



Research article

Preserving cultural landscapes in the face of globalization. The musealization of Sicilian heritage

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Abstract: This contribution critically reflects the musealization of landscapes as an effective response to the rapid transformations brought about by globalization. Focusing on the case of Sicilian heritage, we examine how the conservation and representation of traditional landscapes in museums serve as a defensive reaction to the perceived threats of homogenization and cultural loss caused by global processes. This article fits into the debate on cultural landscapes and outlines the protection policies implemented by UNESCO while delving into the role of museum collections. In this specific context of preserving the tangible and intangible components of cultural heritage, the landscape is intertwined with the role of local communities in a changing world. We also explore the concept of authenticity in landscapes and its significance in preserving cultural identities. Through qualitative methodology involving critical analysis of literature and document examination, the research illustrates how the musealization of Sicilian landscapes has aimed to safeguard collective memory and cultural heritage. However, this article also highlights potential risks associated with this process, such as the static representation of dynamic cultures and the selective nature of museum curation. Ultimately, this study advocates for transparent and multifaceted interpretations of cultural landscapes to avoid the creation of artificial myths and to preserve the polysemy of the landscape's meaning. By critically examining the context through significant examples, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of musealization in conserving and representing cultural landscapes in the face of globalization's challenges.

Keywords: cultural landscapes; cultural heritage; authenticity; risk; heritage communities; musealization

1. Introduction

We aim to critically reflect the musealization of the landscape as an effective response to deeply transformative events. In order to contextualize the research within a solid theoretical background, the first part highlights the impact of environmental changes on cultural heritage and the need for various conservation strategies. In analyzing the protection policies, we delve into the role of UNESCO and museum collections. UNESCO has recognized cultural landscapes as a category eligible for inclusion in the World Heritage lists and it has divided them into three major categories. We emphasize the complexity of cultural landscapes, involving both tangible and intangible components. Furthermore, we highlight how local communities play a crucial role in identifying and preserving the values of these landscapes. Museums are considered effective in preserving intangible aspects, and there is a growing emphasis on community participation in the interpretation and management of heritage. We discuss the perception of risk and vulnerability in the modern world due to globalization, which threatens the uniqueness of cultural landscapes. Thus, we provide a description of the central issues concerning the landscape as a defensive reaction to the crisis, with a focus on the relevance of authenticity seen as a contextual perception.

After anchoring the topic in the most relevant theoretical questions, we intend to focus on the process of musealization of the Sicilian landscape. To analyze the context, a qualitative methodology is employed through a critical review of the literature and document analysis [1]. The examination and interpretation of the materials aim to derive the meanings that the contribution illustrates in the second part of the paper. This section establishes a consequential relationship between the transformations of Sicilian social and economic fabric and the widespread dissemination of museums aimed at preserving the collective memory embodied in the landscape. Indeed, the Sicilian cultural landscape has evolved over time due to economic and social changes, transitioning from an agricultural and marine-based economy to a more urban and industrial one. Sicilian museums have played a crucial role in preserving not only physical objects but also the way of life of the traditional culture. This preservation is a response to the fear of losing the past, especially as rural communities left their agricultural lifestyles for urbanization after World War II. Intellectuals recognized the need to safeguard this cultural heritage. We further discuss two museum models in Sicily: The first emphasizes a connection between the museum's collections and a cultural landscape conceived as uniform and unique. The second model involves museums that reconstruct environments related to rural life and work.

We also highlight the rise of ethnographic museums and the need for a shift in preserving cultural landscapes. The concept of ecomuseums, which focus on community participation in preserving historical, cultural and environmental heritage, is presented as a response to the changing cultural and environmental landscape. We conclude by suggesting that museums serve as monuments of memory in Sicilian communities, preserving the diverse meanings and cultural artifacts that connect the island to its history and identity. We challenge museums to adapt to the transformations of the contemporary world while retaining a sense of authenticity and cultural heritage. The phenomenon is discussed in the results chapter critically, with the objective of highlighting the risks of a conservation process based on the pursuit of authenticity, ultimately proposing more effective strategies to convey the polysemy of the landscape.

2. The cultural landscapes in a changing world

2.1. Cultural landscape protection policies: The role of UNESCO and Museums

An epochal transition is affecting the world and impacting both the environment and the evolving ways in which communities relate to it. The transformations of the environment condition the state of existence of cultural heritage and specifically the cultural landscape. It is known that drastic environmental changes, due to natural or human activities, as well as gradual environmental factors, can directly impact cultural heritage. Depending on the type of cultural relics and the various environments, different conservation strategies are implemented. Protection policies generally follow three basic forms: Burial monitoring, excavation protection and museum collection [2].

Cultural landscape is a specific form of heritage: its protection requires that due attention be given to the full range of values represented in it, both cultural and natural. The scientific debate on cultural landscapes has indeed foreseen a gradual reconsideration of the separation between nature and culture. An important milestone in this process was the recognition of cultural landscapes as a category eligible for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage lists [3]. The World Heritage Convention was the first international legal instrument to recognise and protect cultural landscapes. The Committee at its 16th session acknowledged that cultural landscapes represent the combined works of nature and of man. This statement is present in Article 1 of the Convention and was used to introduce the cultural landscape concept into the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in 1992. After this fundamental recognition, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage divided the cultural landscape into three major categories: The landscape designed and created intentionally by man, the organically evolved landscape and the associative cultural landscape [4]. The protection policies implemented by UNESCO are based on recognizing the complexity of this particular form of heritage. Indeed, cultural landscape involves intangible components and is therefore complex to identify, define and map. So, the role of local communities in recognizing the tangible and intangible values of the landscape and in property management is fundamental [5]. Among the systems for the protection of cultural landscapes, museum collections are considered particularly effective because they crystallize over time the intangible components that risk being permanently erased. Even in this context, the issue of community participation is becoming increasingly central. The contemporary museum adds to its traditional ‘temple’ function that of a ‘forum’: A renewed space where new voices aim to overlap with that of the museum curator [6]. Representatives of the cultures exhibited in museums increasingly demand active participation in the processes of attributing value and meaning to the shown objects. Collaborative museology with indigenous peoples, for example, mobilizes not only museums but also aims to dismantle the ethnocentric representation of non-European populations that underlies colonial collections. More and more often, indigenous communities, in addition to the right to be interpreters and spokespeople for their culture and history, also assert ownership of the objects held by museums [7,8]. The need for a participatory approach is an open question for museums and for the management of cultural heritage as a whole. The scientific debate on the creation of a dialogic model that must involve a more open and inclusive arena has also led to the concept of heritage community as outlined in the Faro Convention [9] and to a renewed definition of heritage in UNESCO documents. This theme of community participation is particularly relevant in an era of great transformations, like the current one, which risks erasing the memory embedded in landscapes. In this context, UNESCO, as well as the

Council of Europe, intervene to manage the risk to heritage. Through the identification, classification and the bureaucratization and professionalization of heritage, these institutions make the risk of erasing what is perceived as valuable calculable and manageable. The loss of cultural objects, as well as the impact of urban development on natural landscapes, is perceived as detrimental not only to the objects and places but also to the people who attribute value to these things as part of their heritage [10]. From this perception of risk both to heritage and to communities, museums have gained an increasingly central role for the preservation of landscapes as an urgent necessity.

2.2. The quest for landscape as a defensive reaction to crisis

The landscape is currently defined in the context of the perception of a threat, consisting of the potential loss or erasure of memory and its value for the community. The importance of protecting and conserving traditional landscapes is based on a fundamental notion of risk and uncertainty that characterizes our time. Risk is perceived as an intrinsic quality of the experience of modernity and it is a systematic way of facing the consequences due to the menacing force of modernization [11,12]. The perception of vulnerability due to the impacts of globalization affects the landscape in multiple ways. In the contemporary world, creolization, transculturation and hybridization pose a serious challenge to the concept of culture as a landscape. The faster pace and deeper impact of today's globalization are seen as a threat to the sense of identity that holds the group together. In the second half of the twentieth century, many scholars began to foresee the end of distance [13–15] and the disappearance of diversity, along with the erasure of the traditional specificity of places [16,17]. In the space of flows and networks, landscapes appear flattened into flatscapes lacking peculiarities [18]. As Daniels observed, landscapes provide a visible form to identities [19]. Since identities are constantly transforming, the landscape is the tool through which everyone can think or imagine a culture and locate it. The landscapes of the mind reproduce the unique characteristics of a culture that are threatened by an impending process of homogenization that leaves no room for specificities. The only strategy deemed effective in ensuring cultural survival against the threats of globalization is to cling to the mythical landscape that connects each culture to its past. In the contemporary age, an increasingly large number of individuals, groups and nations assert the irreducibility of their identity through exaggerated displays of attachment to places and a fervent search for roots. Landscapes are shaped by ideological needs and the necessity to conceive a particular idea of tradition and place as a secure and stable space. As known, this way of describing places as bounded and undisturbed has been widely questioned, as well as the relationships between place, culture and identity [20]. However, the landscape moves by statute at a slower pace compared to the physical and tangible elements of a territory and is anchored in mythical time, connecting each community to its past, or rather, to its collective memory. As Said demonstrated, collective memory is not an inert and passive thing but a field of activity where past events are selected, reconstructed or erased, endowed with political significance [21]. Similarly, the landscape is an ideological concept that reflects and reproduces values, norms and social roles of groups of people [22,23]. Today, landscapes are conceived and imagined to provide a backdrop and a sense to a post-modern vision of the world, seeking reassurance against the risks of globalization in the most 'authentic' characteristics of a place. What matters now is no longer the coherence between the landscape and its referent but rather the ways in which the landscape configures itself as a tool to respond to global crises. The landscape becomes a means to promote a defensive reaction to the threats of homogenization. The response to the crisis of traditional landscapes

lies within the landscapes themselves, as effective tools to reconnect a community to its past, its memory, its mythical origins and to envision every culture in a place.

2.3. The authenticity of the landscape and musealization

The processes of globalization of social, economic and cultural dynamics reinforce the demand for landscapes. In an era where flows of people, data and products connect the global and local dimensions, the need for identity and a sense of place stimulates, with particular urgency, the search for authentic landscapes. Authenticity is not an absolute truth but a contextual perception; it is a partial, constructed and situated notion [24–26]. In various spatial contexts, the need to reconnect with the past and places of origin is reflected in a process of selection that attributes the value of authenticity to certain spaces. This longing for contact with the authentic is based on a strong sense of nostalgia for mythical landscapes, stories and traditions of the past. The search and recovery of particular ways of seeing the world, unique and authentic, fulfill identity aspirations. In response to the global processes that threaten to homogenize landscapes and commodify uniform identities, the musealization of landscapes is considered an effective resource. Today, testimonies of the past are recognized not only for their intrinsic value but also in relation to the spatial context that produces them. Furthermore, safeguarding environmental values and preserving nature no longer concern specific elements and areas but the entire territory. The European Landscape Convention, established in 2000, enshrined the recognition of the landscape as an essential component in the living context of populations, representing the diversity of their heritage and the foundation of their identity. With the Convention, the safeguarding, management and enhancement of the landscape are acknowledged as necessary actions to ensure the quality of the landscape itself, threatened by industrial changes and economic transformations. This document clearly reflects the widespread concern about the ongoing spatial transition. In reality, all safeguarding processes aim to counter the fear that these transformations may irreversibly erase the traces of the past. If environments, societies and cultures change over time, artifacts, on the other hand, transcend and memorialize time and can be considered as the last refuge of culture [27]. It is precisely because of this strong value that cultural heritage objects are the first victims during revolutionary transformations. For the same reason, museums preserve artifacts that represent landscapes: The world changes and evolves, but material objects survive, carrying with them an idea of constancy. This is a possible and current challenge in the contemporary age characterized by significant changes. However, even though objects serve as custodians of culture, they cannot fully capture the entire complexity of the social reality that gave rise to them, the context and the meanings attributed to them within the space of their existence before being placed inside museums. Indeed, museography is based on the illusory hope that the processes of reality can be transformed into systems and therefore into forms. This utopia leads the museum curator to seek to provide a representation as faithful to reality as possible. The illusion of authenticity guides the musealization of landscapes and generates the risk of producing false myths and reserves that mystify the meanings of places.

3. Culture as landscape: The case of musealization in Sicily

3.1. Sicilian museums for the preservation of a conceived unique landscape

The Sicilian cultural horizon has been primarily linked to agricultural activities and the exploitation of marine resources for centuries. After the Second World War, the evolving economic and social changes have brought substantial transformations to the cultural landscape. The dominance of the urban and industrial dimension has crushed rural economies, thinned out populations and thus contributed to the impoverishment of agricultural landscapes. Despite this, the signs and symbols of a traditional culture based on these land uses continue to characterize the Sicilian landscape to this day. The island, situated south of Italy, has been influenced by numerous diverse peoples and cultures, thanks to its central location in the Mediterranean. The Sicilian case is one of cumulative history. The new peoples, cultures, techniques and languages have never entirely replaced the previous ones but rather have layered upon them [28]. This results in a highly stratified reality and a complex identity in which different, sometimes contradictory, images manage to coexist. The island's past and recent events have placed Sicily at the center of multiple discourses and representations. A mythical connotation of Sicily can be found in the descriptions of travelers who, starting from the 18th century, considered it a fundamental stop in their journey to Italy. Travelers played a fundamental role in constructing the image of Sicily [29]. The landscape of Sicily, also constructed through literature, enjoy great collective adherence and consensus [30]. Through these landscape, it is still possible to access Sicily's mythical past. The world landscape is intentionally declined in the singular. Indeed, in spite of the fact that Sicily is not evidently a single landscape but is composed of multiple landscapes, there is still an imaginary concept that encompasses the entire island. This imaginary geography has been significantly influenced by literature and visual arts and has been reflected in the representations provided by the numerous museums established since the post-World War II period. The sense of place tends to strengthen when it feels threatened, and war has demonstrated how real the material and cultural destruction could be [31]. So, museums have been the essential means to protect a sense of place that saw Sicily as a unique landscape to be safeguarded and preserved against the threats of erasing the past. Sicilian museums have played a key role in preserving the memory of the Sicilian landscape and contributing to a construction that is almost stable over time. Sicilian museum curators and scholars aimed to preserve not only objects but also ways of life and oral productions of traditional culture for future memory. In doing so, they preserved a way of seeing the world. The origin of the growing attention to the material culture and oral traditions of the people lay in the fear of erasing the past that the rural classes, after leaving the countryside at the end of the Second World War, voluntarily operated in the shared desire for emancipation from a past of poverty and constraints. In pursuit of a better existence, the newly urbanized intentionally discarded the dialect, magical-religious beliefs and objects of material culture. The intellectuals of the time, recognizing the clear risk of complete oblivion of a universe of world representation and material culture, associating their own roots with this past and often idealizing them, perceived the duty to preserve the memory, documenting it in writing or displaying it for museum enjoyment.

This boom in museum collections of cultural landscapes initiated a broad theoretical and academic debate, as well as a technical-practical one among professionals from different museum institutions, conservators and politicians. This discussion extended beyond the island's borders starting in the 1970s. It led to a profound reconsideration of the role of museums, shifting from a focus on conservation to that of museum communication [32]. The most current and prevailing orientation of

contemporary museography is to attempt an interpretation of the complex reality to which objects were connected. Since every landscape is also composed of invisible signs, museum curators and scholars are now called upon to consider how to incorporate the intangible dimension into a museum and how to make objects speak. Despite this strong impetus for rethinking the meanings of museums, it is interesting to note that many of the ethnographic museums in Sicily maintain their original exhibition setups. This type of museum can be thoroughly explored to understand how the Sicilian landscape has been conceived as a single landscape and how it has been represented through the objects selected as authentic relics of a past not to be forgotten.

3.2. *The contribution of ethnographic museums to the preservation of the Sicilian cultural landscape*

To provide a contextual framework for the state of museums in Sicily, it is useful to refer to the latest results of the Survey on Museums and Similar Institutions conducted annually in Italy by the National Institute of Statistics (Istat), the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces. According to the 2022 survey, there were 4,292 museums and institutions open in the reference year of 2021. Among these, 220 are located in Sicily (Table 1).

Table 1. Museums and similar institutions open in Italy, divided by region. Source: Istat 2022, Survey on Museums and Similar Institutions, reference year 2021 (Last updated: February 9, 2023). The responsibility for the elaboration lies with the author.

| REGIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Piemonte | 352 |
| Valle d'Aosta - Vallée d'Aoste | 46 |
| Lombardia | 373 |
| Trentino-Alto Adige | 183 |
| Bolzano/Bozen | 101 |
| Trento | 82 |
| Veneto | 280 |
| Friuli-Venezia Giulia | 145 |
| Liguria | 156 |
| Emilia-Romagna | 424 |
| Toscana | 511 |
| Umbria | 161 |
| Marche | 254 |
| Lazio | 298 |
| Abruzzo | 84 |
| Molise | 34 |
| Campania | 199 |
| Puglia | 131 |
| Basilicata | 42 |
| Calabria | 134 |
| Sicilia | 220 |
| Sardegna | 265 |
| Italia | 4.292 |

The museums and similar institutions located in Sicily can be categorized according to the type of structure, i.e., the type of assets and collections considered most relevant for public enjoyment (Table 2).

Table 2. Museums and similar institutions open in Sicily, divided according to the type of assets and collections considered most relevant for public enjoyment. Source: Istat 2022, Survey on Museums and Similar Institutions, reference year 2021 (Last updated: February 9, 2023). The responsibility for the elaboration lies with the author.

| Sicily (220) | |
|---|-------|
| Type of exhibition structure | Total |
| Art (from medieval to the 19th century) | 13 |
| Modern and contemporary art | 15 |
| Religion and worship | 20 |
| Archaeology | 31 |
| History | 5 |
| Natural history and natural sciences | 13 |
| Science and technology | 2 |
| Ethnography and anthropology | 19 |
| Thematic and/or specialized | 14 |
| Industrial and/or business | 1 |
| House Museum, House of Memory | 8 |
| Archaeological area | 24 |
| Archaeological park | 13 |
| Church, religious building, or monumental religious complex | 17 |
| Historically or artistically significant villa or palace | 10 |
| Fortified or military architecture | 7 |
| Civil architecture of historical or artistic interest | 1 |
| Archaeological artifact | 4 |
| Industrial archaeology artifact | 3 |

The Istat survey (2022) includes in the category of ethnographic museums collections of materials related to the cultures and characteristics of different populations, including intangible evidence, agricultural and craft museums, as well as territorial museums with collections of materials and evidence related to a particular territory. Among the types listed, ethnographic museums are the ones most directly involved in the conservation and representation of Sicilian cultural landscape. Despite Istat's identification of only 19 ethnographic museums, the actual number in Sicily is at least twice as many when taking into account that many collections are relatively unknown. Indeed, these museums often struggle and are isolated, they are little-known and visited and they lack proper support from public administrations. In the new millennium, the economic crisis and the collapse of public investments have often led to these museums' survival being entirely dependent on the resilience of a few volunteer groups. Ethnographic museums are still quite widespread and are facing the challenge of transforming themselves into territorial outposts capable of addressing the demands of civil society [33]. The numerous museums that safeguarded traditional landscapes were organized either based on object types or on the reconstruction of environments [34].

An emblematic example of the first model is the Museum dedicated to Giuseppe Pitрэ, born from a collection exhibited for the first time at the Universal Exhibition of Palermo in 1891–1892, that has preserved over time the original arrangement model of its collections. This Museum remains to this day a precious treasure chest that preserves objects related to daily life, productive activities and the realm of symbolism. In the post-war period, the museum collections were relocated to the Casina alla Cinese inside the Favorita Park in Palermo. The museum director of that time (Giuseppe Cocchiara, the heir to Pitрэ) believed that an ethnographic museum should be located in special environments, preferably in the open countryside, where the beauty of nature shines most brightly. According to him, this is because while an archaeological museum houses lifeless objects, an ethnographic museum accommodates living and vibrant artifacts of life [35]. This idea of landscape authenticity linked to naturalness is reflected inside the museum through the selection of objects that represent a bucolic landscape and an idealized people, much like the original 19th-century Romantic concept of the museum's founder. The museum's rooms recreate the spaces of Sicilian daily life and work without making a distinction based on the geographic origin of the objects but rather on their typology. The museum exhibits, for example, models that replicate rural and urban dwellings with their respective furnishings, tools used in hunting and fishing activities as well as instruments and equipment related to agricultural and pastoral activities (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The agricultural and pastoral landscape of Sicily is reconstructed through the exhibition of material culture objects that embody a culture perceived as authentic and uniform.

The narrative conveyed by the entirety of the collections produces a representation of Sicily as a unique landscape that disregards spatial and cultural differentiations. Thus, the museum can present the typical costume or traditional dwelling as authentic relics of a single history. The museum setup designed by Cocchiara has not undergone significant changes. The essence of the island, crystallized by Cocchiara in his exhibition, has remained accessible in the decades that followed and can be appreciated today.

The reconstruction of environments is the second model that characterizes numerous other museums scattered throughout the Sicilian territory. Among these museums it is worth mentioning the museum-house set up by Antonino Uccello in Palazzolo Acreide, in the province of Siracusa. The scholar operated in the 1960s and 1970s, reconstructing, on the ground floor of a building originally

inhabited by a *massaro* (farmer), a typical dwelling with stables, storerooms and warehouses. The scholar's work is part of the growing focus on the Sicilian landscape as a space for the expression of a unique and uniform culture. The increasing attention to material culture had its origins in the post-crisis fear of the erasure of the past, which the rural classes, after leaving the countryside at the end of World War II, voluntarily operated in a shared desire for emancipation from a past of poverty and hardships. In their pursuit of a better life, the new urban dwellers deliberately discarded their dialect, magical-religious beliefs and material culture items. The intellectuals of the time, recognizing the clear risk of the complete oblivion of a universe of representations of the world and things, placing their own roots in this past and often idealizing them, felt a duty to preserve the memory, whether by putting it into writing or on display.

The peculiar and most interesting aspect of this museum is the living connection that the curator had established between the objects in the collections and the landscape outside the museum. As long as he was alive, Antonino Uccello brought the objects to life by modifying the exhibits in relation to the changing seasons and the phases of life and production. For example, depending on the time of year, he would change the furnishings of the bed in the museum, or use kitchen tools to make traditional sweets prescribed for specific holidays. He would also fill the barrels in the museum during the grape harvest season. In 1983, four years after his death, the museum-house was purchased by the Region and became the first regional museum exclusively dedicated to ethnography. The current exhibition virtually maintains the original arrangement, almost unchanged, for visitors to experience.

This museum model ensured the breaking down of the museum walls and a vital relationship between the collections and the cultural landscape that had given birth to the objects. An even more explicit example of the connection between objects and places within the landscape is the Civic Museum named Places of Peasant Labor and Handicrafts. It offers a true itinerary that unfolds between the municipalities of Buscemi and Palazzolo Acreide. The museum units are located in privately owned buildings scattered throughout the municipal territory of Buscemi, which is why it is often referred to as a museum town. In Palazzolo Acreide, there is a water mill (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2. Display of objects and models inside a typical rural dwelling as part of the Buscemi Ecomuseum itinerary.



Figure 3. The water mill Santa Lucia as a site within the ecomuseum in the municipal territory of Palazzolo Acreide.

The itinerary includes, in addition to the mill unit, various other sites related to rural life and work: The House of the Farm Manager (a typical farmhouse); the Palmento (a place for grape pressing); the Blacksmith's Workshop (located within an artificial cave); the Laborer's House (small in size yet inhabited by six people until the 1960s); the Tinsmith's Workshop (containing tools for metalwork);

the Carpenter's Workshop; the Olive Press (housing an ancient wooden press and traditional tools); and the Cobbler's Workshop (preserved without alterations after the owner's death) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The itinerary of peasant labor sites as mosaic tiles in the cultural landscape of the territory of the Iblei Valley.

In 1998, the representatives of the museum-house Antonino Uccello and the civic museum of Buscemi collaborated to create a project for the establishment of the Iblei Ecomuseum. This initiative is particularly significant because it highlights the need for a shift on two fronts.

On one hand, it strongly signals the locally perceived necessity to assert an identity tied to a specific territory rather than the entire island. In the Iblei area, the need for adopting a common strategy, which had already been identified by the two most important ethnographic museums, led to the establishment of the Union of the Municipalities in the mountainous area of the Province of Siracusa for the purpose of territorial enhancement in the year 2000. The Union of the Valle degli Iblei involves the municipalities of Buccheri, Buscemi, Canicattini Bagni, Cassaro, Ferla, Palazzolo Acreide and Sortino. In 2005, in Syracuse, the Iblean Ethnographic Museum Network was also established, bringing together entities of various sizes under a memorandum of understanding. Furthermore, it is significant that in 2005, Syracuse and the Pantalica Rock Necropolis were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This icon of a particular identity was thus elevated to a symbol of universal human identity [36].

On the other hand, this territory's desire to establish an ecomuseum signals a new direction in the preservation of the cultural landscape. Indeed, the ecomuseum is not a closed and static container but an open and dynamic one. Its purpose is no longer just the preservation of memory that was at risk of being erased with industrial development, as feared by those who founded museums to escape oblivion. Instead, it is a participatory practice for enhancing the historical, cultural and environmental heritage. The ecomuseum is indeed defined as a tool for popular participation in territory management and

community development [37]. Ecomuseums are therefore places of conservation, but above all, of participation by public and private entities and the entire local community in the context of environmental, economic and social sustainability. The trend towards shaping cultural landscapes in this way, also observed in Sicily, should be interpreted as a response to transformations. Ecomuseums represent spaces for reflection to recover, document and enhance historical memory, life, figures, traditions, material and immaterial culture, relationships between the natural environment and the human-altered environment, artisanal work activities and how traditional settlement has shaped the formation and evolution of the regional landscape and territory, with the perspective of guiding the future development of the region in the logic of sustainability and responsibility.

Museums, with the objects they preserve, now stand as monuments of memory in many communities across Sicily. The meanings attributed by Sicilians to cultural artifacts have transformed, just as culture incessantly changes. However, the musealization of culture has somehow crystallized the Sicilian landscape, still allowing us to trace the threads that connect the Island to its memory, to recover and transmit the ways in which Sicilians perceived the world and its symbols. Nevertheless, the current challenge for museums and ecomuseums is no longer to offer a nostalgic journey through time and space within a singular form of culture and in search of a lost collective memory. Museums prompt us to question the need for a conscious rediscovery of cultural landscapes and the diversity of meanings that communities can attribute to them also in relation to contextual forms of authenticity. In essence, they challenge us on how to respond more effectively to the transformations of the contemporary world.

4. Results and discussion

The examples examined demonstrate that the musealization of the landscape can serve as a tool to address cultural crises. In Sicily, as seen, intellectuals and conservators of traditional artifacts perceived a strong fear of the erasure of the traditional landscape at the end of the Second World War. The perception of this risk led to the widespread process of musealizing ways of life through objects preserved in museums. However, critically observing this dynamic, it is important to highlight the risks that may arise from it. First, the musealization of culture transforms reality, shifting it from a dimension of dynamism to one of staticity. The museum runs the risk of becoming a sort of limbo for objects and an enclosure for the landscape [38]. Through museums, the Sicilian territory has responded to its need for roots. These roots cling to a mythical space-time. Roots, by their very nature, evoke the natural order. Nature is transformed into the individuality of the landscape through the human gaze [39]. Even the gaze of the one who constructs the museographic setup must be highlighted, as each museum represents and interprets cultural memory, attributing a sense to the place that cannot be fully or objectively restored. The second risk of musealization as a response to the crisis is therefore that of selection, based on authenticity. The museum presents and represents the past in such a way that some voices are hidden, while others are emphasized. The first voice that risks being erased is that of the curator. In the reconstruction of cultural landscapes, the curator develops a narrative that inevitably reflects a specific interpretation of the past, his personal cultural horizon and his particular objectives. Museums should, therefore, highlight the authorial presence of the curator in the construction of their representation. Furthermore, it is an intellectual duty to consider who has the right to represent [40]. Today, museums involve an increasingly diverse audience, and other subjectivities enter the scene, claiming an active role regarding the representativeness that collections claim to have. The significant recognition of cultural

landscapes by UNESCO, which distinguishes them as a World Heritage category, acknowledges their combined natural and human significance. We thus also aimed to emphasize the importance of community participation in identifying and managing, inside and outside of museums, these landscapes' tangible and intangible values. Museums should, therefore, strive to make visible the polysemy of the concept of landscape. Lastly, they should make the processes that have generated culture as a landscape and specific, situated ways of seeing the world decipherable and transparent.

5. Conclusion

This contribution has demonstrated how the musealization of the landscape can be considered a defensive response to the threats of globalization, which tends to homogenize spaces and devalue cultural identities. The perception of vulnerability caused by the impacts of globalization concerns the landscape in multiple ways, manifesting in the perceived risk of erasing specificities and local traditions. The authenticity of the landscape becomes a central theme in this context, with the search for authentic landscapes serving as a way to satisfy identity aspirations and counter cultural homogenization. We enter the notion of landscape authenticity and how it is influenced by the musealization of cultural artifacts. It sounds a cautionary note regarding the risk of crafting false myths and oversimplifications through this process. Museums have become monuments of memory in various communities, striving to balance their role as time capsules with their responsibility to embrace contextual authenticity.

Within the theoretical framework that addresses key issues related to risk and culture as landscape, with a focus on authenticity, the contribution examined a case study by approaching it with a qualitative methodology through a critical review of the literature and analysis of reports and documents. The musealization of Sicilian landscapes was explored as a tool used to preserve collective memory embedded in the landscape. The research has yielded evidence of potential risks arising from the selection made by museums, such as the crystallization of landscapes and the constriction of culture to a static state. The study of Sicilian museums presents a compelling case study. These institutions are shown to be essential in preserving the collective memory and identity of the region. They have adapted their approaches to cater to the changing landscape, highlighting two distinct models, each with its unique merits and challenges. Moreover, the emergence of ecomuseums in Sicily is a promising development, indicating a shift toward more dynamic, community-driven cultural preservation.

In conclusion, we aim to highlight how the process of musealization should be transparent and shed light on the various possible interpretations of culture, contrasting the presumed naturalness of roots. In summary, we analyze the musealization of the landscape as a strategy to preserve cultural identity and confront the challenges of globalization. However, we also emphasize the importance of a critical and transparent vision to avoid the crystallization and falsification of the meanings of the places represented in museums. In the face of relentless transformations in both culture and the environment, the overarching message of this paper is the need for continuous adaptation and innovation in the preservation of cultural landscapes. Museums, while being repositories of memory, must also evolve to accommodate changing paradigms, engage local communities and reflect the dynamic nature of cultural identity. The preservation of authenticity and the protection of heritage should remain paramount, but in a way that respects the diverse and evolving meanings that communities attach to their landscapes. As the paper concludes, museums are posed with the challenge

of navigating this shifting terrain and playing a pivotal role in preserving the rich tapestry of cultural landscapes in a changing world.

Use of AI tools declaration

The author declare she has not used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the creation of this article.

Conflict of interests

The author declare no conflict of interest on this manuscript.

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