

Special Issue
Enhancement, Management,
and Sustainability of Tourism in Italian
Small Villages

FUORI LUOGO

Journal of Sociology of Territory,
Tourism, Technology

Guest Editors

Ilaria Marotta

Salvatore Monaco

Marina Novelli



Editor in Chief: Fabio Corbisiero
Managing Editor: Carmine Urciuoli

YEAR VII - Vol 21 - Number 4 - December 2024
FedOA - Federico II University Press
ISSN (online) 2723-9608 - ISSN (print) 2532-750X

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English text editor: Pietro Maturi.

Cover by Fabio Improta. Image from Unsplash.

EDITORE



FedOA - Federico II University Press
Centro di Ateneo per le Biblioteche "Roberto Pettorino"
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

Editorial responsibility

Fedoa adopts and promotes specific guidelines on editorial responsibility, and follows COPE's Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors.

Authorization of the Court of Naples no. 59 of 20 December 2016.

ISSN 2723-9608 (online publication) ISSN 2532-750X (paper publication)

Articles

In evaluating the proposed works, the journal follows a peer review procedure. The articles are proposed for evaluation by two anonymous referees, once removed any element that could identify the author. Propose an article. The journal uses a submission system (open journal) to manage new proposals on the site.

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Fuori Luogo is one of the open access journals published under the SHARE Interuniversity Convention.

Fuori Luogo is included in the ANVUR list of Area 08-11-14 scientific journals, class A for the sociological sectors, 14/C1, 14/C2, 14/C3, 14/D1.

Fuori Luogo is indexed in: DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals - ACNP Catalogue code n. PT03461557 - Index Copernicus International ID 67296.

The journal is part of CRIS Coordinamento Riviste Italiane di Sociologia.

Fuori Luogo is included in the LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) network of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP PLN)

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The Emergence of Lazy Tourism

Small towns constitute a significant portion of the total population in many countries. However, there has been a relative scarcity of sociological research focused on these areas, with scholars devoting more attention to the impacts of globalization and technological change on large cities and urban regions. Nevertheless, as the effects of globalization increasingly manifest in small towns, transnational grassroots movements have arisen to address the needs, challenges, and opportunities faced by these communities. Many of these movements involve partnerships and networks that connect local and international levels. They are often framed in terms of community sustainability, emphasizing livability and quality of life.

This special issue of *Fuori Luogo* situates the emergence of cross-border collaborations between small towns within the broader context of the transition from “first” to “second modernity.”

Through in-depth case studies on environmentalism, entrepreneurship, and creativity in Italy, the scholars contributing to this issue examine a topic that has captivated academics, policy-makers, and tourists worldwide. The severe experience of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 highlighted the risks associated with rapid, mass tourism in urban centers (McCabe, 2024).

After this period, slow tourism saw a remarkable resurgence, as travelers sought authentic experiences connecting them with nature, local culture, and the charm of small communities. The allure of these small villages, or “borghi,” lies in their picturesque landscapes, rich history, and the warm hospitality of their residents. These quaint settlements often stand in stark contrast to the fast-paced lifestyle of urban centers, allowing visitors to slow down, immerse themselves in the local way of life, and appreciate the simple pleasures that come with “lazy” living.

One of the primary attractions of this type of tourism is the opportunity to explore the stunning natural surroundings typical of these villages. From rolling hills and vineyards to breathtaking coastlines and mountains, the scenery is both diverse and captivating. Activities such as hiking, cycling, and agritourism enable visitors to engage directly with the environment, often leading to a deeper appreciation for the land and its resources (Sharpley, 2022). Many of these small villages also take pride in their local produce, offering farm-to-table dining experiences that showcase traditional recipes and seasonal ingredients.

Cultural heritage is another cornerstone of lazy tourism. Many of these “borghi” boast historic architecture, ancient traditions, and vibrant festivals celebrating local customs, as seen in several villages currently accessible in the Campania region—including Zungoli, which served as the site for the research papers upon which this special issue is based. Visitors can participate in workshops such as pottery, weaving, or cooking classes that not only impart new skills but also provide insight into the community’s heritage. These experiences foster a connection between tourists and locals, promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

Moreover, the economic impact of slow travel on these small communities can be profound. By attracting visitors, small villages can stimulate their local economies, creating jobs and supporting local artisans and innovative businesses. This influx of tourism can help preserve traditional crafts and ways of life that might otherwise be at risk of disappearing.

However, it is essential that such growth be managed sustainably to ensure that the charm and authenticity of these villages are not lost to commercialization. The main question is whether tourism can thrive under a new paradigm characterized by reduced resource consumption and a significantly lower environmental impact. This challenge has proven difficult for the tourism sector to address. Even during periods of temporary socio-economic crisis, the dominant narrative has been one of resilience and renewed growth; press releases from leading tourism institutions reflect such sentiments. Some argue that a recovery in the second decade of the 21st century is entirely achievable, given the global population of eight billion, the expanding middle class in developing economies, and a supply sector eager for commerce. However, how does this align

with the realization that oil production has peaked and that scientists worldwide predict severe negative consequences from global warming if current trends continue?

Moreover, for the majority of people living in developing countries, owning a car is not currently feasible. Regular vacations are also uncommon; only a small segment of the population has both the disposable income and the inclination to travel. Nonetheless, travel to nearby destinations or visits to friends and family has become more frequent than in previous decades. The significant rise in economic migration to urban areas in the late 20th century also led to an increase in domestic travel, largely motivated by family commitments—many stemming from economic and political displacement. Traditional holiday practices exist in various parts of Italy as well. For instance, some residents of the Campania region prefer beach vacations in nearby inland or coastal areas, reachable by ferry or bus.

Thus, before promoting mindful and moderate tourism, we need to ensure that everyone has the means—economic and otherwise—to regard travel as a time of well-being for both individuals and the places they visit. These small villages, with their unique character and rich traditions, are ideal destinations for travelers seeking a more meaningful connection with the world around them.

As more people discover the beauty of these enchanting locales, the future of “lazy tourism” looks promising—provided it is approached with care and respect for the communities that welcome us.

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