

Agritourism and slow lines: hybrid practices for a landscape design model to support agriculture in mountain regions. Vermont as read from an Italian perspective \*

Agroturismo y “líneas lentas”: prácticas híbridas para un modelo de diseño de paisaje para apoyo a la agricultura de las regiones de montaña. El caso de Vermont desde la perspectiva italiana

---

CATHERINE DEZIO

Architect PhD

Postdoctoral research Fellow / Adjunct Professor, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani  
Politecnico di Milano (Milan, Italy)

[catherine.dezio@polimi.it](mailto:catherine.dezio@polimi.it)

ORCID: [0000-0001-6537-5418](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6537-5418)

Recibido/Received: 30-09-2020; Aceptado/Accepted: 26-03-2021

Cómo citar/How to cite: Dezio, Catherine (2021), “Agritourisms and slow lines: hybrid practices for a landscape design model to support agriculture of mountain regions. The Vermont case reading from Italian perspective”, *Ciudades*, nº24, pp. 79-98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/ciudades.24.2021.79-98>

Este artículo está sujeto a una licencia “[Creative Commons Atribución-No Comercial 4.0 Internacional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)” (CC BY-NC 4.0) / This article is under a “[Creative Commons License: Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0. International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)” (CC BY-NC 4.0)

**Abstract:** The recent pandemic has brought mountain areas back to the centre of many political and academic debates. Amid the increasing desertification of these areas, the need to protect the cultural and natural heritage has become an emergency. In this perspective, the growing social sensitivity towards mountain areas can contribute to a new landscape design model capable of being the driving force for sustainable development. A combination of agritourism and slow tourism can serve as an opportunity to support the rural economy of mountain areas. To explore this possibility, the case of Vermont (USA) is analysed by exploring some specific practices that lead to concrete reflections on new landscape synergies.

**Keywords:** mountain areas, agriculture, agritourism, slow tourism, Vermont.

**Resumen:** La reciente pandemia ha vuelto a situar las zonas de montaña en el centro de muchos debates políticos y académicos. En un contexto de creciente desertización de estas zonas, la necesidad de proteger el patrimonio cultural y natural se convierte en una emergencia. En esta perspectiva, la

---

\* Publication carried out in the context of DASTU “Territorial Fragilities” Research Project funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), Departments of Excellence Initiative 2018-2022. The author would like to thank the SlowHer research committee of the “Territorial fragilities” Project and the scientific coordinator Gabriele Pasqui, the VENTO Lab group, and everyone interviewed for this paper.

creciente sensibilidad social hacia las zonas de montaña puede contribuir a un nuevo modelo de diseño del paisaje capaz de ser el motor de un desarrollo sostenible. La combinación de agroturismo y “turismo lento” puede ser una oportunidad para apoyar la economía rural de las zonas de montaña. Para explorar esta posibilidad se analiza el caso de Vermont (Estados Unidos de América), explorando algunas prácticas específicas que conducen a reflexiones concretas sobre nuevas sinergias paisajísticas.

**Palabras clave:** zonas de montaña, agricultura, agroturismo, “turismo lento”, Vermont.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION. A REGENERATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR FRAGILE MOUNTAIN AGRICULTURE

The recent pandemic and social isolation have brought long-forgotten mountain areas back to the centre of public debate due to the need for a change in perspective. With COVID-19, the lack of adequate health services has appeared throughout this drama. It has revealed how mountain areas have been abandoned by the politics and policies of many European states, which often base their reasoning on the number of people present. Such abandonment by institutions for over a century has consequently contributed to the continuous, slow abandonment of rural areas, activities, and tangible and intangible heritage (MacDonald et al., 2000; European Commission, 2004; Corrado & Dematteis, 2016; Fondazione Montagne Italia, 2017; Lasanta et al., 2017; De Rossi, 2018; Varotto, 2020). To date, despite the recognition by all EU Member States of the importance of common development guidelines for mountain areas, there is no common policy. On both the national and European levels, there is a certain inadequacy of many of the existing agricultural policies to support mountain activities, which have been in a state of crisis for some time.

Farmers operating in mountain areas face a number of specific disadvantages that lead to lower soil productivity and, consequently, lower labour productivity. Furthermore, the difficulty of access, the lower number of processing plants and their small size lead to higher transport costs and lower economies of scale (Reyneri et al, 2015). All these factors have also led to the progressive abandonment of rural mountainous areas, with dangerous effects for entire societies (MacDonald et al., 2000; Li & Li, 2017; Cislighi et al., 2019; Varotto, 2020).

Mountain areas in Europe occupy 18% of the Community’s surface, with almost 2.5 million farms, equal to 18% of all European farms (Reyneri et al., 2015). The weight that mountain agriculture plays is different for each country. In some, it plays an important role in terms of cultivated land area, livestock, number of employees, and wealth produced (Reyneri et al., 2015). In general, mountain areas are territories that most of all represent the providers of ecosystem services to which all communities can benefit, including urban ones (MEA, 2005; Swinton, 2007; Forman, 2017).

According to the landscape described, all the conditions exist for mountain areas and mountain agriculture to return to the centre. In particular, with the consideration that agriculture in these areas often encourages more complex development processes capable of integrating other economic sectors, we can imagine a hybrid model composed of agriculture and tourism with the potential to become a widespread development engine with low territorial impact. These places can act as ideal experimental laboratories for new methods of landscape management (Chiodo et al., 2019). The idea is to investigate a model that connects farms open to the public (in particular agritourism) and the slow infrastructures typical of mountain areas (routes, trails, and bike paths). In this sense, an economic, cultural, and social platform of use, supervision and protection would be consolidated, where farms would become landscape units and farmers would become ecological actors willing to share maintenance of the paths and neighbouring territories. This type of sustainable development model would allow tourists to stay overnight on agritourism farms, support farmers' agricultural activities, visit poorly guarded places with high environmental quality, activate micro-economies that allow social roots to stabilize, and support the maintenance of paths and mountain areas presenting hydrogeological risk. Escaping the romantic rhetoric of mountain places, the model is proposed as an integrated design activity, part of a single programmatic framework oriented towards sustainable development and based on all the local resources of territorial capital (Dezio, 2020a).

Starting with the perspective described above, this paper explores the combination of agritourism and slow tourism as possible synergy oriented at the regeneration and sustainable development of mountain regions, applicable thanks to a landscape design. To conduct this survey, the role of agritourism is analysed in relation to local resources (Table 1), followed by the potential of slow tourism, proposing indicators developed on the basis of UN goals (Table 2). Both the reading and evaluation frameworks (Table 1 and 2) are structured according to the dimensions of the territory and sustainability. Based on this approach, we study the situation in Vermont (USA). The results of interviews with three local programmes that have more or less consciously created synergy between slow tourism and agriculture are read according to the proposed framework. The paper concludes with reflections aimed at implementing replicable guidelines in support of mountain farms that can fuel integrated landscape design.

## **2. AGRITOURISM AS AN ACTIVITY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TERRITORIAL CAPITAL**

Tourism as an opportunity for mountain agriculture refers to several possible topics. The first and fundamental issue focuses on the relationship between consumer and product: it is only in tourist economic activities that the

consumer-tourist moves towards the product-destination rather than the opposite. It is from this attractiveness that great economic potential can transform fragility into opportunity (Mutana & Mukawada, 2018). The ever-increasing tourist demand oriented at places of high rurality and unspoilt nature suggests enhancing the multifunctional capacity of mountain farms by introducing hospitality services with a view to supporting the micro-economy of the place (Chiodo et al., 2019). When the agricultural family provides accommodation and catering services on the farm, this is “agritourism”. The definition of agritourism includes practices developed on farms with the purpose of attracting and hosting visitors for recreational or educational purposes, allowing them to take part in production activities (Sznajder & Przeborska, 2004; Marques, 2006; Barberi & Mshenga, 2008; Philip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010; Barbieri, 2019; Ammirato et al., 2020). The tourist services provided on a farm should not prevail over production activities, but should be complementary (Ammirato et al., 2020). In particular, rural products and services can be divided into nine groups: (i) rural/agritourism accommodation; (ii) rural/agri-food; (iii) true agritourism; (iv) rural/agri-food activities; (v) rural/agro-recreational; (vi) rural/agri-sport; (vii) agriculture; (viii) rural/agricultural and health products; (ix) ethnography (Sznajder & Przeborska, 2004). However, farms cannot be defined only in terms of the services provided. They should act as an opportunity for both farm and territory, in parallel with the new orientations of EU agricultural policies, to satisfy a growing demand for nature and enhance local resources (Ammirato et al., 2020; Lin, Li & Ji, 2020).

Some authors have dealt with the motives behind agritourism activities, underlining the dual role of agritourism both for individual “actors” (rural tourism operators, intermediaries in the tourism sector, and visitors) and the rural community (McGehee, Kim & Jennings, 2007; Ammirato et al., 2020).

Agritourism should be considered as one possible strategy for supporting farms, but above all for the sustainable development of the territory on the different dimensions of its resource capital, with an awareness of its inherent fragility.

To provide a tool for reading the potential benefits of agritourism for the local territorial capital, an analytical synoptic framework is proposed below to cross-read elements, disturbances, and interactions. This framework is structured according to the dimensions of territorial capital and the interpretations of landscape ecology (structure, change, function: Hobbs, 1997), which has always been applied when interpreting landscape dynamics. In this sense, the framework describes the components of rural territorial capital (structure), the disorders to which it is subjected with particular reference to the phenomenon of abandonment (change), and the possible interactions introduced by an agritourism project (function).

<b>Rural Territorial Capital</b>	<b>Landscape structure</b> Constituent elements of Rural Territorial Capital (Dezio, 2020a)	<b>Landscape Change</b> Alterations of RTC due to abandonment (Shangfa & Xiubin, 2017)	<b>Landscape Function</b> Possible positive interactions between agritourism and RTC (Ammirato et al, 2020)
Cultural capital	<p><b>Tangible heritage:</b> rural buildings, rural artefacts</p> <p><b>Intangible heritage:</b> techniques and skills, dialects, music, oral literature, festivals, traditions</p> <p><b>Traditional agricultural landscapes</b></p> <p><b>Food heritage</b></p>	One of the significant negative social effects of land abandonment is landscape degradation and rural decay, which leads to a loss of the traditional farming culture and its aesthetic values, as well as its decline as a tourism attraction.	Recovery of roots, folklore, and traditions; Teach visitors about agriculture and the rural world.
Natural capital	<p><b>Ecosystems:</b> True agroecosystems and green infrastructure (hedges and rows); agroforestry systems, woods and forests; grasslands and pastures; wetlands, rivers, lakes, water network</p> <p><b>Ecosystem services:</b> Procurement services (food, water, fibre); Support services (soil structure and fertility, supply of habitats, nutrient cycle, pollination); regulatory services (pollination, soil conservation, water quality and supply, climate regulation, carbon sequestration); cultural services (recreational and aesthetic)</p>	After farmland has been abandoned, semi-natural artificial ecosystems without management gradually evolve into natural ecosystems, thereby changing the entire traditional agricultural landscape, with substantial ecological and environmental effects. Some scholars have argued that land abandonment threatens some semi-natural habitats with high ecological value, so this agricultural practice should be maintained. Others have advocated that abandonment is a good opportunity to restore natural ecosystems and conserve biodiversity.	Natural and landscape resources maintenance/Biodiversity and environmental protection; Responsible use of raw materials and natural resources/Waste reduction
Human capital	<p><b>Individual Capital:</b> characteristics of individuals: levels of education; knowledge, skills, competencies, formalized and non-formalized knowledge; employment of young people, elderly, women, foreigners, disadvantaged people.</p> <p><b>Social Capital:</b> social dimension of the firm: structured international relations; presence of foreigners; multifunctionality; product ethics; variety of sales types; economic organization of producers</p>	Farmland abandonment occurs due to a rural exodus, which in turn further promotes rural marginalization, restricts the sustainable development of rural areas, and exacerbates the poverty of low-income rural households.	Provide alternative job opportunities to family members; Emancipation of women.

Economic capital (of the firm)	<p><b>Deepening:</b> production, processing, sale of agricultural products; breeding services; forestry; feed production</p> <p><b>Broadening:</b> farmhouse; recreational and educational activities; crafts; renewable energy production; arrangement of greenery</p> <p><b>Regrounding:</b> multiple employment; subcontracting; craft workshops; shops; animation</p>	Farmland abandonment causes a direct decrease in grain acreage, which may lead to considerable reductions in local food production and food shortages in some areas where land has been abandoned.	Incentive for other local activities and boosting local economies. Infrastructural investments; Alternative sources of income for the farmer/business, diversification; Distribution channel for farm product/Developing new markets niches
--------------------------------	---	--	--

Table 1: A cross-cutting model of rural territorial capital. The framework is structured according to the dimensions of territorial capital and the landscape ecology approach to the territory (structure, change, function; Hobbs, 1997). Source: produced by the author.

Table 1 shows how agritourism can ideally be inserted as an action in a sustainable project based on the resource capital of the territory.

In general, the integration of agriculture and tourism has the potential to economically support local communities located at high altitudes and to safeguard some territorial characteristics, encountering few constraints (Sznajder & Przezborska, 2004).

Having said this, agritourism farms have been studied by sciences that deal with business management, but hardly with respect to landscape design. If done so, mountain agritourism could be viewed as an opportunity for networking different local resources.

### 3. SLOW LINES AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REGENERATION

The OECD (2006) argues that tourism can serve as a tool to encourage the growth of many European regions, especially less developed and marginal areas, due to its ability to enhance local resources by generating jobs (without necessarily large initial investments). Especially in areas where traditional jobs such as agriculture, livestock, and crafts have been progressively abandoned, tourism can become the most important sector (Pelc, 2018; Pileri & Moscarelli, 2020). Tourism is seen as a way to enhance territorial capital and is proposed as a valid strategy to revitalize marginal territories (Espon, 2017; Dezio, 2020c; Pileri & Moscarelli, 2020).

Just after the Rio de Janeiro World Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992, three international organizations — the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Earth Council — developed the “Agenda 21 for the tourism industry: towards sustainable development”. This established a few fundamental

principles: tourism must contribute to the conservation and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems; travel and tourism must be based on sustainable consumption and production patterns; and tourism development must recognize and support the identity, culture, and interests of local populations<sup>1</sup>. Even in the most recent Italian policy on the subject, the National Strategy for Inner Areas, tourism is one of five lines of local development, together with the “active protection of territorial/environmental sustainability, enhancement of agriculture and food system, activation of renewable energy supply chains, and know-how and craftsmanship” (UVAL, 2014).

On an international scale, an agreement in 2015 among world leaders of the United Nations on a universal agenda for sustainable development committed all countries to pursuing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015) that would lead to a better future for all by 2030. The agenda sets a comprehensive framework for ending extreme poverty, inequality, and injustice, and tackling climate change. Either directly or indirectly, tourism has the potential to contribute to all 17 goals, with particular emphasis on goals 8, 12, and 14.

Table 2 shows a summary framework for the development of indicators to assess the sustainability of tourism practices, starting with the UN objectives.

<b>Rural Territorial Capital</b>	<b>Evaluate tourism sustainability</b> Indicators based on UN Goals
Cultural capital	2.5 Presence of actions that protect and promote genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. 8.9 Presence of actions to promote local culture and products. 11.4 Presence of actions to protect cultural and natural heritage.
Natural capital	12.2 Presence of sustainable management actions and efficient use of natural resources. 15.1 Presence of actions for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of ecosystems and their services. 15.4 Presence of conservation actions for mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity.
Human capital	8.9 Presence of actions to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and to promote local culture and products. 12.8 Presence of actions to raise awareness about sustainable lifestyles. 12.b Presence of actions that develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism
Economic capital	2.3 Presence of support actions for small local producers. 11.a Presence of actions that support links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. 14.7 Presence of actions that increase economic benefits to develop fragile territories.

Table 2: Sustainability indicators to evaluate tourism practices.

Source: produced by the author.

<sup>1</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000115628> (Accessed: 19/03/2021).

Achieving the 2030 Agenda is a milestone that provides a unique opportunity for governments to create a favourable political base, not only for development but also to repair the fragility of marginal areas.

These territories, defined as “slow” (Lancerini, 2005), can become icons of beauty and good quality of life. In this sense, the negative connotation of the slowness of these places can be transformed into care for environment and landscape, high quality of life, historical and architectural heritage, strong local identity, and local products (Pileri & Moscarelli, 2020). The context of slowness as way to discover territorial quality also includes slow tourism, defined as a form of experiential tourism for travellers in which the most important aspect is the authenticity of the journey and respect for local cultures, as opposed to mass tourism (Nocifera, de Salvo & Calzati, 2011; Heitmann et al., 2011; Dickinson et al. 2010; UNWTO, 2012; Pavione, 2016; Meini, 2018; Pileri, 2020; Pileri & Moscarelli, 2020).

Slow tourism of routes, trails, and bike paths is characterized by slow infrastructures that cross the landscape in areas with high natural value that are rarely visited, with the potential to enhance the many dimensions of territorial capital (Dezio, 2020a) and, therefore, a regeneration project. This project is based on the line that represents an ideal spatial model for holding together points that are spread throughout the territory and revealing lost and dispersed beauty. The line can activate the tourism that these areas need, rebuilding “broken narratives” (Meini, 2018; Pileri, 2018; Pileri, 2020; Dezio, 2020c). Each of these light threads works as a hidden load-bearing structure, an iron wire that can support fragile stories that are deposited in the landscapes it crosses (Pileri et al., 2018). This means, for example: the rice landscape and the local rice it produces; the rice museum that tells about traditional methods and tools for rice cultivation; restaurants with the typical rice recipes; and the testimonies of those who worked there in the past. All these constitute a single story composed of individual points reconnect by the line, activating a virtuous economy.

We could say that the line reveals bioregions. It holds tangible and intangible aspects together in the same frame of interpretation, shifts attention from administrative boundaries to real identifying boundaries, maintains aspects of fragility tied to opportunities for regeneration, holds local and territorial scales together, enhances local resources with sustainable economic and social goals, and directs actions with goals, both part of a single reference system (Dezio, 2020c). The multidimensional paradigm of the bioregion has the ability to feed the slow line project, which is not consumerist, but rather narrative, pedagogical, and ethically oriented (Dezio, 2020c).



#### 4. THE CASE OF VERMONT (USA) FROM AN ITALIAN PERSPECTIVE

To investigate the feasibility of an integrated model of tourism and agriculture where tourism represents an opportunity to support mountain agriculture, we decided to analyse some practices in the state of Vermont (USA).

The motivation for considering a US state relates to the historical ability of this land to transform marginal characteristics into important tourist and economic potential.

This territorial area has managed to build a tourism image strongly based on local identity, while maintaining its authentic, characteristic factors. It could be defined as a resilient cultural agroforestry landscape, that is, a balanced combination of anthropic and natural factors capable of adapting and evolving over time while maintaining its intrinsic characteristics (Dezio, 2020b).

Vermont is a federal state of the United States of America, located in the region of New England. It ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in surface area and 49<sup>th</sup> in population among the 50 states of the Union. The name derives from the French, meaning “green mountain”, just like the ancient chain of Green Mountains that crosses the state in a north-south direction. The highest peak in the chain is Mount Mansfield, at 1,339 meters. To the south lies the Taconic Range, a mountain system parallel to the Green Mountains but with less elevated reliefs that degrade towards the northwest in the eastern plains of Lake Champlain. Eighty percent of the territory consists of mountain forests, while 10% is used as grazing land. For this reason, the economy is based on agriculture (the cultivation of cereals, vegetables, potatoes, fruit), cattle and poultry, and the exploitation of large wooded areas. The secondary sector has developed the food (Vermont maple syrup and cheddar cheese are famous around the world), textiles, wood, paper, and cellulose industries.

If we look at Italian regions with a size similar to Vermont and with the same percentage of mountainous areas (as well as similar GDP), the slow, continuous depopulation in Italy with a decrease in local farms stands out (Table 3). In Vermont, on the other hand, over the same period, the population has increased, along with the start of new farms (which is still decreasing compared to the trend in recent decades). Despite the climate and landforms, agriculture is an important component of Vermont’s economy, landscape, and cultural heritage.

Table 3 shows a comparison that clearly illustrates how, with the same low-density mountainous areas and similar GDP, Vermont has followed a strategy that protects agriculture. The main factors that have allowed this are a very strong structure concerning the local food supply chain, with the related promotion of local products, and the integration of agriculture and tourism.

	Area	Population	Population variation (2009-2019)	Population density	% Mountainous areas	% Variation in farms	GDP in €
<b>Vermont (USA)</b>	24,923 km <sup>2</sup>	623,989 (2019) 621,436 (2009)	+0.4 %	26 pop./km <sup>2</sup>	5.69 % (only Green Mountain)	+5.1 % (2007-2012)	28.428 billion € (2019)
<b>Abruzzo (IT) - centre</b>	10,795 km <sup>2</sup>	1,305,770 (2019) 1,338,898 (2009)	-2.5 %	116 pop./km <sup>2</sup>	6.6 %	-12 % (2000-2010)	33.864 billion € (2018)
<b>Calabria (IT) - south</b>	15,081 km <sup>2</sup>	1,924,701 (2019) 2,009,330 (2009)	-4.2 %	133 pop./km <sup>2</sup>	5.9 %	-21 % (2000-2010)	33.256 billion € (2018)

Table 3: Vermont data compared to Italian regions.  
Source (data): USA, 2020; ISTAT, 2020; Eurostat, 2020.

The Vermont rural landscape attracts many tourists to its ski resorts in winter and its biking and hiking network in spring and autumn. Most villages have a country store, a craft workshop, an antiques shop, and an historic site. Tourism is 15% of the state's economy and strongly depends on the rural landscape and its territorial resources. Vermont has a large network of country inns, small hotels, and farms that have opened their doors to visitors for more than a century.

In 2017, the Biennial Report on the Impact of Tourism in Vermont (Department of Tourism and Marketing, 2018) illustrated the positive impact that tourism has on the economy of Vermont through jobs and income. The industry supports 10% of the state workforce (32,000 jobs), along with a vast network of meals, housing, and products. Agriculture and tourism in Vermont are closely connected. According to a research study, 84% of respondents choose Vermont for its agroforestry landscape and 58.5% would be less likely to visit Vermont if there were few farms to visit (Timmons, 2006). Therefore, state policymakers aim to sustain and preserve the agricultural economy and consequently also tourism.

With the picture described above, we can investigate some practices that have more or less consciously decided to integrate agriculture and tourism, with reference to slow line tourism (routes, trails, bike paths).

## 5. AGRITOURISM AND SLOW LINES. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

In Vermont, there are many practices that support agriculture and local food supply chains. In order to identify tourism options for supporting mountainous agriculture, three practices developed in the state of Vermont were singled out. The selection criteria were based mainly on the presence of slow tourism (i.e., routes, trails, and bike paths).

Vermont's trail network is very dense. AllTrails has mapped 527 hiking trails, running trails, mountain bike trails, and more. The most famous trail is the Long Trail. At 437 km long and with 267 km of side trails, it is the oldest long-distance hiking trail in America, making it possible to reach over 40 peaks (Department of Tourism and Marketing of Vermont, 2018).

The three practices selected for a cross-examination between slow tourism and agriculture are the Farm Walk Trail network, the Inn-to-Inn Walking Tour, and the Shelbourne Farms Walking Trail.

The Farm Walk Trail is an initiative that food, agriculture, and agritourism organizations (Farm-Based Education Network, NOFA-VT, Shelburne Farms, UVM Extension, Vermont Fresh Network/DigInVT, and the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing) brought together to generate synergy between rural systems and tourism. It is based on hiking trails that have host nodes on farms. The Vermont Farm Walk Trail network is based on the idea that farms should not be closed to public and dedicated only to production, and that they can, by diversifying what they offer, become strategic points in poorly visited territories. The project began in spring 2020 and the pandemic has only led to its expansion, since it represents an opportunity for people to have a complete experience (excursion, visit to the company, and tasting) while remaining outdoors.

The Inn-to-inn Walking Tour is a tourist programme that allows all trails in Vermont to be walked with stops at inns that provide luggage transportation. The inns are typical farms isolated in the rural countryside which, due to their location on ancient infrastructure connections, have combined hospitality and catering services with food production. By travelling the entire circuit of paths from inn to inn, you will return to the starting point where you left the car.

Shelburne Farms is a sustainability educational centre within a 570-hectare farm and a National Historic Landmark on the shores of Lake Champlain. The property is nationally recognized as a well-preserved example of a Golden Age "ornamental farm", developed in the late nineteenth century and with architecture by Robert Henderson Robertson and landscape design by Frederick Law Olmsted. The farm's dairy supports a herd of 125 registered Brown Swiss cows, whose milk is used to make cheddar cheese. The farm serves as an educational resource by practicing an environmentally, economically, and culturally sustainable use of rural land. Tourists are invited to walk paths, visit the educational farm, inn, restaurant,

and property. The walking trails are private paths to visit the property by stopping at points where you can taste or buy farm products.

Table 4 summarizes the three practices described above.

Name	Opening	Public / Private	Funding	Actors	Replicable characteristics	Website
<b>1. Farm Walk Trail Network</b>	Spring 2020	Public	Grant funding and in-kind donations of staff time.	A committee of people who represent various Vermont non-profit food/farm orgs who are members of Vermont’s Farm to Plate Network.	Farms open to stops and tastings for tourists walking along the paths.	<a href="https://www.diginvt.com/trails/detail/farm-walks-across-vermont">https://www.diginvt.com/trails/detail/farm-walks-across-vermont</a>
<b>2. Inn-to-Inn Walking Tour</b>	Late 1970s	Private	Each inn contributes to marketing and other expenses.	The four inns that started it are no longer a part of the cooperative group. Inn Victoria, the longest standing member at this time, motivated the group in the 1990s to promote it more actively.	Tourists walk along the paths and stop at inns and small farms that offer local food. The luggage of travellers is transported from one inn to another by the organization.	<a href="https://www.vermontinntoinnwalking.com">https://www.vermontinntoinnwalking.com</a>
<b>3. Shelburne Farms Walking Trail</b>	-	Private	Charitable giving.	Shelburne farms.	A nearly 6-km <sup>2</sup> farm, which also has an environmental education centre, museum, shop, and B&B. Within the estate there are paths of different levels.	<a href="https://shelburnefarms.org">https://shelburnefarms.org</a>

Table 4: Three tourism and agriculture practices in Vermont. Source: produced by the author.

To understand the regenerative and sustainable development capacity of the practices identified, it would be necessary to apply indicators that allow resilience to be assessed before and after the practice evolves (Dezio, 2020b). There are many indicators used for tourism, but there are no common indicators that assess small farms’ resilience, reflecting the gap in policies regarding these topics in such fragile places. For this reason, not wanting to evaluate the tourism impact but rather the integration between tourism and agriculture and its positive impact on farms and the

territory, we decided to apply the indicators developed above starting with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Below, we apply the indicators identified to the three practices, reporting the questions and answers from the interviews (Table 5), which allows some considerations to be extrapolated.

With regard to cultural capital, the main vehicle for protection of the intangible heritage is event programming and the constant promotion of local products, both for sale and within on-site restaurants. However, there are also opportunities to explore the landscape that enhance the material heritage connected to the agricultural world, particularly through walking and slowness.

Natural capital is protected through different practices that safeguard the soil, biodiversity, or efficiently use local energy and resources, although it does not always seem to emerge as a priority.

Rural Territorial Capital	Indicators	Questions	Practices	Answers	Y n/a
Cultural capital	2.5 Presence of actions that protect and promote local resources and associated traditional knowledge.	a) In your activity, have you set out actions that promote and disseminate intangible cultural heritage and old traditions tied to the rural world?  b) Are there any actions that promote local products?	Farm Walk Trail Network	a) The VT farm walk project helps the public to explore and support Vermont's agricultural heritage and the working landscape in a new way.  b) Yes. For every farm listed on the trail, we provide information about what they have for sale.	Y  Y
			Inn-to-Inn Walking Tour	a) Our Vermont Inn to Inn Walking Tour promotes slowing down, unplugging, 'being in the moment', and making that moment surrounded by nature.  b) The four participating inns do. Each inn has its own level of emphasis on local foods. Vermont has a strong emphasis on local farms and each inn leverages that emphasis to a varying degree. Local products are also sold at most inns.	Y  Y
	8.9 Presence of actions to promote local culture and products.		Shelburne Farms Walking Trail	a) To promote cultural heritage and old traditions- our education programs include local indigenous leaders to provide public programming through public programs and events.  b) Yes, we have a restaurant that serves our products; a Farm store that sells our own and others' products; other local and national stores sell our products; and we participate in local farmer's markets.	Y  Y
			11.4 Presence of actions to protect the cultural and natural heritage.		

Natural capital	12.2 Presence of sustainable management actions and efficient use of natural resources.	a) Are there actions for the efficient use of natural resources?	Farm Walk Trail Network	a) - b) We want the public to learn to about regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices through their experience on these farms.	n/a Y
	15.1 Presence of actions for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems and their services.	b) Have you set out agricultural practices that are compatible with maintaining ecosystems, biodiversity and soil quality?	Inn-to-Inn Walking Tour	a) Each inn focuses on such efficiencies. Vermont has a strong focus on environmentalism and each of our four inns shares this focus in their own ways, some more than others (from solar panels to local foods, highly insulated buildings to green cleaning practices). b) Out of our range of insights/observations.	Y n/a
	15.4 Presence of conservation actions for mountain ecosystems, including biodiversity.		Shelburne Farms Walking Trail	a) Yes, our agricultural practices include pasture grazing and silvopasture. b) Yes, our agricultural practices take wildlife habitat, water quality, and soil & forest health into consideration.	Y Y
Economic capital	2.3 Presence of support actions for small local producers.	a) Does the initiative present actions that support small local farmers?	Farm Walk Trail Network	a) Yes, we have actions that support small local farmers. b) No, we don't have actions that support relationships with cities.	Y n/a
	11.a Presence of actions that support links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.	b) Are there any actions that support or strengthen relationships with cities?	Inn-to-Inn Walking Tour	a) Only in the sense that the four participating inns do. Each inn has its own level of emphasis on local foods. b) We do not have any need or occasion to interact with the local town governments, but certainly the guests we bring to the area are good for local tourism. Overall, the Walking Tour promotes awareness of and appreciation for rural Vermont.	Y n/a
	14.7 Presence of actions that increase the economic benefits to developing fragile territories.		Shelburne Farms Walking Trail	a) Our walking trails support public access to our farm. b) Yes, our education and teacher professional learning programs work with local, regional, national, and international audiences.	Y Y

Table 5: SDGs Indicators applied to the three practices selected, based on interview results. Source: produced by the author.

The questions concerning economic capital show the need for training and guidance practices in support of small producers. In the practices analysed, it can be seen that there are no horizontal networking actions between farms and no actions involving local or urban institutions. It is not possible to detect the real territorial impact of agriculture and slow line tourism synergy with the use of just the SDG indicators. The desire to spread a sustainable lifestyle in contact with nature and rural traditions is the basis of all the three practices. However, it can be seen that although all the practices foresee a union between farms and paths, the organizers are not aware of the landscape regeneration potential of the synergy they have generated, thus excluding the action of a conscious landscape design and preventing its improvement. This consideration leads to the need for policies and guidelines addressed to farms with adequate support for landscape design and business planning oriented around integrated, sustainable development.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In light of these results, some interesting aspects can be extrapolated.

The first is the great need for common policies to support small quality farms located in marginal areas such as mountain areas. We need policies that also propose useful indicators to assess resilience that can be adapted to different territories. The exchange of good practices such as those investigated in this paper between countries with the same characteristics but which have undertaken different evolutionary paths can serve as useful knowledge for all levels of governance.

The second consideration concerns the need for operational guidelines for farms, which should be structured according to an interdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder, and multi-objective approach. They should be configured as an operational tool for guiding concrete actions, namely: networking between farms in the same territory; urban-rural connections; integrated protection of the environment and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible; the various possibilities, methods, and limits of practices to integrate agriculture and tourism; and the way in which the role of integrated, multi-scale landscape design can become a strategic action for farms and territory.

Agritourism has certainly been considered an advanced form of integration between tourism and agriculture. An agritourism farm, intended as a farm with accommodation and catering services, can tie a project and landscape vision to enhancement of the resource's territorial capital. Farms offer farmers the opportunity to diversify production activities with tourist activities, which may add extra earnings to their low agricultural income and support the maintenance of rural traditions and culture. Following this reasoning, agritourism can be a successful example of sustainable tourism that has gained importance over the years (Agritourism World Platform, 2020). However, it is necessary to investigate the problem and consider the limits and contradictions that can characterize agritourism

projects. Such limitations include, for example: involving farmers in reception services for longer than in his/her original production activities allow; gaps in tourism promotion; lack of entrepreneurial foresight among farmers; lack of financial resources; and lack of consistency regarding a sustainable, integrated vision of all activities within agritourism.

One of the most relevant aspects is certainly that agritourism is configured as a purely business action, ignoring its landscape regeneration potential. We recall that many researchers have noted that farms may become ecological units, capable of being an important presence for maintaining biodiversity and hydrogeological protection. From this point of view, the possibility of a landscape vision for agritourism may be accepted, and therefore the chance for including slow infrastructure in an overall landscape design. It means integrating business planning and landscape design in a multi-scale model, whose network is composed of paths and trails and the nodes are agritourism farms. This opens up important scenarios for research concerning landscape design as the backbone of a large territorial project. In fact, this approach can bring together landscapes, slow lines, agritourism farms (as services for tourism but also environmental management), and all the great natural and cultural heritage that characterizes mountain regions, which could be enhanced and embodied in a network design project.

The intuition of turning a slow line into the core of an integrated landscape design can also represent an opportunity for management plans in mountain regions. Problems like depopulation or agricultural crises could find a possible solution in a change of vision that moves the observation point from the farm scale to the landscape scale.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ammirato, Salvatore; Felicetti, Alberto Michele; Raso, Cinzia; Pansera, Bruno Antonio & Violi, Antonio (2020), “Agritourism and Sustainability: what we can learn from a systematic literature review”, *Sustainability*, vol. 12, pp. 1-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12229575>
- Barbieri, Carla, & Mshenga, Patience M. (2008), “The role of the firm and owner characteristics on the performance of agritourism farms”, *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 48, n°2, pp. 166-183. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2008.00450.x>
- Barbieri, Carla (2019), “Agritourism research: a perspective article”, *Tourism Review*, vol. 75, n°1, pp. 149-152. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-05-2019-0152>
- Chiodo, Emilio; Fantini, Andrea; Dickes, Lori; Arogundade, Temitope; Lamie, R. David; Assing, Lucilene; Stewart, Corinne & Salvatore, Rita (2019), “Agritourism in Mountainous Regions – Insights from an International Perspective”, *Sustainability*, vol. 11, pp. 1-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11133715>



- Cislaghi, Alessio; Giupponi, Luca; Tamburini, Alberto; Giorgi, Annamaria & Bischetti, Gian Battista (2019), "The effects of mountain grazing abandonment on plant community, forage T value and soil properties: observations and field measurements in an alpine area", *Catena*, vol. 181. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.catena.2019.104086>
- Corrado, Federica & Dematteis, Giuseppe -ed.- (2016), "Riabitare la montagna", *Scienze del Territorio Rivista di Studi Territorialisti*, vol. 4. Retrieved from: <https://oajournals.fupress.net/index.php/sdt/issue/view/331> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).
- De Rossi, Antonio -coord.- (2018), *Riabitare l'Italia. Le aree interne tra abbandoni e riconquiste*, Rome, Donzelli.
- Dezio, Catherine (2020a), "Restart from resources. Rural heritage as Antifragile Territorial Capital", *Valori e Valutazioni*, n°24, pp. 209-217. Retrieved from: <https://siev.org/16-24-2020/> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).
- Dezio, Catherine (2020b), *Paesaggi Agrari Resilienti: Approcci e metodi per l'analisi di pratiche, processi e strategie territoriali*, Milan, FrancoAngeli.
- Dezio, Catherine (2020c), "A bioregional reading of the rural landscapes of the Italian inner areas and the regenerative potential of rural tourism. The case study of the VENTO project", *Ciudades*, n°23, pp. 49-69. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/ciudades.23.2020.49-69>
- Dickinson, Janet & Lumsdon, Les (2010), *Slow travel and tourism*, London, Earthscan.
- Eurostat (2020), "Regional GDP per capita ranged from 30% to 263% of the EU average in 2018", Eurostat newsrelease, n°38/2020. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10474907/1-05032020-AP-EN.pdf/81807e19-e4c8-2e53-c98a-933f5bf30f58> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).
- Filho, Walter Leal; Mandel, Merit; Al-Amin, Abul Quasem; Feher, Alexander & Chiappetta Jabbour Charbel José (2017), "An assessment of the causes and consequences of agricultural land abandonment in Europe", *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, vol. 24, n°6, pp. 554-560. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2016.1240113>
- Fondazione Montagne Italia (2017), *Rapporto montagne Italia 2017*, Catanzaro (Italy), Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli.
- Forman, Richard (2017), *Towns, Ecology, and the Land*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press.

- Heitmann, Sine; Robinson, Peter; Povey, G. (2011), “Slow Food, slow cities and slow tourism”, in Robinson P.; Robinson S. & Dieke P.U.C. -eds.- *Research themes for tourism*, Oxford, CAB International.
- Hobbs, Richard (1997), “Future landscapes and the future of landscape ecology”, *Landscape and urban planning*, vol. 37, n°1-2, pp. 1-9. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-2046\(96\)00364-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-2046(96)00364-7)
- Lancerini, Emanuel (2005), “Territori lenti”, in *Territorio*, vol. 34.
- Lasanta T.; Arnaez J.; Pascual N.; Errea M.P. & Lana-Renault N. (2017), “Space-time process and drivers of land abandonment in Europe”, in *Catena*, vol. 149, pp. 810-823. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.catena.2016.02.024>
- Lin, Mengyi; Li, Fu-Yuan & Ji, Zhe (2020), “How to Innovate the Service Design of Leisure Farms: The Innovation of Sustainable Business Models”, *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, vol. 6, pp. 1-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6030045>
- MacDonald, D.; Crabtree, J.R.; Wiesinger, G.; Dax, T.; Stamou, N.; Fleury, P.; Gutierrez Lazpita, J. & Gibon, A. (2000), “Agricultural abandonment in mountain areas of Europe: environmental consequences and policy response”, in *Journal of Environmental Management*, vol. 59, n°1, pp. 47-69. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1006/jema.1999.0335>
- Marques, Helena, (2006), “Searching for Complementarities between Agriculture and Tourism”, in *Tourism Economics*, vol. 12, n°1, pp. 147-155. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5367%2F000000006776387141>
- McGehee, Nancy; Kim, Kyungmi & Jennings, Gayle (2007), “Gender and motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship”, *Tourism Management*, vol. 28, n°1, pp. 280-289. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.12.022>
- Meini, Monica -ed- (2018), *Terre invisibili. Esplorazioni sul potenziale turistico delle aree interne*, Soveria Mannelli (Italy), Rubettino Editore.
- Mutana, Sarudzai & Mukwada, Geoffrey (2018), “Mountain-route tourism and sustainability. A discourse analysis of literature and possible future research”, *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, vol. 24, pp. 59-65. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2018.08.003>
- Nocifera, Enzo; de Salvo, Paola & Calzati Viviana -eds.- (2011), *Territori lenti e turismo di qualità. Prospettive innovative per lo sviluppo di un turismo sostenibile*, Milan, Franco Angeli.

- Nordregio (2004), *Mountain Areas in Europe: analysis of mountain areas in EU member states, acceding and other European countries*, Nordregio.
- OECD (2006), *Innovation and Growth in Tourism*, Paris, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Pavione, Enrica -ed.- (2016), *Turismo sostenibile e valorizzazione del territorio. Sfide e opportunità di sviluppo del cicloturismo in Italia*, Ariccia (Italy), Aracne Editrice.
- Pelc, Stanko (2018), “Drivers of Marginalization from Different Perspectives”, in Pelc, Stanko & Koderman, Miha -eds.- *Nature, Tourism and Ethnicity as Drivers of (De)Marginalization: Insights to Marginality from Perspective of Sustainability and Development*, Springer International Publishing, pp 3-27.
- Philip, Sharon; Hunter, Colin & Blackstock, Kirsty (2010), “A typology for defining agritourism”, *Tourism Management*, vol. 31, n°6, pp. 754-758. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.08.001>
- Pilati, Luciano (2020), “Combinazione/integrazione di agricoltura e turismo nelle regioni di montagna”, in *Incontri Tra/Montani*. Retrieved from: [www.incontritramontani.it](http://www.incontritramontani.it) (Accessed: 13-10-2020).
- Pileri, Paolo (2020), *Progettare la lentezza*, Gallarate (Italy), People.
- Pileri, Paolo -coord.- (2018), *Ciclabili e cammini per narrare territori*, Portogruaro (Italy), Ediciclo Editore.
- Pileri, Paolo & Moscarelli, Rossella -coord.- (2020), *Cycling & Walking for Regional Development. How slowness regenerates marginal areas*, Springer.
- Reyneri, Amedeo; Gianpaolo, Bruno; Gaudino, Stefano; Rotolo, Luca; Gasco, Laura; Renna, Manuela; Sopegno, Alessandro; Cornale, Paolo & Marzano, Raffaella (2015), “L'agricoltura di montagna nell'Unione Europea”, in *Water and Food Security*. Retrieved from: <https://www.waterandfoodsecurity.org/scheda.php?id=46> (Accessed: 17-03-2021).
- Roberts, Lesley & Hall, Derek (2001), *Rural tourism and recreation: principles to practice*, Wallingford, CAB Int.
- Li, Shengfa & Li, Xiubin (2017), “Global understanding of farmland abandonment: A review and prospects”, *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, vol. 27, pp. 1.123-1.150. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11442-017-1426-0>
- Swinton, Scott -coord.- (2007), “Ecosystem services and agriculture: Cultivating agricultural ecosystems for diverse benefits”, *Ecological Economics*, vol. 64, n°2, pp. 245-252. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2007.09.020>

Sznajder, Michal & Przezdorska, Lucyna (2004), "Identification of rural and agritourism products and services", *Roczniki Akademii Rolniczej w Poznaniu*, vol. 3, n°359, pp. 165-177. Retrieved from: <https://www1.up.poznan.pl/jard/index.php/jard/article/view/1027> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

Timmons, David (2006), *Measuring and understanding local foods: the case of Vermont*. Thesis, University of Vermont.

UN (2015), "Sustainable Development Goals". Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

UNWTO (2012), *Asia-Pacific Newsletter*, n°27.

Ustaoglu, Eda & Coljier, Marcus (2018), "Farmland abandonment in Europe: an overview of drivers, consequences, and assessment of the sustainability implications", *Environmental reviews*, vol. 26, n°4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1139/er-2018-0001>

UVAL (2014), "A strategy for Inner Areas in Italy: definition, objectives, tools and governance", *Materiali UVAL: documenti*, n°31. Retrieved from: [http://old2018.agenziacoesione.gov.it/opencms/export/sites/dps/it/documentazione/servizi/materiali\\_ual/Documenti/MUVAL\\_31\\_Aree\\_interne\\_ENG.pdf](http://old2018.agenziacoesione.gov.it/opencms/export/sites/dps/it/documentazione/servizi/materiali_ual/Documenti/MUVAL_31_Aree_interne_ENG.pdf) (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

Varotto, Mauro (2020), *Montagne di Mezzo. Una nuova geografia*, Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi.

## Websites

Agritourism World Platform. Retrieved from: <https://agritourism.eurac.edu> (Accessed: 17-03-2021).

Department of Tourism and Marketing of Vermont. Retrieved from: <https://www.vermont.gov/#gsc.tab=0> (Accessed: 19/03/2021).

Farm walk trail network. Retrieved from: <https://www.diginvt.com/trails/detail/farm-walks-across-vermont> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

Inn-to-inn walking tour. Retrieved from: <https://www.vermontinntoinnwalking.com> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Retrieved from: <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).

The Shelburne Farms walking trails. Retrieved from: <https://shelburnefarms.org> (Accessed: 13-10-2020).