tourism destinations to adopt sustainable policies and practices to ensure the protection of the environment and the well-being of the local communities involved.

The aspect of the historical evolution of the tourism sector, with its social dimension and adaptation to the needs of different social classes, is reflected both in the case of Ramadilla Lunahuan and in the various interviews conducted with representatives of the Valle d'Aosta hotel scene. In the case of Ramadilla Lunahuan, it is evident how tourism has become an opportunity for economic and social development for the local community. Through opening a hospitality business and offering unique tourism experiences, Ramadilla Lunahuan has been able to adapt to the needs of visitors, both culturally and in terms of comfort and services. This demonstrates how even in a geographically distant reality like Lunahuan, the evolution of tourism has had a significant impact on the community and created opportunities for growth and social connection.

In the context of the interviews with representatives of the Valdostan hotel scene, a common awareness of the social importance of the tourism sector emerged. The protagonists interviewed emphasized the central role of hoteliers in the community as job creators, promoters of local traditions, and enhancers of the area's resources. The political vision that guides Valle d'Aosta hoteliers is characterized by a strong sense of social responsibility and a commitment to sustainable tourism development, which takes into account the needs and aspirations of different social classes.

Both Ramadilla Lunahuan and the Valdostan hoteliers represent concrete examples of how tourism can be a tool for social development, creating opportunities and helping to build sustainable and inclusive communities. These cases demonstrate the importance of wise and conscious management of tourism, taking into account the different social classes and needs of the local community, in order to maximize the social and economic benefits derived from the tourism sector. Therefore, a management model for tourism policy in the Valnerina based on these assumptions was proposed. The proposal of a management model for the tourism policy of the Valnerina, based on the conception of the Valnerina DMO, aims to create a common table involving both the public and private sectors. The main objective is the drafting of a strategic plan aimed at enhancing and increasing the ecomuseum project initiated by CEDRAV. The implementation of this model is based on a collaborative and synergistic approach, bringing together the resources and expertise of both sectors. The active participation of public institutions, tourism operators, local associations and resident communities is crucial to the success of this initiative. Collaboration between the public and private sectors will allow for a shared vision and management of the tourism resources of the Nerina Valley. This will create synergies, optimize financial and human resources, and improve the promotion and marketing of the ecomuseum and tourist attractions in the area.

It is important to note that the proposed elaboration has some limitations, as no quantitative analysis was conducted to support the Valnerina DMO project. The absence of numerical data may be a shortcoming in assessing the effectiveness and impact of the proposed project. To address this limitation, it would be advisable to conduct further research and quantitative analysis to collect specific data on tourism in the Valnerina. This could include market studies, analysis of industry trends, assessment of tourism flows, analysis of economic data, and other quantitative measurements. Quantitative analysis could provide detailed information on visitor characteristics and behaviors, trends in economic revenues generated by tourism,

environmental impacts, and other key performance indicators. These quantitative data could be useful for assessing the effectiveness of promotion strategies, identifying potential areas for improvement, and supporting evidence-based decision making. Further research could also contribute to a better understanding of visitors' needs and expectations, as well as the factors that influence their travel decisions. This would allow the tourism development plan to be adapted in a more targeted manner consistent with market demands.

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