



Landscape Connections in the villages of inland Sicily

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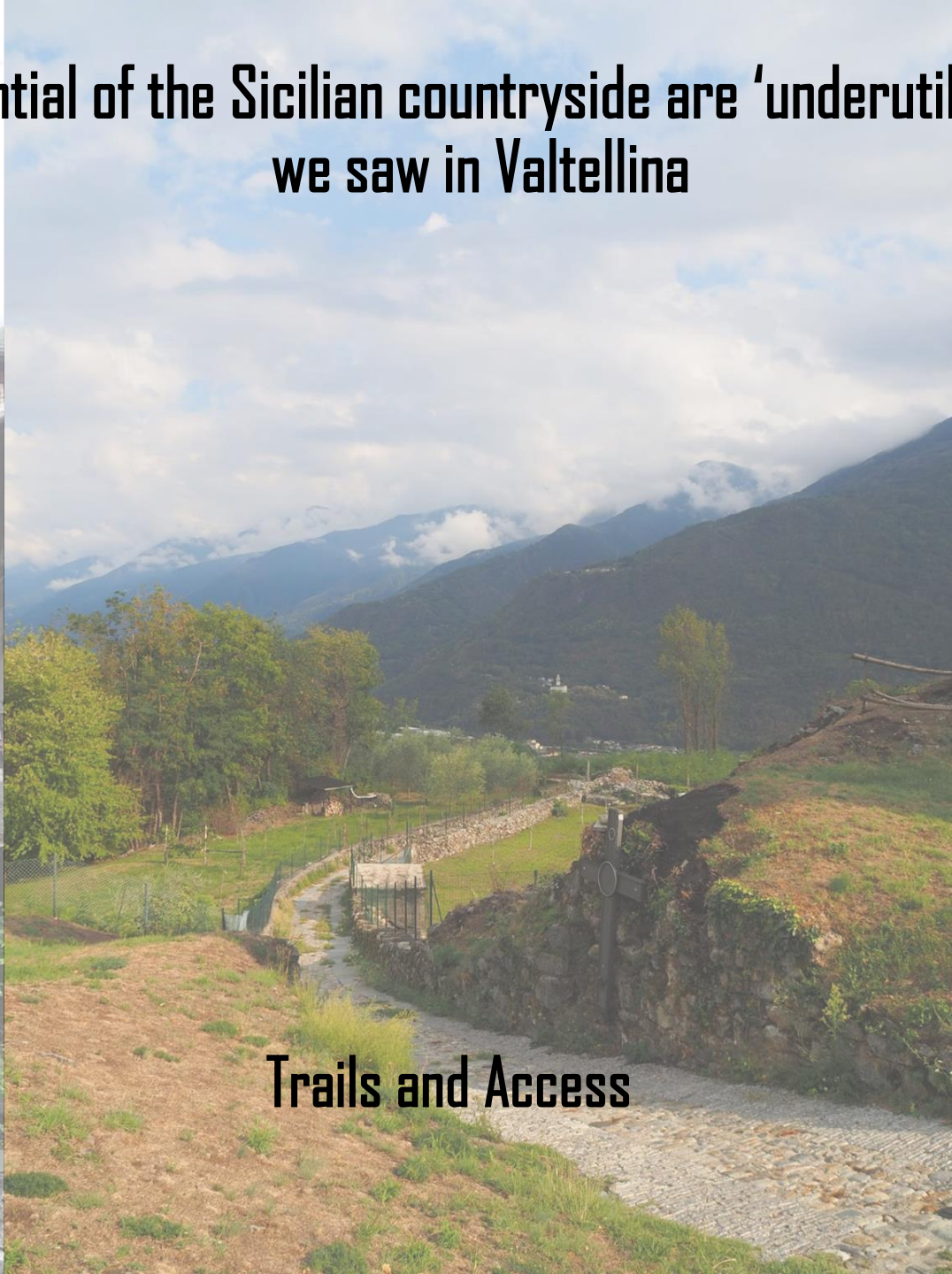
Initial Observations, Inspiration and Questions

- **My context:** challenges of rural economic development in the United States and declining agricultural populations
- **Observations in Sicily:** small villages with a strong visual and spatial connection to the primarily agricultural countryside.
- **Questions:** what is happening in the countryside surrounding the villages? How are the challenges and opportunities similar and different to familiar agricultural contexts in rural New York and Maine? Is there a way to revitalize both village and countryside economically while protecting the natural resources and agricultural character of the countryside?
- **Location:** Centuripe

The beauty and potential of the Sicilian countryside are 'underutilized' relative to what we saw in Valtellina



Restoration and Heritage



Trails and Access



Agritourism

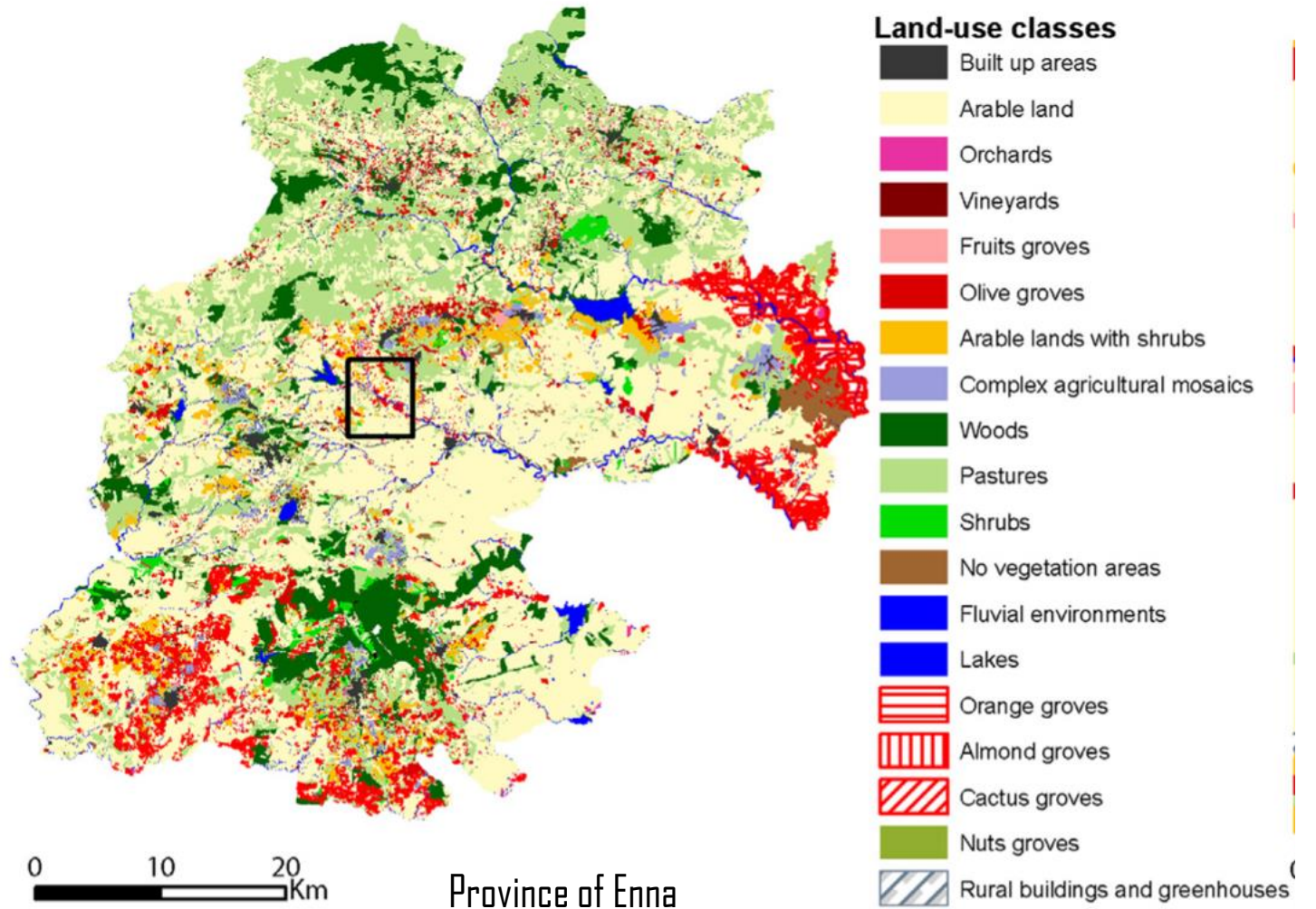
Research Finding: Culture and Agriculture

There has been a long history of interest in fostering agricultural development from past planning efforts and agrarian land reform (particularly in the South.) The Agricultural Census is conducted every ten years in Italy. From 2000-2010, the agricultural surface area used in Sicily increased by 8.4% and in Enna, by 21%.

"The perspective to be avoided must be that of considering the places of extensive agriculture as a resting place for small groups of urban intellectuals or, on the contrary, as an industrial system for producing food or energy. To achieve this result, agriculture must return to center stage as a protagonist in the protection of the territory..." (*Martinico, Paesaggi Riforma*)



Research Finding: Landscape Potential



Overall Project Aims

- Goal: use my research, case studies and experience working in similar contexts in the United States to identify challenges to be overcome and opportunities for rural economic development in Centuripe.



Case Study →

Troina: The Italian town that will pay you to restyle a €1 home

Silvia Marchetti, CNN • Published 14th January 2021

- Mayor Fabio Venezia (elected 2013)
- Population: 9,209 (2017)
- **Purpose:** to transform Troina into a center with a production economy, rather than the formerly almost exclusively 'assisted economy'
- **Three priorities:** restore and increase access to historic center, enhance environmental quality through revitalized agriculture, gastronomy and related tourism, and strengthen collaboration with mental health and elder care facility
- Major hub for public funding in past decade → over 50 public works financed for more than 47 million euro.
 - Importantly, this involved regaining land control from organized crime (including over 4200 hectares of state-owned forest)

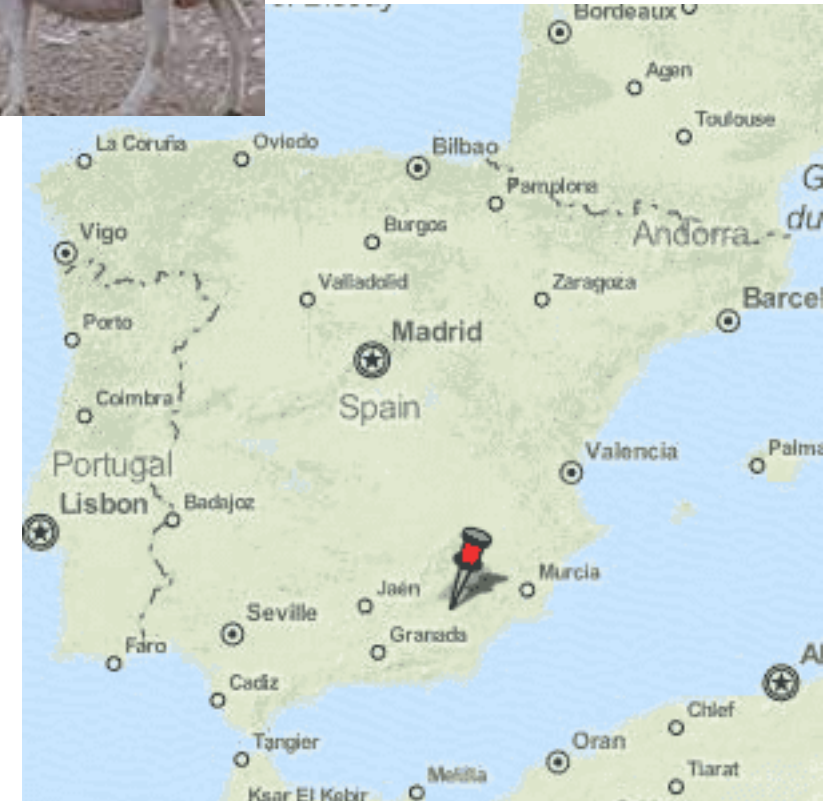


Case Studies → Huéscar (Andalusia, Spain)

- Many demographic similarities to Centuripe, but economic turnaround occurred when livestock farmers formed an association & marketing cooperative (selling finished meat not live lambs).
- This resulted from the strategic decision to preserve the Segureño breed of sheep and differentiate from other sheep.

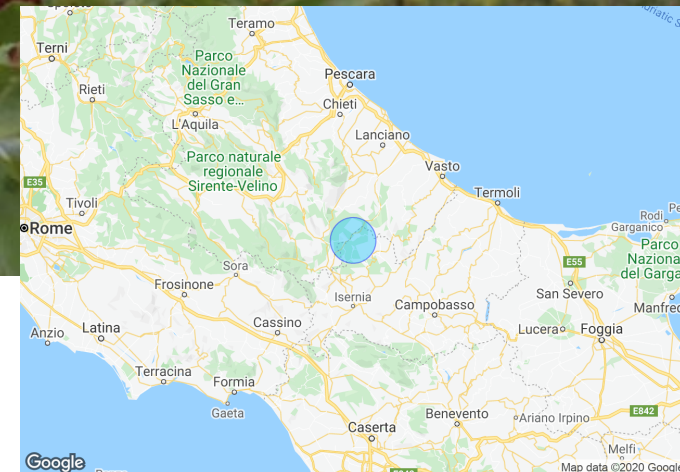


Public funding provided 80% of association budget. 40 farmers and 20,000 sheep → 280 farmers and 140,000 sheep. *In other nearby areas like Guadix, livestock farming has virtually disappeared.*



Case Studies → Castel del Giudice (Molise, Italy)

- Set up agricultural business specializing in the production of apples and biological preserves called "Melise" - many residents bought shares in the company and became employees.



Engagement: Strategy and Findings

- **Goal:** testing out my ideas for strategies, asking what has already been done and why it worked/failed, and what would need to be different to have success.
- **Salvatore La Spina (Mayor, Centuripe)**
 - Focused on the importance of agriculture in the region and the lack of cooperatives/organized marketing for export
- **Angelo (PermArancia → permaculture project growing citrus for shipment across Italy)**
 - Thinks my strategies are aligned with the potential he sees for the region, but a lot would need to change. He is concerned that people don't see the value in these projects, that there aren't enough qualified people to run them and that corruption will dilute any project finances

Key parameters for Centuripe:

- Focus on culture, food and agriculture
- Tourism alone is not enough
- No industrial-scale agriculture
- Use public funding successfully
- Regain/maintain land control, and set the goals/terms for projects
- Identify the key players
- Cooperation and community involvement

Strategy 1: Identify ways development/new business opportunities can coexist with agriculture



Agritourism





NEWS

Italy to allocate US\$1.5 billion for 375MW of agrivoltaics

By Jonathan Tourino Jacobo

August 29, 2022

Cooperatives



Mt Etna

Strategy 2: Identify new products

- Cooperative marketing
- Value-added goods



Strategy 3: Increase the interaction between village and countryside

Hiking trails



Small business/community connections



Reflections on Challenges and Achievements of Project Process

- Reflect on and understand the reasons for challenges
 - Limited engagement – is there a project champion?
 - Language barriers
 - The problem of too much money



Key Parameters for Vizzini

- Don't hire any consultants without a clearer plan
 - (don't hire consultants to come up with a plan)
- Consider issuing a Request for Proposals for the site after a serious community engagement effort → articulate with specificity what you want to see there, and use the money to make it happen