SMALL VILLAGES AS ANCHORS OF MEDITERRANEAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN EAST AND NORTHEASTERN TERRITORIES OF SICILY

SYEDA RAMEEN SHERAZI[1]

Resumo | Abstract

This paper comes from an internship with Pro Loco San Teodoro, where I mapped itineraries from Catania to Nebrodi Park. Walking local paths and talking with residents, I discovered how small villages hold together a large Mediterranean territory between the eastern coast and the northeastern mountains. The network links a volcanic river gorge, medieval town, territorial castle, dairy areas, griffon vulture cliffs, high pastures, and park gateway villages. These are lived cultural landscapes whose distinct *Genius Loci* only become clear through movement on foot between them.

The research examines how these routes function as both landscape features and territorial connectors across the Messina, Catania, and Etna provinces within the Nebrodi Park. The methodology is based on field walking, interviews with residents and the Nebrodi Park President, field notes, photographs, and Google Maps sketches. It demonstrates how villages serve as anchorages. The open exposure of the gorge is compressed into medieval streets, then into a mountain enclosure where griffon vultures circle limestone cliffs.

Local path networks convey place meanings more effectively than tourist itineraries. Photography and route sketches record these embodied experiences. For Landscapes, Territories and Mobilities, this offers a simple methodology of community walking routes as heritage research tools. It reveals that tourist maps overlook everyday mobilities across geological and administrative boundaries, which makes visible each village's distinct character within Sicily's internal areas.

Palavras-chave | Keywords

Cultural landscapes; tourism itineraries; mediterranean territories; *Genius Loci*; living heritage.

Resumo biográfico | Short biography

Syeda Rameen Sherazi is an urban planner and MA student in World Heritage Studies at Brandenburg University of Technology in Cottbus, Germany. She works at the intersection of cultural landscapes, climate resilience, and community-based planning, with experience in Pakistan, Italy, and Germany. Before starting her current degree, she worked as an urban planner on habitat assessments, ecotourism plans, and sustainable land-use strategies.

[1] Brandenburg University of Technology, Germany.

She has co-authored peer-reviewed articles on green roofs, air quality, and nature-based solutions. In Sicily, as an intern with Pro Loco San Teodoro, she has been analysing local agri-food supply chains and testing walking itineraries that connect small villages, heritage landscapes, and local producers in the Etna–Nebrodi area. She is particularly interested in how local path networks, living heritage, and sustainable planning approaches can inform wider debates on urban–rural relationships, territorial development, and climate adaptation in internal and peripheral regions.