



The landscape-tourism nexus as a learning object. Comparing two Italian experiences in geography higher education

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Abstract

Landscape and tourism have been widely investigated in geography, both in research and from a teaching perspective. The need for interdisciplinary contributions that can overcome sectorial and dichotomous visions on the two themes has been stressed for years. This paper addresses the relationship between landscape and tourism as a nexus.

Moving from recent investigations that revealed the relevance of post-phenomenological studies informing either landscape or tourism or both, this paper discusses how the nexus can be developed as a teaching object, an issue and a tool in the framework of geography classes in higher education.

To do so, this paper juxtaposes two distinct Italian course units: one from the Master's degree in Management of Tourism and Cultural Heritage programme at the University of Molise and the other from the Master's degree in Landscape Sciences programme at the University of Padua.

This paper focuses on the common approach based on performative and mobile experiences in fieldwork as a turning point for transformative and critical learning addressing the nexus. Despite some differences, the cases include embodied landscape-tourism mobilities, encounters with local actors and the connections of representations and practices through performances. Together, all these elements turn into a specific pedagogy.

In the conclusion, we claim the effectiveness of situated and dynamic approaches to teaching the physical, social and symbolic dimensions of the landscape-tourism nexus, as these approaches are powerful in evidencing the complexity of its entanglements.

Keywords: Geography Teaching, Higher Education, Landscape-Tourism Nexus, Fieldwork, Mobilities, Embodied Practices, Active Citizenship

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, awareness of landscape as a common good and understanding of tourism as a relevant territorial driver have increased (Terkenli, 2021). Recent contributions developed for the celebration of the European Landscape Convention's 20th anniversary and for the United Nations (UN) Agenda for Sustainable Development evidence how the ongoing requests addressing local development have never stopped questioning the intertwining relationship between landscape and tourism.

Geography teaching in higher education is eager to absorb the scientific contributions on this complex theme. The didactical analysis of the physical, social, economic and political dimensions of the geographical contexts (De Vecchis, 2021; Stoltman, 2012) necessarily crosses the multiplicity of issues connecting landscape and tourism.

Concerning the disciplinary positioning, the relationship between the two themes can be mainly found as explicit or, more often, implicit teaching object in geography course units included in tourism-oriented programmes that are part of the economic-managerial field or in tourism-focused course units included in geography degree programmes. Although teaching programmes, methods and outputs may vary according to the discipline, the complex nature of the nexus and the growing influence of postmodern, performative and mobile perspectives (Bærenholdt et al., 2003; Edensor, 2007; Hannam et al., 2006) in its conceptualisation require critical thinking to continuously (re)define theory-based and practical skills aimed to interact with the evolving nature of both landscape and tourism.

Considering the conceptual need to assess the multifaceted and evolutionary aspects of the geographical teaching, the aim of the present study is to explore whether and how addressing the specific landscape-tourism nexus as a teaching object can contribute to the theoretical discussion on geography in higher education (Fortuijn et al., 2020). This will be done by considering two Italian teaching and learning experiences: one, of a broad human geography course unit within the Master's degree in Management of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

programme of the University of Molise, and the other, of a specific tourism geography course unit within the Master's in Landscape Sciences programme of the University of Padua. The common efforts to integrate cognitive with bodily forms of knowing, learning and interrelating "on a mobile ground" to address the landscape-tourism relationship have stimulated the association between the two geographical teachings¹.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 conceptualises the landscape-tourism nexus as a didactical object for geography classes in higher education. Section 3 presents the two course units. Section 4 shows the results of the comparison between the two experiences. The final remarks underline the reason for integrating them, and indicate further possible research investigations.

2. Conceptualising the landscape-tourism nexus as a learning object

Landscape and tourism are complex and connected scientific research fields. Their synergy has generated a large number of articles that are diverse in subject matter and methodology (Terkenli et al., 2021). As for the main research topics, in 2004 Terkenli offered an enlightening epistemological overview of the "infusion of tourism-related issues into landscape geography and vice versa" (p. 342). She argued that the increasing focus on the relationship of tourism with landscape is the result of three distinctive tendencies: (i) an international, largely European, interest in landscape values, landscape planning and policy, assessment and analytical methodologies; (ii) widespread realisation of the growing degree of modifications that tourism development has been imparting to many landscapes around the world; (iii) and the dominant role of structuralist, post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives on landscape in social and cultural geographies of

¹ The comparison has been possible thanks to a fruitful dialogue and collaboration among the authors matured between 2021 and 2022 within the seminars on landscape issues organised by the Landscape Studies Research Group of the Association of Italian Geographers (AGeI).

tourism focusing on the complex interrelationships between the phenomenon of tourism and the construction, reconstruction and consumption of landscape in and out of the context of everyday life.

As highlighted in recent studies (Jimenez-Garcia et al., 2021; Meneghello, 2021), the three perspectives indicated by Terkenli still predominantly define the scientific contributions. Moreover, the post-phenomenological establishment of non-representational (Thrift, 2008) and more-than-representational theories (Ingold, 2000; Lorimer, 2005) has been influencing a shift in the debate on the landscape-tourism nexus. Tim Ingold's concept of "taskscape" (1993) considers the "making of" space a social expression of incessant human body movements in ordinary activities. This concept, combined with the new mobilities approach to movement (Cresswell, 2006, 2010; Sheller and Urry, 2006), has been absorbed by tourism scholars (Coleman and Crang, 2002; Crouch, 1999, 2005; Edensor, 2001; Mavric and Urry, 2009). This approach has paid more and more attention to both tourism embodiments (Prince, 2019) and mobilities (Jensen et al., 2015) as active agents in the co-construction of "touristscapes" (Edensor, 2007).

In such a perspective, it is worth considering the concept of "enskilment", in which "learning is inseparable from doing, and in which both are embedded in the context of a practical engagement in the world" (Ingold, 2000, p. 416). This means that a revised framework for understanding landscape and tourism can also suggest other ways of teaching and learning the two themes that are much more embodied and dynamic than traditional static "indoor" classes (Wattchow and Prins, 2018), such as ways that are performed "on the ground" and "on the move".

This study originates from the consideration that the educational implications of the intense scientific production referring to the landscape-tourism nexus have not yet been fully investigated in literature.

Many contributions have long emphasised the role of "in-field activities" in geography education. Widely studied in literature both internationally (France and Haigh, 2018; Kent et al., 1997) and nationally (Dematteis and Giorda, 2013; Donadelli, 2019; Gilardi and Molinari, 2014; Giorda and Puttilli, 2011), the value of

outdoor geography education is being recently renewed thanks to the advancement of knowledge in neuroscience and the teaching methodologies of outdoor education and place-based learning. In particular, we now know that these specific didactical practices contribute to the psychophysical development, can enhance learning experiences and support the definition of citizenship competences (Giorda and Rosmo, 2021; Rogaten et al., 2019).

In particular, landscape education identifies innovative approaches for emancipatory learning (Castiglioni and Cisani, 2022) evaluating the opportunities offered by the concept of landscape and its "plurality of instrumental uses" (Castiglioni et al., 2015, p. 12) to develop conscious attitudes and behaviours of active citizenship (Cepollaro and Zanon, 2022; Cisani et al., 2022; Riesco-Chueca and Gómez-Zotano, 2013). Sgard (2022) argues that "[a] landscape may be an object, an issue, and a tool" (p. 156), stressing that "landscape education should aim to embrace both sensorial experience and the deciphering of political issues" (p. 158). From a different perspective, tourism education demonstrates the benefits of hands-on learning as a pre-condition for social and civic awareness, global understanding and intercultural exchanges (Miller et al., 2021; Schreck et al., 2020).

Among the diverse contributions, that of Küpers and Wee (2018) is particularly enlightening for our study because it channels the richness of these contributions into our conceptual framework. By adopting a specific (post)phenomenological approach to the fieldtrip, the authors concretely exemplify the meaning of "enskilment". In particular, they describe the walking practices in field trips as a specific didactical method of exploring the significance of embodied and mobile ways of sensing and making sense of spaces. Focusing on issues of performativity, mobility and self-exploring, the specific didactical experience demonstrates that learning about tourism landscapes "on the ground" and "on the move" represents an effective way of "enskillment" knowledge about the different dimensions of the landscape and force to resituate the sense of self towards ecological, social and cultural values that address forms of active citizenship.

3. Embodied and mobile experiences of landscape and tourism in two Italian geography course units

The Italian academic context has a long tradition of place-based learning in geography education (Giorda and Rosmo, 2021). Many important in-field experiences that are organised today are rooted in this tradition. In the main Geography Master's degree programmes fieldworks are organized as an additional part of teaching or a specific laboratory. The presence of fieldwork seems to be more evident in programmes and course units that explicitly address landscape and/or tourism. Moreover, the fulcrum of these didactical experiences often revolves the issues of landscape/heritage planning, management and promotion interrelated with sustainability².

Despite a variety of in-field cases that are actually performed in higher education, little scholarly review considered these cases for scientific debate. To fill this gap, we consider two Italian experiences developed in two different but complementary Master's degrees, one in Geography (LM-80 class) at the University of Padua, and one in Planning and Management of Tourism Systems (LM-49 class) at the University of Molise³. We report and scrutinise the two experiences with the aim to start a systematization of the subject.

3.1 Mobile practices in landscapes with tourism management students of the University of Molise

The Master's degree programme named Management of Tourism and Cultural Heritage programme at the University of Molise includes

² Just to cite a few examples, the Master's degree in Development of the Territories and Sustainable Tourism at the University of Genova (LM-80) proposes a Laboratory titled "Survey techniques and shared planning in tourism" where students are taken into the field to design new tourism proposals by interacting with institutions. The University of Turin proposes in-field activities as integrative part of the teaching "Historical Geography of Landscape" in the Master's degree in Geography and Spatial Sciences (LM-80).

³ The authors have been diversely involved in the two courses.

a Human Geography course unit that is focused on places, mobilities and cultures and is particularly oriented toward the study of landscapes for tourism promotion, with reference to the European Landscape Convention⁴.

Lessons are carried out by the two authors Meini and Petrella in an interactive way to elicit critical assumptions of the landscape-tourism nexus. Examples of landscape analysis, readings and cartographic visualisation are provided, with direct involvement of students in data acquisition, processing and communication of results, creation of itineraries for landscape/heritage enhancement and geomedial implementation⁵.

In the learning process, fieldwork represents the turning point in which different visions and sensibilities are confronted (Figure 1). It initiates a process of deconstruction of the touristscape (Edensor, 2007) in search of new meanings that can underpin the sharing between host and guest (Prince, 2019). This first step of the experience consists of a moment in which the students are invited to create a subjective representation, starting from the sensory stimuli deriving from the landscape. The second step constitutes the moment of confrontation with residents and operators on the representations of the ordinary and the extraordinary landscape. The third step starts when students are asked to come up with the most appropriate and effective narrative in consideration

⁴ The teaching of Human Geography, which is a long-established subject in this graduate programme accredited by the UNWTO TedQual certification, aims to achieve the sensitivity and skills to understand the tourism potential of marginal regions or minor aspects of mature tourist regions; the ability to interpret different landscapes, seen as a result of territorial transformations that often have upset the traditional order; methods and techniques for the analysis of geographical landscapes, their perceptions and their value as commons; and skills for the design of routes and tourism development plans starting from the varied manifestations of the man-environment relation and the nature-culture nexus.

⁵ A part of the course is dedicated to geomedial applications for cultural tourism with the support of the competences and research outputs developed in the MoRGaNA Lab of the Department of Biosciences and Territory (www.morgana-lab.com).

of the specific landscape context and the means of transport used for the mobility experience⁶.

During the fieldwork, the methodological simulation of the role of tourists facing different mobility experiences is aimed at understanding how the various forms of transport and spatial movement, including the walking practices along the ancient transhumance routes (Meini et al., 2018), influence the perception of the landscape.

The final product is left to the creativity of the students. Over the years, it has taken the form of audio guides, short videos with travel stories and hypertexts. Its didactic value, however, does not lie in the finished product as much as in the process of critical reflection that is activated during its production. The landscape is thus used as a mediator in the continuous process of co-creation of meaning (Castiglioni et al., 2015). Indeed, in the design of the landscape narrative, tools are the result of the interaction between students and residents. Moments of joint elaboration, comparison and sharing are encouraged *in itinere*. Once implemented, such tools become effective drivers of dialogue among engaged actors in the landscape discussion.

3.2 Walking as tourism and as pedagogy with the geography students of the University of Padua

The Master's degree in Landscape Sciences programme at the University of Padua includes the course Tourism and Landscape Promotion. It is a rare course where the landscape-tourism nexus appears in the course title, and it is no coincidence that it is found in one of the only curricula nationwide entirely devoted to landscapes through a geographical perspective⁷.

⁶ Students elaborate geotourism itineraries working on effective proposals for promoting new landscape practices in marginal areas (Meini, 2021). To understand the tourism potential of these regions, field surveys are carried out mainly in the inland areas of Molise reached through various means of transport and on foot along stretches of the sheep tracks that are the physical reference of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage of Mediterranean transhumance.

⁷ Inaugurated two years ago, this brand-new graduate programme aims to teach the various themes that

This course is therefore divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to the "ABC of tourism"; the second, to the specific contribution of human geography to tourism and landscape studies; and the third, to walking tourism – a type of "slow tourism" that is being increasingly proposed for sustainable development (UNWTO, 2019). Through this last thematic part, students have the chance to test and experience what they have learnt in the class on the ground, through a walking experience, and specifically, "on a moving ground" (Scriven, 2021)⁸. Walking provides students the opportunity to experience embodied, multisensory and highly sociable ways of perceiving, knowing and co-creating places and senses of places (Simm and Marvell, 2015).

In 2021, "walking touristscapes" have been "enskill" through a two-day walking fieldwork along Saint Anthony's Way, and more precisely, in the last 35 km before reaching the famous Basilica in Padua (Figure 2)⁹.

intersect with landscapes to foster innovative and interdisciplinary approaches. Although the landscape-tourism nexus also appears indirectly in other courses in this Master's degree programme (courses on regional planning, landscape protection and landscape storytelling or with urban, natural and rural landscapes) Tourism and Landscape Promotion is the only course that is systematically dedicated to the exploration of tourism, here intended well beyond the tourism-landscape nexus. The general goal of this course is to provide students (some of whom have never studied anything related to tourism) a general awareness of the diversity of contemporary tourism and its social and spatial implications. Merging the knowledge and skills that students have learnt in the other programme courses, the ambition is that they can "enskill" their expertise to recognise the landscape-tourism nexus from a critical perspective, beyond the consumption and production divide.

⁸ The educational significance of walking methods for tourism education and other forms of experiential learning has been recently revised, as already mentioned, from a phenomenological perspective by Küpers and Wee, (2018).

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of Saint Anthony's Way, see Meneghello and Volpe, 2022.



Figure 1. Didactical walking along the transhumance routes with students of the University of Molise. Elaboration: Meini M. and Petrella M.

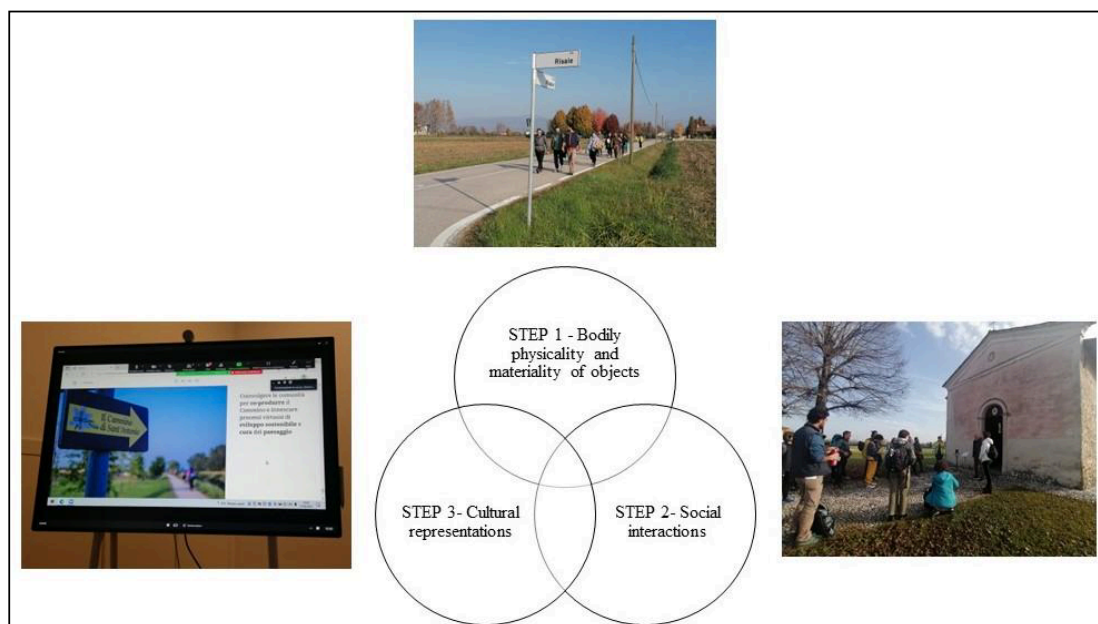


Figure 2. Walking as tourism and as pedagogy along Saint Anthony's Way with the students of the University of Padua. Elaboration: Meneghello S. and Rabbiosi C.

Walking tourism is the object of inquiry of one of the teaching professors (Rabbiosi, 2021)¹⁰. However, the didactical experience

¹⁰ By walking along ancient pilgrimage routes, students explored two interlinked and increasingly popular themes: walking holidays and cultural-religious itineraries. The activity also evaluated their potentialities in a mature tourism destination such as the Veneto Region.

integrated a second instructor, whose ongoing PhD research project focuses on the landscape-tourism nexus (Meneghello, 2021). The nexus as teaching object was explored while it was deployed along the route experiencing simultaneously the perceptual-emotional, social-recreational, and spiritual-cultural dimensions of the walking (tourist) landscape (steps 1,2,3 in Figure 2).

Methodologically, the students walked while performing diverse roles (resident, religious pilgrim, tourist and local administrator) that were assigned to them before they left for the fieldwork; and at the end of the first day of walking, a first debriefing was organized to assess the landscape-tourism nexus according to the perception that such an “identity” may have had. Not only this; while walking, the students also had to answer a geoquestionnaire proposed to them for the georeferencing of significant landscape and describing, while experiencing the landscape, its physical, social and cultural dimensions. The use of the specific tool stimulated the recognition of the multiple landscape dimensions activated through the specific experience (Macpherson, 2016).

As a final exam, the students were asked to develop a work project on a specific aspect of Saint Anthony’s Way, to be presented in the form of a story map in front of an audience composed of diverse experts who had previously intervened in the class.

4. The landscape-tourism nexus as a teaching object, a tool and an issue

The exploration of the landscape-tourism nexus as a teaching object is here assessed starting from the juxtaposition of the two courses with respect to their disciplinary and geographical positioning¹¹. The human geography course in Molise investigates the role of landscape as tourism resource in marginal areas of Southern Italy that are in the early stages of destination development. Therefore, the course teaches students how to plan, manage and promote sustainable geotourism, starting from the transhumance routes or other historical communication networks. On the other hand, the tourism geography course unit in Padua analyses walking tourism not only through theoretical

frameworks or disembodied data but also as a form of pedagogy for learning about it.

Apart from the differences, the conceptualisation of the landscape-tourism nexus as a teaching object enables to go beyond the mere juxtaposition of the two experiences and to compare them under the same conceptual framework. In particular, the common focus on the relational dimensions of the (tourist) landscapes allows to critically integrate the two cases. The groups of photos representing the in-field activities in Molise (Figure 1) and in Padua (Figure 2) have been selected by the authors in a specular way to evidence the comprehension of the three relational dimensions defining the nexus; and that are the sensory-affective dimension of mobile practices, the social dimension of meeting people and role-playing game, and the cultural dimension of sharing ideas and negotiating new or renewed representations of places.

Although the physical, social and cultural dimensions of (tourist) landscapes are investigated differently in the two experiences, where in the case of Molise there is a sequential learning process (Figure 1) to understand them, and in the case of Padua they are conceived to be learnt simultaneously (Figure 2), the adopted mobile practice become the key tool for the implementation of both educational methodologies. Digital tools, such as the audio guides, hypertexts and videos produced by the students in Molise and the geoquestionnaires and final story maps filled and realised by the students in Veneto, thus assume a complementary role in supporting the teaching activities, by favouring data collection, problem-solving and restitution in class. Together, all these elements turn into a specific pedagogy where the in-field activity represents the most peculiar phase of the whole process.

Despite the different disciplinary backgrounds and spatial contexts, the lesson on practical and mobile engagement with landscapes as “enskilment” taken from Ingold demonstrates in both courses that “how” to teach is as important as “what” to teach. Merging Ingold’s conceptual filter with the one proposed by Sgard (2022) on the multiple roles of landscapes in education highlights how the landscape-tourism nexus can be defined as a teaching “intermediate object” but also a didactical “tool” and an “issue” that can

¹¹ Whereas the programme of Molise is part of a 20-year tradition of academic programmes in Tourism Management, the programme of Padua represents a new interdisciplinary programme that addresses multiple landscape issues from the social sciences and humanities perspectives. In addition, the two didactical cases explore different landscapes and tourist contexts.

trigger debates and favour active citizenship. Both students' groups critically face the complexity of managing and promoting landscapes that are the expression of the intricate constellation of movements and forms of dwelling that define the local (tourism) systems. They also become aware of the need to responsibly access common spaces and resources for the contextual benefit of communities, tourists and territories as well as the different uses and meanings associated with landscapes.

Controversial aspects raised by the specific teaching object derived from the different viewpoints of the students, the instructors and the external subjects. From the multiple reactions that

emerged during the in-field activities to the various interpretations given to symbolic values, to the discussion of tools and ways to present the final results, the students' viewpoints, even in the same course, need to be constantly negotiated and supervised. Beyond the in-field activities, this relational and dialectical dimension among different subjects turns out to be the style of the entire didactical process.

The schematic diagram in Figure 3 describes the result of the comparative analysis evidencing the commonalities in the whole didactical process facing the landscape-tourism nexus and the centrality of the fieldwork.

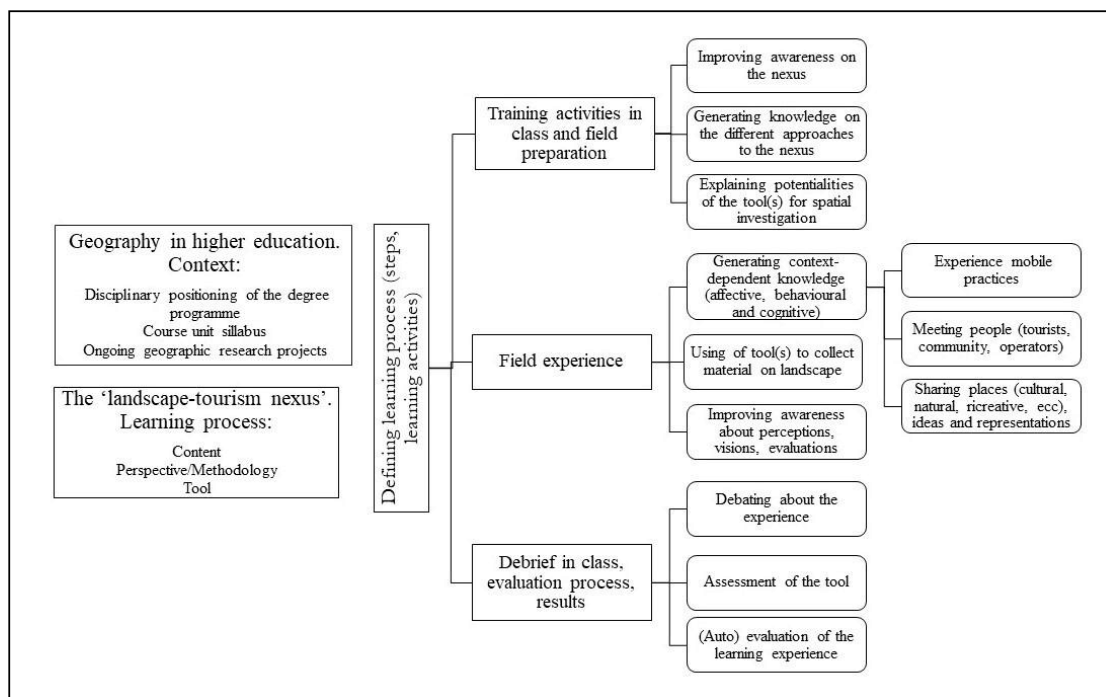


Figure 3. Teaching the landscape-tourism nexus in geography courses. Processual steps and teaching activities (conceived with reference to Michelutti E. and Guaran A., 2022). Elaboration: Meneghello S.

5. Final remarks

This paper enquires whether and how the theoretical richness of the landscape-tourism nexus, which has been widely explored in scientific debates, is also mirrored in the

pedagogical experience. We have proposed to focus on the “enskilment” potential of performative and mobile didactical practices in geography in higher education with reference to two Italian courses that address the relationship between landscape and tourism.

The fieldwork, mainly deployed along ancient routes through different mobilities, is considered in both cases the most transformative part, or turning point, in the learning process. Based on the context-dependent knowledge, the experiences foster students' comprehension of the triple, physical, social and cultural dimensions of the tourist landscapes they encountered while walking as well as their triple positioning, as a student, as a tourist and as a local operator or resident.

By favouring the shift from an individual and passive perception of the mere scenic value of the landscape to a collective involvement in/for the landscape assessed in its relational dimensions, the didactical experiences turn to be a transformative way to address active citizenship.

These transformative challenges confirm the relevance of the landscape-tourism nexus as teaching object in geography classes at the higher education level. In this regard, both courses take up Sgard's invitation to imagine "new approaches and tools for learning not only how to perceive but also how to express and debate" (Sgard, 2022, p. 2).

The two experiences result to be complementary in contributing to the debate on geography education at university level. They exemplify two different ways of teaching a topic, that of the relationship between landscape and tourism, that is central in critical geographical approaches facing territorial transformations. Moreover, the two experiences complement each other because, despite different objectives, disciplinary positioning and didactic processes, they teach students to be observers of the experience, active subjects co-creating the tourist landscape through shared and individual sensations, perceptions and cognitive reflections, and agents discussing what is experienced, collectively contributing to the mobilisation of new ideas and solutions.

Additional investigations should explore the didactical experiences and related outputs depending on the type of mobility chosen to reach the destination and/or go through it (by coach, by train, by bike and on foot). Future reflections on the landscape-tourism nexus as a teaching object in other educational contexts could further the systematisation process on this subject initiated with this study.

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