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Promoting Geoheritage in the Aspiring Geopark of Taburno-Camposauro (Southern Apennines, Italy) with Innovative Tools

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Abstract: In the inland areas of Campania (Italy), the Taburno-Camposauro Regional Natural Park covers almost 137 square kilometres. It well represents, in the reliefs that give it its name, the southern segment of the Apennine chain. In fact, the rock outcrops, landscape features and surface and ground water make it possible to reconstruct the geological evolution of this area. Nonetheless, it is possible to understand how the history of man, who has frequented these places since ancient times, has developed by taking advantage of the resources offered by this territory. Among these resources, it is believed that the characteristics of the geological heritage spread throughout the Park can also be an opportunity to attract not only researchers, but also significant tourist flows. To this end, not only has the procedure been initiated to be included in the world network of Geoparks, but efforts have also been made to promote the most representative geological sites using the latest communication tools (e.g., social media). Besides these, numerous initiatives aimed at schools and national tourism agencies were developed. Promotion found particular emphasis with the realisation of an art installation by a well-known author in a water catchment system. In fact, this installation triggered an artistic vein around the beauty of the sites, manifested by videos and photo exhibitions and even forms of entertainment. These events have increased interest in the geological heritage, as evidenced by the increase in visitors observed by a specific analysis of the performance of social media posts, as well as frequent visitors to the geoheritage elements of the Park.

Keywords: geoheritage; geosite promotion; geoscience communication; public engagement; geoeducation; sustainable tourism; geopark; Taburno-Camposauro Regional Park; Italy

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1. Introduction

Promoting geological heritage is not too expensive, since many of the geosites which are included in it are fascinating in themselves (e.g., [1,2]). Indeed, their fascination is capable of attracting people with the most varied interests and knowledge (e.g., [3,4]). Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to convey what these sites represent in human knowledge, namely a piece of the geological history of our planet [5,6]. For geologists this may be quite obvious, but for non-experts it might be difficult. There are countless examples of how geological history has been popularized, or rather, how the main features of a site located anywhere in the world have been highlighted (e.g., [7–12]). Based on these characteristics, the next step is to shed light on the origin of the sites. All of this should not lose the interest that a site is capable of arousing; on the contrary, it should emphasize it more. In fact, the emphasis with which it is told must expand the space–time dimension [13,14].

Until recently, the promotion of a geological heritage was limited to enhancing its aesthetic appearance and/or attracting multiple interests. Promotional material was 'collected' in tourist brochures or guidebooks of a local or regional nature (e.g., [15,16]). The use of video has made it possible to convey material in a different format and thus reach a wider

audience. Rocky outcrops, fossil deposits, volcanic phenomena, and unexplored places have suddenly become readily accessible to many (e.g., [17–19]). This visual dissemination intensified the possibility of using sites of geological interest for educational purposes, therefore schools and universities began to exploit these sites for visits and research projects (e.g., [20–22]). All this has led to the need to protect and manage these sites by integrating them into natural parks or by establishing specific reserves [23,24]. This has certainly improved the appeal of those areas which encompass multiple aspects, even if at times it has diminished the uniqueness of the elements of geological heritage.

However, the spread of the internet and social media has completely changed the promotion of any place that attracts interest and stimulates tourism (e.g., [25–29]). It has accelerated both real and virtual mobility, allowing people to rediscover the beauty of the Earth. At the same time, an awareness has been gained of being in a place that only covers a certain period of time of that history, and thus only shows a fraction of the geological events that occurred. Such dissemination today can be both technically simple, with a short text accompanied by figures, photos and even videos, but it can also be technically complex. In particular, the creation of geological scenarios based on knowledge of the forms and processes that have taken place in the past requires considerable effort. With the use of a visor, one could find oneself virtually living in a lagoon where dinosaurs roamed, or witness a spectacular volcanic eruption without any risk or danger (e.g., [30–32]). Nowadays, the level of technical dissemination is so advanced that we can travel through time and space.

In addition, these new tools would make it possible to avoid a number of potential impacts for some specific sites, which increasing geotouristic activity could lead to. In some sites, where the capacity and effectiveness of management is not the best, land degradation may occur. Such impacts may result in loss of attractiveness of the geosite or limitation of visitor numbers [33,34].

Nevertheless, although such promotion may help in the educational process and in tourist appeal, it can also stifle the emotion that you might obtain from strolling among the trunks of a petrified forest, visiting a cave with stalactites and stalagmites or walking around a volcanic crater. In order to demonstrate an emotion towards a geosite, one needs to transfer knowledge in its essential traits and to be able to represent it using forms of expression that come from the passion aroused by being in that place [35,36]. The aim of this contribution is to demonstrate how the census of geosites in the Taburno-Camposauro Regional Park, in southern Italy, and their subsequent valorisation to attract scholars and tourists from all over Europe has inspired a flourishing artistic strand [37–39]. In fact, the promotion of geological heritage, which was intensified to enhance the area's candidature as a Geopark, has undergone an unexpected change. In addition to the classical methods of brochures and documentaries, this promotion triggered the discovery of geosites and thus of a geological history only apparently perceived, first with social media and then with photographic exhibitions and artistic performances [40,41]. In this way, applied and popularised geo-preservation could be pursued [42], in which it is possible through knowledge to "link awareness and social responsibility to a more conscious use of resources and heritage".

2. Study Area

Taburno-Camposauro Natural Park is located within the Campania region in southern Italy (Figure 1). It includes all or part of the territories of 14 municipalities in the province of Benevento. In 2002, this area was protected as a Regional Park covering an area of 123.70 square kilometres [43]. The borders of this park, which takes its name from the main reliefs that make it up, also include the foothills. This zone connects on its sides with the alluvial plains of the Calore and Isclero rivers. The altitudes in the park area range from the maximum altitudes of the Taburno and Camposauro mountains, 1394 m and 1390 m, respectively, to the minimum altitudes of the foothills, which on average do not fall below 250 m. The population centres with more than 52,000 inhabitants (2021) are essentially concentrated on the edge of the Park.

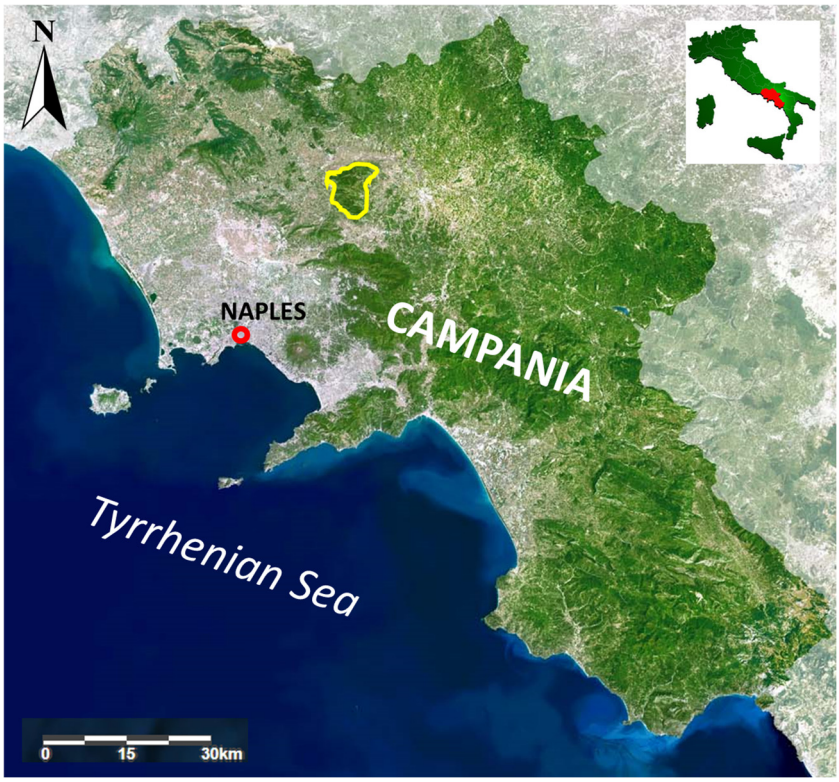


Figure 1. Location of Taburno-Camposauro Regional Park (perimeter in yellow) in Campania (Southern Italy) shown in red in the top right-hand box.

The Taburno and Camposauro reliefs form part of the southern segment of the Apennine chain [44]. Belonging to this segment of the chain is evident from the geological history, which is visible in the rock outcrops and landscape forms of this area from 150 million years ago [45,46] (Figure 2) This capacity triggered the candidature process as a Geopark in the global network recognised by UNESCO [47–50]. In particular, along the slopes of Taburno and Camposauro, calcareous and calcareous-dolomitic successions ascribable to the extensive shallow-marine platform domains are exposed (Apennine Carbonate Platform in legend of Figure 2). These domains persisted on the margins of an oceanic area from the Upper Triassic to the entire Cretaceous [51–53]. In the latter period, however, the platform was subject to brief platform emersions, as evidenced by several cavities due to palaeocarst phenomena filled with reddish clay sediments. They are similar to residual and bauxitic deposits visible on the eastern slopes of Camposauro M. as well as in other neighbouring Apennine areas [54–56]. In addition to this extraordinary aspect, which gave rise to a flourishing mining activity, the Cretaceous limestones show a rich fossiliferous content: in the lower part of Requienites and Gasteropods and in the upper part of Rudiste and Orbitoline and then Radiolitids and Hippurites [51,53]. The Palaeogene successions represented by reddish argillites with silicified marls and calcareous breccias, also with blocks of Rudiste limestones indicate the drowning of the platform and thus the deposition towards a deep-sea environment [57]. In this environment, mainly Miocene turbiditic successions were deposited (Synorogenic deposits of the wedge top basin in the legend of Figure 2), which outcrop much less than Mesozoic limestones. In particular, they can be found in the eastern hills and in the valley between Taburno and Camposauro. These successions consist of thinly stratified sandstones with marls or sandstones and conglomerates with clays [58,59]. The intercalations of blocks of dozens of cubic metres of carbonate platforms and olistostromes of different coloured clays are particularly interesting. These features allow us to hypothesise that the margins of this deep basin were quite unstable [44,45]. From the late Miocene onwards, both the carbonate platform domains and the deep basin domains underwent a general compression regime, resulting in a complex structure of

folding and overthrusting of the rocks constituting these domains by stacking them on top of each other. In this way they emerged from the sea and rose to their present altitude [60].

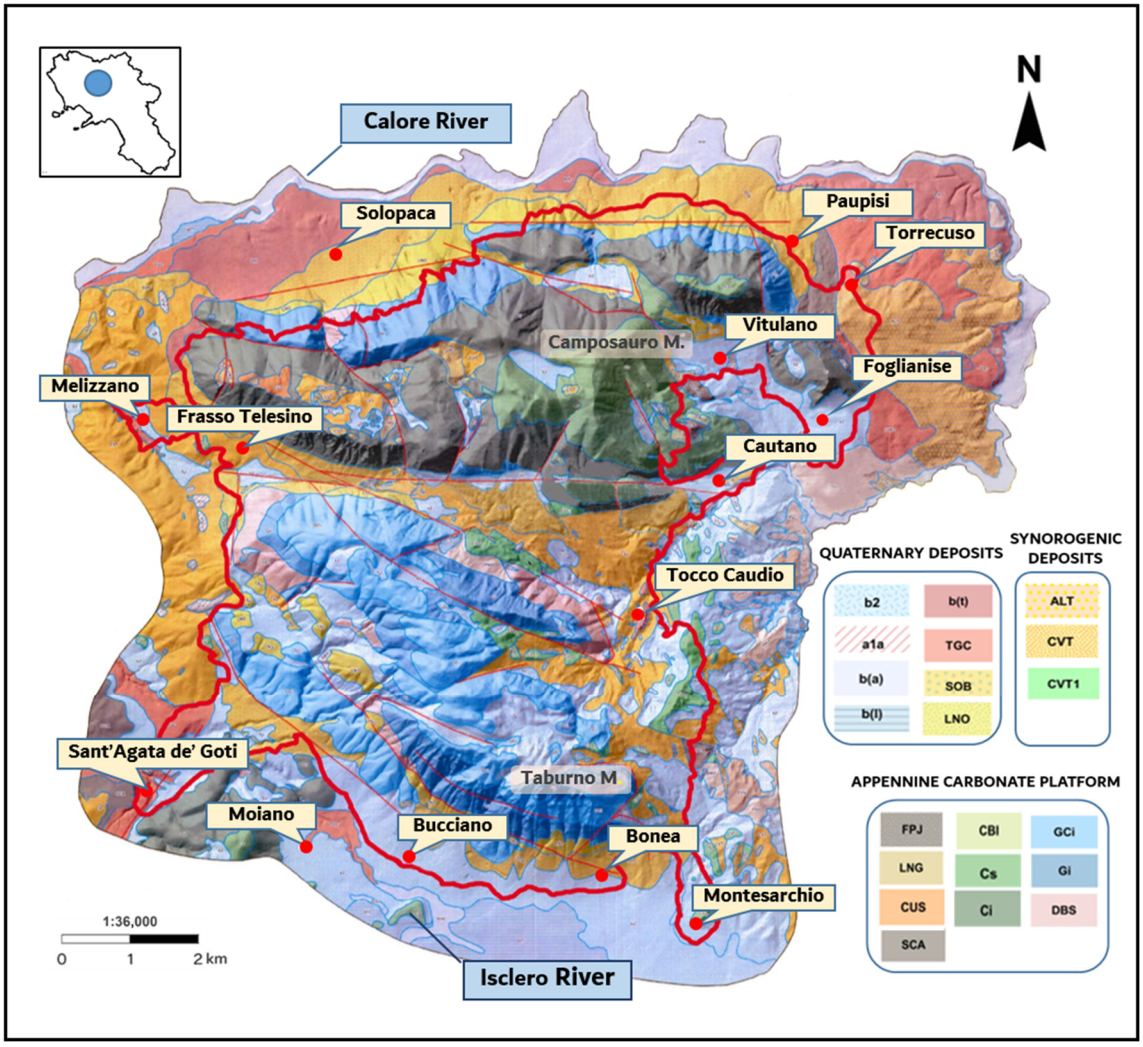


Figure 2. Geological sketch of Taburno-Camposauro reliefs prepared through research by the Department of Science and Technology—University of Sannio (Benevento) in support of Taburno-Camposauro Park (perimeter in thicker red line) Legend: QUATERNARY DEPOSITS (in the box at top left): b2—eluvial and colluvial covers (Holocene—Present); a1a—landslide deposits (Holocene—Present); b(a)—alluvial deposits (Holocene—Present); b(l)—lacustrine deposits (Upper Pleistocene—Holocene); b(t)—terraced alluvial deposits (Upper Pleistocene p.p.—Holocene); TGC—Campanian Ignimbrite (Upper Pleistocene); SOB—calcareous gravels in abundant matrix with pyroclastic paleosols (Lower Pleistocene?—Middle Pleistocene p.p.); LNO: calcareous breccias alternating with paleosols (Lower Pleistocene). SYNOROGENIC DEPOSITS OF WEDGE-TOP BASIN (in the box at top right): ALT: evaporitic deposits passing upwards to clastic deposits (Upper Messinian-Lower Pliocene); CVT—Castelvetere Group: sandstones and polygenic conglomerates with carbonate olistoliths and varicoloured clay olistostromes (Upper Tortonian—Lower Messinian); CVT1—Castelvetere group: conglomerates and carbonate breccias (Upper Tortonian—Lower Messinian). APENNINE CARBONATE PLATFORM (in the bottom box): FPJ—clays, marls and sandstones (Middle Tortonian); LNG: marly calcilutites and marls (lower Serravallian—lower Tortonian); CUS—calcarenites and calcirudites with rhodoliths assemblages (middle-Langhian Burdigalian); SCA: marls and marly limestones (scaglia) with levels of flint (Eocene—Langhiano); CBI—massive limestones, calcirudites and bio- and litho-clastic limestones (Maastrichtian—Paleocene); Cs—Limestones

with Rudiste and Orbitolinides and Limestones with Radiolithides (Cenomaniano p.p.—Senoniano p.p.); Ci—Limestones with Requienie and Gastropods (Upper Jurassic p.p.—Upper Cenomanian); CGI—Limestones and dolomitic limestones (Lower Jurassic p.p.—Lower Cretaceous); Gi—Limestones with Cladocoropsis and Clypeina, Oolithic and oncolytic limestones, Limestones with Palaeodasycladus, (Lower Jurassic p.p.—Neocomian); DBS—Dolomites (Norico—Sinemuriano). Red-lines crossing the succession represents the main tectonic faults.

The subsequent erosion helped sculpt these young reliefs and brought about a reduction in the marked differences in elevation. In fact, today, at the foot of the slopes of the Taburno and Camposauro ranges, whose shape derives from the evolution of important faults, imposing Quaternary polygenic accumulations make up the foothills [61–64]. (Quaternary deposits in the legend of the Figure 2). These accumulations consist of large alluvial conoids and debris strata. The oldest deposits given by breccias with palaeosols intercalations date back to the Lower Pleistocene [61,65–67], while the most recent ones rework the detritus of the previous ones through gravitational phenomena which are quite frequent in this context. Intercalated with the deposits of the foothills, especially in the areas closest to the plains, partially buried or even in good exposure, are numerous volcanic units deriving from the Campania district of the Campi Flegrei and Somma Vesuvius [68,69]. In particular, the Ignimbrite Campana outcrops surface in the area, dating back to approximately 39,000 years ago [70] (Quaternary deposits in the legend of the Figure 2).

As far as the minor hydrographic network is concerned, along the northern and southern slopes of Taburno-Camposauro, there are a number of torrential trenches embedded in the carbonate substrate that disperse downstream into the foothill debris flows. While the central body of the massif is devoid of surface hydrography, all meteoric waters are rapidly absorbed and disposed of underground in the sinkholes of the karst fields extended on the summit of the reliefs [71]. Groundwater circulation is well defined and isolated due to the particular stratigraphic and structural layout of the massifs. In fact, the mountain group's highly permeable carbonate complex is surrounded along all sides by alluvial detrital and pyroclastic soils with medium–high permeability resting in turn on the complex of arenaceous-marly-clayey deposits, which are relatively impermeable [72,73]. The detrital belts contribute to draining the carbonate stratum by directly feeding the alluvial aquifers of the Isclero and Calore. Important spring manifestations are conditioned by the plano-altimetric trend of the impermeable belt and the fracture pattern that makes up the massif. More specifically, we emphasise the copious Fizzo springs drained by the Isclero river basin on the southern slope of Taburno, as well as some springs suspended at high altitude on the slopes in Camposauro [62,74,75].

3. Materials and Methods

Promoting geological heritage to a wide audience beyond the earth sciences profession was the main aim of the research. The intention was to identify materials and approaches that could 'capture' attention on geological heritage [76–80]. In order to obtain assurances as to what was considered to be included in this scope, the documentation on the Taburno-Camposauro Park Authority's website was taken into consideration for the candidature to enter the international network of UNESCO GeoParks. This documentation was created by researchers from the Department of Science and Technology of the University of Sannio for this purpose and included a census of geosites with different attributes and evaluation in order to characterise their geological heritage [49,50]. Alongside this inventory, a significant series of thematic maps were produced: geological, geomorphological, hydrogeological, sites of geological interest, vegetation, land use, geotourism, etc. This documentation is not usable in its final form as the assessment process is in progress, however it has been allowed to be read and partially used, as it is not the purpose of this contribution to validate it.

Therefore, the starting point was the definition of the elements of geological heritage considered in this documentation in order to initiate its promotion. In the initial stages, those geosites considered to be of international standing, i.e., those geological sites that had complementarities with elements of other heritages (e.g., biological, historical, cultural)

were considered more important. Such a choice could, in fact, have a greater appeal than other specifically geological ones. Furthermore, these relationships could exploit international instruments or traditions rooted in the area, so as to fit in with strategies that have been adopted for years [36,81–85].

The methods exploited for the promotion of geological heritage fall into both classical and innovative approaches. Among the classical ones, carried out directly by the staff of the Park Authority, are the production of brochures in paper format, the production of videos derived from drone footage to be used in television broadcasts, and the organisation of events held at some geosites to coincide with the inauguration of routes or various events. These methods did not make it possible to ascertain the effectiveness of the geoscience communication beyond the number of those present.

Among the innovative methods, developed with the help of researchers from the Department of Science and Technology of the University of Sannio, the largest amount of information on the geological heritage was concentrated on the Park Authority's website [43], in order to get to know it and stimulate visits [14,25,28,30]. Another approach was implemented with the help of social media (Facebook, Instagram). Through it, geosites or events where geology was presented were demonstrated with a video or a series of photos with a short text understandable by the public. With regard to these posts, it was possible to check the effectiveness of the communication by means of functions on social media, evaluating the performance in a given time period. In this way, it was possible to actually show how many people look at the content that was posted and thus how much of it was able to attract the users' attention [86–88]. The latter are recognised in gender, age and origin. Among other things, the function made it possible to calculate interactions with the content (Engagement Rate by Reach—ERR). It should be noted that geological events also included those initiatives were developed in the school environment with both students and science teachers. The former to initiate a knowledge of the Park's geological heritage, the latter to deepen certain aspects also in view of the geopark's candidature. Finally, artistic events developed in situ and ex-situ were also considered [38,39,41,89]. In addition to the evaluation of the performance of socials, one must add the significant number of tickets for exhibitions and artistic performances. However, beyond this classic 'count', the pursuit of these innovative methods made it possible to not only quantitatively ascertain the knowledge of the geological heritage, but also to qualitatively measure the level of judgement of digital visitors.

4. Geoheritage

Within the Taburno-Camposauro area, researchers from the Department of Science and Technology of the University of Sannio for the candidature of the Park to the international network of UNESCO GeoParks have identified, described and evaluated 44 geosites as being of interest to an observer and capable of narrating the geological history of this area [45,46] (Figure 3). The value of the sites surveyed in the aspiring geopark would also be significant for their connections with elements of other 'heritages' such as biological (animal and plant biodiversity, woods and forests, grazing areas, etc.) and cultural (monuments, archaeological sites, etc.) [76,90].

Such connections can be verified for most of them [45,46]. However, the objective assessment to be carried out for each of them makes the scientific aspects stand out; for example, the geosites located on the eastern slopes of Camposauro, where Mesozoic limestone successions affected by palaeokarst appear as outcrops [53,54]. Among these, the geosites of Uria Cave (*1*: such number, as well as the subsequent numbers in round brackets, are shown in Figure 3) (this geosite is also shown in its full extent in Figure 4a) and La Perla Cave (*7*) are to be considered of international value both for representativeness and integrity [91]. Moreover, they represent places where for centuries ornamental stones were extracted and became well known throughout Europe. Scientific production of stratigraphic and petrographic geological interest for these sites also continues to be of great significance [92,93]. International value can also be attributed to another aesthetically

striking outcrop: Sant'Agata de'Goti (*39*). This historic town rests on Ignimbrite Campana, a pyroclastic product representative of the largest volcanic explosion in Europe in the last 200,000 years. On the steep slopes, erosion produced by a stream highlights all the features of this product [46] (Figure 4b). International research for this site is not limited to relevant geological characteristics, but extends to archaeological and geotechnical aspects [94,95]. This research emphasises the importance of geosite conservation, which must be done appropriately through techniques that do not cause the site to lose its value.

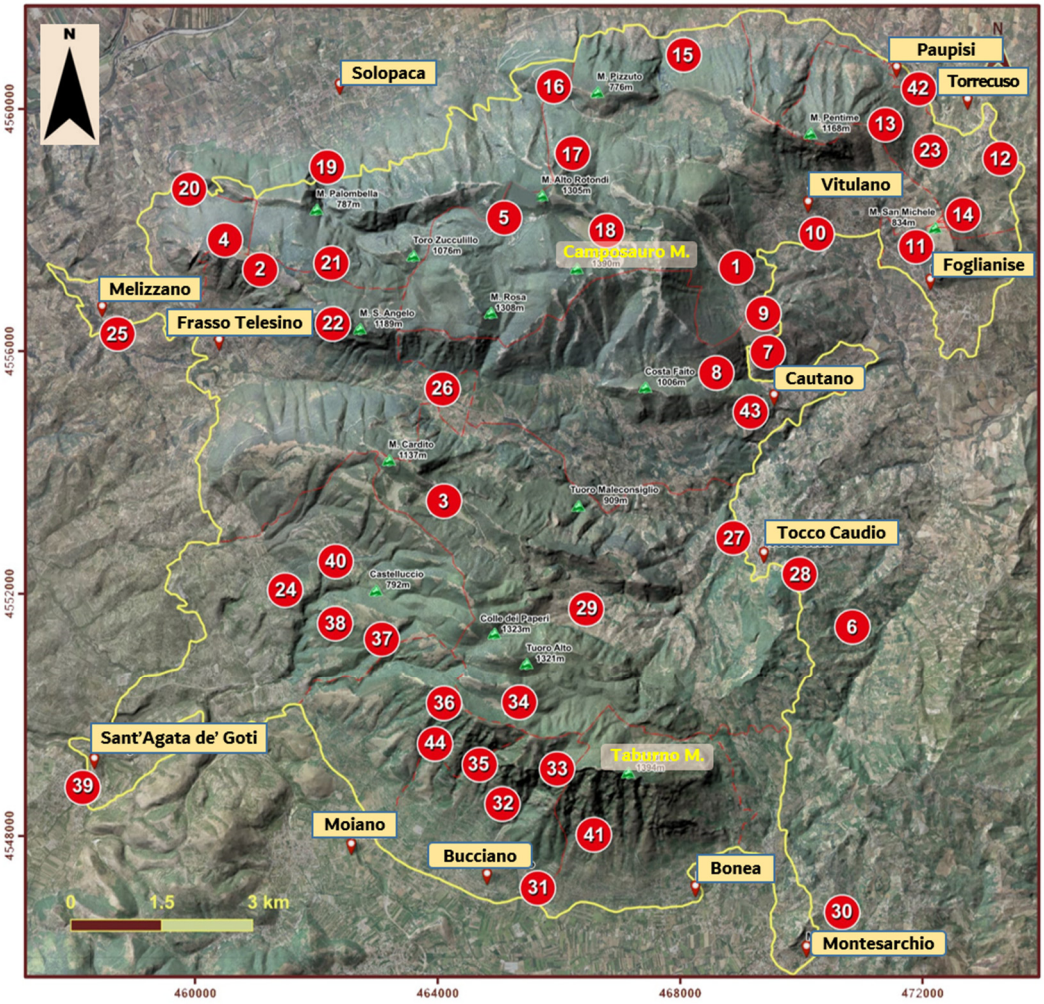


Figure 3. Geosites (red circled number) in Taburno-Camposauro reliefs assessed for the UNESCO candidature as Global Geopark.

Technological innovation has caused a drastic reduction in the integrity of the Fizzo Springs (*31*), the largest springs located at the southern pediment of Taburno ridge. Known for their considerable flow ever since Roman times, they were utilised to supply the western coastal areas with impressive aqueducts that are considered UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In recent decades, the springs have been replaced by a system of wells, so the springs have lost some of their magnificence, although today the Roman hydraulic works (Figure 4c) have been incorporated into a beautiful landscaped garden [96]. Much more recent is the hydraulic works built close to a spring catchment at about 600 m on a minor relief leaning against the Camposauro ridge (*16*). This was considered among the sites of geological interest, also because of its function. In fact, it allows the capture of 400 litres per second of drinking water, which it distributes to a population of 150,000 people [73].

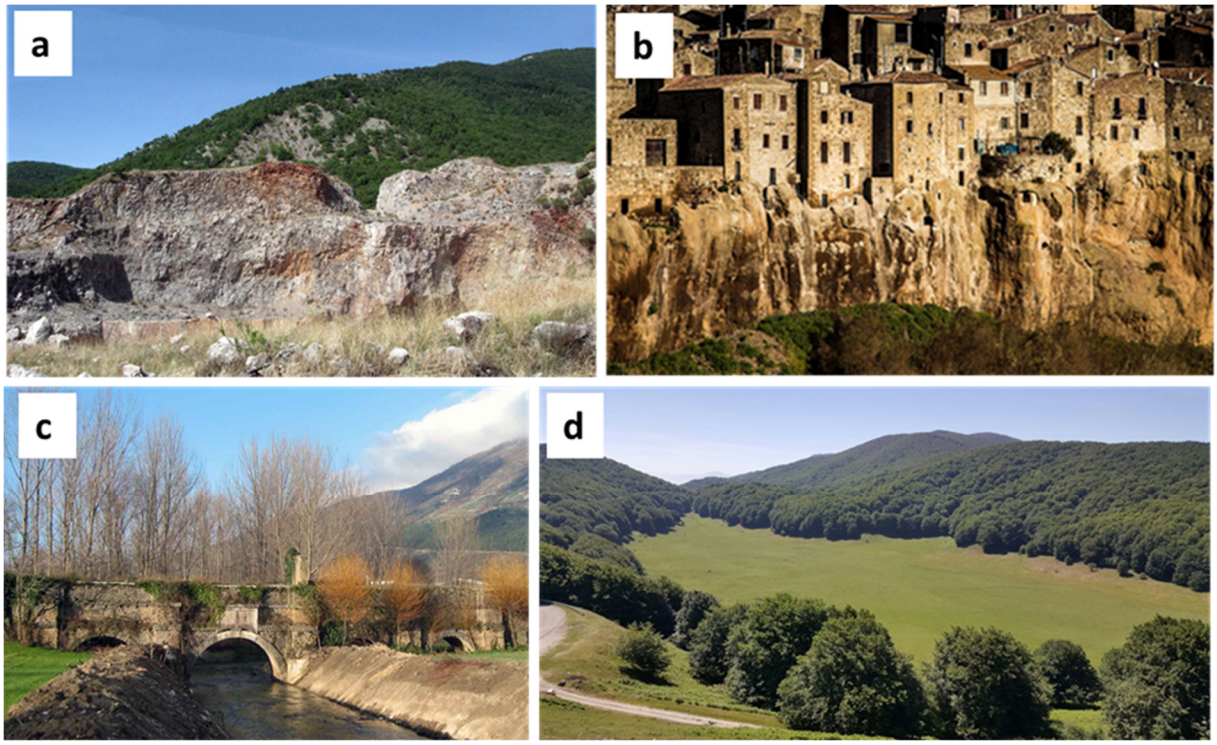


Figure 4. Geosites in Taburno-Camposauro Park (**a**) The Geosite of Uria Cave (*1*), in which were extracted Cretaceous limestones affected by paleokarst phenomena used for ornamental stones; (**b**) a detailed vision of the Ignimbrite Campanian underlying the historic village of Sant'Agata de' Goti (*39*); (**c**) the Roman aqueduct dating back to the 1st century B.C. that draws water from Fizzo Springs (*31*) and supplied coastal areas; (**d**) the karst field known as "Il Campo" (*18*) on the summit of Camposauro Mountain.

Among the most relevant scientific publications are those of a hydrogeological nature, which made it possible to develop a model of the underground circulation [72]. This model involved other sites, which could play an international role in the karstic geomorphology studies that were developed on them. In particular, these include the numerous epigean forms present on the summits of Taburno and Camposauro, represented by large polje (*3*, *18*, *21* and *34*) or long karren (*22*) [71] (Figure 4d). In some of the sinkholes present, picturesque temporary lakes can be found, while in others, thick red earth coverings can be seen. Such coverings are typical of Mediterranean limestone regions. Other popular sites which can be deemed to be of national value are the shallow caves, especially those that are located on the southern slope of Monte Taburno (*32*, *33*, *35*, *36* and *37*), which are more important for their use in the last millennia than for the dissolution process [97]. The regional geological interest in understanding the Meso-Cenozoic tectonic-sedimentary evolution of the Apennines is widely demonstrated for a number of sites under investigation. On the carbonate rocks, in addition to the quarry outcrops already mentioned, there are sites worth mentioning because the oldest rocks in the entire park are exposed: Triassic dolomites (*24* and *27*) [46]. Due to the exposure conditions, they have a more national value. Palaeontological interest reaches an optimum condition in terms of macrofossils essentially in the Cretaceous successions, even when larger than a decimetre in size (*8*), making that deposit scientifically assume a regional value. The arenaceous-pelitic successions attributable to the Miocene deep basins, although present, do not present well preserved outcrops (local value), but despite this, rather particular sedimentary structures (*14* and *23*) can be highlighted within them [98].

In this context, the intercalations to these deposits of blocks up to several tens of cubic metres collapsed from the edges of the basins take on a relevant (regional) geological value,

as is the case with the Pietra di Tocco (*6*) (Figure 5a). Here too, their isolated condition and their shape sculpted by morphogenetic agents become the subject of myths and legends for local populations. However, castles such as the one at Montesarchio (*30*) were built there precisely to exploit this condition. Geological-structural evidence of educational value is quite widespread along the slopes of Taburno-Camposauro with exposure of fault surfaces or tectonic contacts. They can be traced back to the deformations that occurred in this Apennine segment in the Plio-Pleistocene. Some of them have been chosen to be integrated with other aspects of the Park's geological heritage, as national (*11* and *20*) or regional elements (*2* and *13*) [46,63]. Finally, the valley that separates the Taburno (to the south) from the Camposauro (to the north) is noted for its morpho-structural continuity; it represents the overthrusting of the older carbonate succession of the Taburno on the more recent Camposauro (*26*), a condition that is not very frequent in this Apennine segment, which increases its scientific value [46,63] (Figure 5b).



Figure 5. Geosites in Taburno-Camposauro Park (**a**) Pietra di Tocco (*6*): the huge carbonatic olistolith surrounded by sandstone and pelitic succession; (**b**) the trail on the karren (*22*) reaching the top of the Camposauro ridge, in the background the valley separating it from Taburno (*26*).

A mention should be made of the slope processes that have always been very active along the slopes of the aspiring geopark's reliefs. At times they have left significant deposits, such as those observed on the southern slope of Taburno M. (*44*) [62,67], at other times they have determined landslides coinciding with significant meteoric events as revealed on the northern slope of Camposauro (*19* and *42*). Along this slope numerous occurrences were triggered during the October 2015 event, and these have also featured in various international publications [99,100]. Such events give indications of the aggressiveness of climate change that is increasingly evident in this area.

The landslides which occurred around the historic centre of Tocco Caudio, also associated with the destruction caused by earthquakes, probably led to the abandonment of this 'ghost town', where medieval traces are still evident (*28*) [101,102]. For a more general view of the park area and its immediate surroundings, there are also panoramic sites (*4* and *17*), which offer a wide view of the Calore and Volturno valleys, in addition to the already-mentioned view of the Montesarchio Castle over the Isclero Valley and the tectonic valley that separates the Taburno and Camposauro massifs (Figure 5b).

Although the water-related forms of the landscape do not have any noteworthy scientific value, they have a significant aesthetic appeal (local value) for the residents of the area and for hikers, both when they emerge from the reliefs (*5*, *10*, *38* and *40*) and when they flow in tortuous and narrow channels, even forming waterfalls or steep valleys (*15*, *19*, *29*, *33* and *41*).

Finally, among the sites surveyed in this park, it was decided to include the wine landscapes evident in the foothills of the mountains, because they have acquired national value. In fact, the particular cultivation and arrangement of the rows of vines, which follow the morphology of the hills, has contributed to enhancing the value of the wine and thus

to it being recognised as a fine wine and awarded DOCG status (*12*). Ultimately, these man-made works on geological emergences allow the soil and water component of the park area to be emphasised [103,104].

It should be noted that this rich geoheritage is integrated into a valuable floristic and faunistic context, which was preserved and enhanced even before the Park was established. The park area contains habitats of community interest (SCIs and ZPSs), for which the need for conservation is recognised at European level due to their high biodiversity and the rare plants they host [105,106]. Particularly exciting is the initiative developed first in schools and then in the business sector on the knowledge and dissemination of medicinal plants in the area. Such dissemination includes the geomorphological setting in which these plants grow. In this way a geosite, located in this asset could increase its value and thus consequently its potential for attractiveness toward tourist use [82,107]. In the case of Taburno-Camposauro, this occurs especially with the surface covered by Taburno Regional Forest. Its role in protecting water quality and mitigating soil instability integrated with biodiversity protection also emphasises educational capacity.

Similarly, it happens when these geological emergences intersect with human history, represented by historic centres, castles, monuments, hermitages or with the activities and traditions developed over the centuries in these territories. Connecting with these cultural assets can emphasise geological heritage and facilitate the relationship between places and people [36,85,108]. As revealed by traces left by humans in caves or fortifications built on limestone olistolites or the cultivation of red "marbles". Therefore, the integration of geological heritage with ecological and cultural assets, typical of geopark areas, should be a specificity of some geosites for tourism and educational uses.

However, this geological heritage with high geotouristic potential sometimes has difficulties in accessibility, sometimes suffers from the inability to be able to be rightly interpreted, or indeed to ensure the safety of visitors [91]. Therefore, both to make it possible to be able to observe the beauties of geological occurrences, and to take advantage of the natural and man-made complementarities of each geosite, a diversified and somewhat innovative promotional activity must be developed.

5. Promotional Activity

In the promotion of geological heritage, it is definitely important to make the most of communication, both in terms of content and the way in which this is done. In order to facilitate its effectiveness, it will be necessary to use a language that can be understood by a wide audience and a dissemination through media that can bring as many people as possible together [6,26,28,108–110]. In the context of a protected area, especially a park that contains significant geodiversity, recognised in a global network under the aegis of UNESCO, this promotion may be less complex. Both because the park territory tends to identify with the community, which supports the activities that are developed to the point of economic benefit, and because one becomes part of a shared international system for the protection and enhancement of geological heritage. Involving the community and sharing experiences generates new ideas and good practices (e.g., [30,111–114]).

Based on this premise, in the Taburno-Camposauro Park, which has activated its candidature for the global network of Geoparks, innovative approaches have been intensified alongside 'classic' promotion procedures. Among these approaches, the dissemination of the Internet has become of strategic importance. Indeed, it makes it possible not only to physically reduce distances and disseminate knowledge, but also to express judgements and exchange ideas [28,109,115]. In the communication developed, preference was given to those geosites considered to be of international standing, or those geological sites that had complementarities with elements of other heritages (e.g., biological, historical, cultural). The first option also derives from the broad and up-to-date geological knowledge that contributes to fuelling scientific interest in those geosites, and increasing their relevance. The second could, on the other hand, foster greater appeal than other specifically geological

ones. Furthermore, these reports could exploit international instruments or traditions rooted in the area, so as to fit in with strategies that have been adopted for years.

5.1. Traditional Activities

Promoting geological heritage has meant being able to disseminate printed material or produce videos. This material is used to present the Park at meetings in schools in the area or at regional and national fairs. TV reports or programmes on geodiversity have also been useful for reaching a wider audience and potentially increasing visitors. The resulting interest is facilitated by texts that can be understood even by a non-specialist audience [42,116]. All this material, however, allows local people to discover their geological heritage and connection with the territory and tourists to broaden their awareness of geo-environmental and social issues [117,118]. These traditional methods have so far not made it possible to ascertain the effectiveness of communication beyond the numbers present. The creation of park facilities will soon make it possible to make a more precise estimate.

For some initiatives in particular, instead of language, it was decided to experiment with new ways of bringing non-experts closer to the earth sciences, such as through painting, photography, mountain biking and ecological programmes within the park area, so as to develop a sense of belonging to those places [3,38,39,108,119]. The specific mode selected to propose these initiatives depended on the objective to be pursued. A university outing obviously included different elements than a day excursion to spend a leisure day together, just as a programme for children and families was more functional than a demanding trekking experience. Natural aspects or cultural events were combined with one or more geological aspects to improve knowledge of one's territory. This type of action is widely promoted in schools, which do not miss the opportunity to visit and analyse the geological and biological features of Taburno and Camposauro with their worksheets and maps.

It was felt that the promotion of geological heritage is very effective for science and nature education [2,11,20–22]. Many projects have been carried out by students from different schools of all levels in the area. In total, 15 schools have been involved. The youngest students were given the opportunity to explore the Park (the "discover our mountains" project), some high school students were given the opportunity to map and report the access methods to the geosites as well as reach the nearest picnic areas, and finally for a professional school to design systems of protection from erosion or degradation. These latter activities were restricted to a small group of a high school students as part of an alternating school–work project, while the primary school activity involved several hundred young students. To focus on the educational aspect, a course was held for teachers to share the approach used to prepare the Geopark candidacy and to highlight how certain biological and cultural aspects are closely connected with geodiversity.

At the same time, scientific research by various Italian and even foreign universities, also in view of the Geopark candidacy, has continued to deepen certain aspects of geosciences [120–122]. In particular, studies have recently resumed on palaeocarsism [93,94,123], which involves limestone successions from the Cretaceous period, exploited for the purpose of providing ornamental stones. The uniqueness of this stone has represented a flourishing activity in the local economy over the past centuries, to the point of covering royal palaces (Royal Palace of Caserta and Naples in Italy, Grand Duchy of Tuscany, Kremlin Palace in Moscow in Russia), churches (Torlonia Chapel of St. John Lateran and Church of the Holy Apostles in Rome in Italy, St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg in Russia) and various monuments (Figure 6a) The attraction of tourists, who visit these places, to the mining areas has been confirmed by their significant presence in the geosites and exhibition areas. Thus, even though mining activities are interrupted, artisans use the mining residues for figurative works of art that are also exhibited at various international fairs (United States, Germany, Spain).

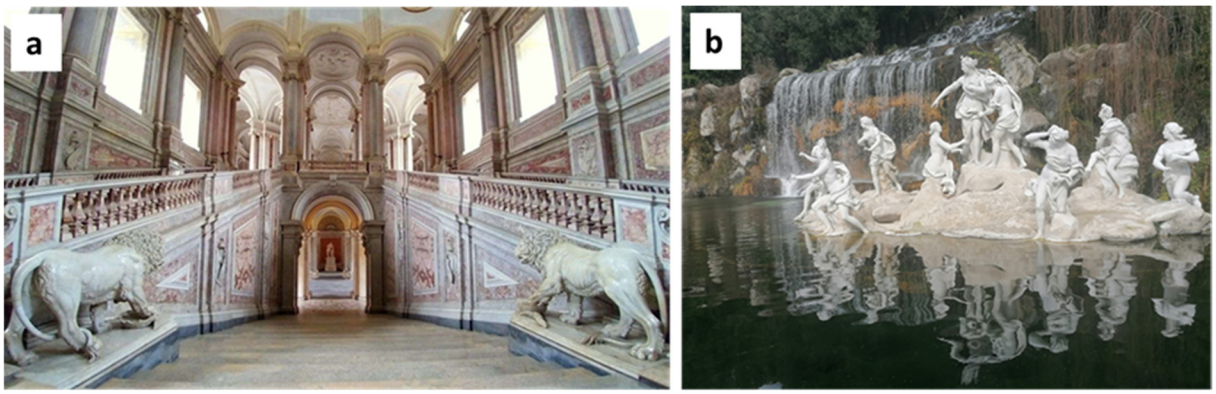


Figure 6. UNESCO World Heritage Sites connected to Taburno-Camposauro Park (**a**) Cautano "marbles" in the Royal palace of Caserta extracted from Uria Cave (*1*) (**b**) the fountains in the garden of the same Palace fed by the Fizzo springs (*31*).

Research on the study of landscape forms, both on the reliefs and in the adjacent valleys, has developed considerably in recent years. The use of GIS has made it possible to better articulate the evolutionary phases that developed in the Quaternary period, also highlighting those markers that still today play an important role in the attractiveness of places, directly or indirectly. These markers include the various pyroclastites attributable to the volcanic events of the Campi Flegrei and Vesuvius. They have allowed the development of pedological horizons, rich in mineral substances, capable of biologically counteracting vine damage and enhancing vine cultivation [123,124]. In order to understand the ancient wine tradition, one should also emphasise the special storage in cellars dug into the tuff, which can be visited in Sant'Agata de'Goti (*39*). Recognition of the wines produced with prestigious labels has been followed by events and activities that every year attract large numbers of tourists enthusiastic about getting to know this area and tasting the wines directly in those rural areas. Worthy of mention is the national philatelic series of wine-growing landscapes (*12*), which also included the Taburno-Camposauro areas.

Another strong attraction in the geological heritage is water. This resource has been an important resource for this area since Roman times. This is testified by the valuable works scattered throughout the territory for a better utilisation of water. As mentioned, the Fizzo springs (*31*), south of Mount Taburno, have even deserved UNESCO recognition because they feed the fountains of the Royal Palace of Caserta and the Vanvitellian aqueduct (Figure 6b). These and other works scattered throughout the territory exalt the ingenuity of man, but also highlight the ability not to alter too much the visual beauty of geological situations, rather to draw inspiration for art from them [35,119]. More specifically, in some of the caves (*32* and *36*) on the southern slope of Monte Taburno, steeped in stories dating back up to a thousand years, there are 'artistic imprints' left inside them (12th century cave paintings) (Figure 7a). Their didactic role in the reconstruction of historical events is clearly significant [98,124]. Moreover, the modern art installation created by an international artist on the access road to the reservoir and the Pizzuto M. reservoir (*16*), north of Camposauro M., is part of this context, and the artist has integrated his installation not only into the hydraulic construction, but into the mountain landscape (Figure 7b). This also happens at night, when a soft lighting system is activated to illuminate the access to the reservoir as well as to the artistic installation.

This combination of geology and art has probably triggered other similar initiatives, which have developed alternative forms of tourism that enhance the geological heritage. Among these, the travelling photo exhibition deserves special mention, in which the photographer transferred his emotions onto large-format black and white photos of the Taburno-Camposauro geosites. The exhibition was also accompanied by choreographic performances and poetry readings recalling those 'places once considered impressive only by geologists' [125]. This result emphasised the artistic visions of abiotic nature and the

recognition of the geological and geomorphological features in the photos [41]. Visitors to the exhibitions (several thousand in all) appreciated these 'images of great beauty that enhance the architecture and landscapes of the protected area, which is definitely worth a visit!'.

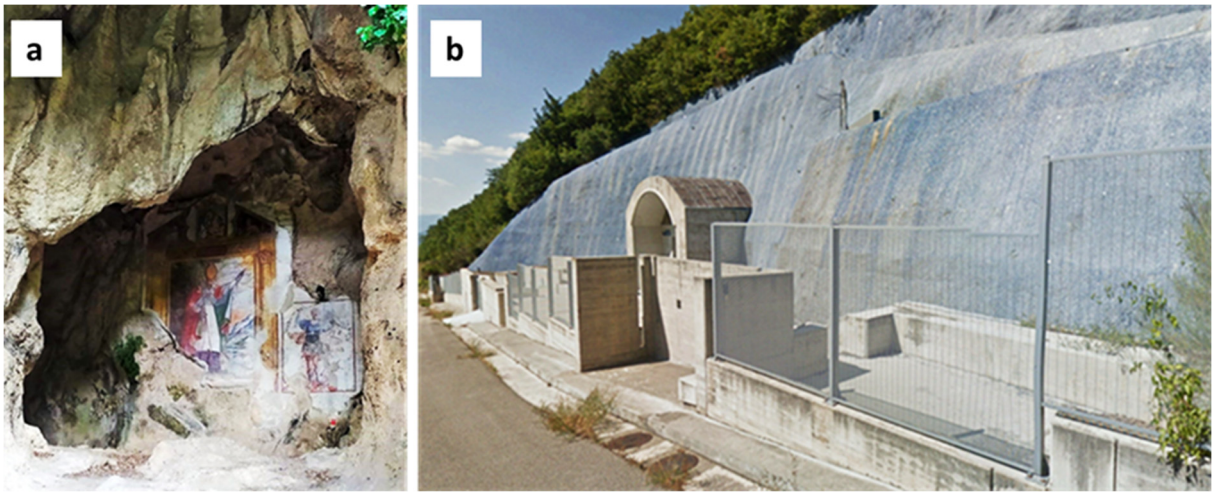


Figure 7. Geosites of Taburno-Camposauro Park (**a**) 12th century cave paintings inside the S. Simeone Cave (*32*); (**b**) daytime vision of the "artistic access" to the reservoir of Monte Pizzuto (*16*).

Last but not least, we cannot forget the calendar with drawings of natural heritage that was created for school-age children. The calendar is based on a guidebook, with each month depicting the geological beauty of the Park. It is intended as a further attempt to convey respect and care for nature as well as serving as an inspiration to explore and discover places so close by.

5.2. Innovative Activities

One of the activities that has proved to be strategic, because it succeeds in providing information on the geological heritage and stimulating visits, is the website of the Taburno-Camposauro Park Authority. A special feature on the site is the link to maps created with the aid of GIS aimed at enhancing geotouristic resources (analogous to [126,127]). The advantages of these tools make it possible to know in advance the places to visit using the website, where the maps are located. This makes it possible to follow 'predefined' itineraries as well as 'tailor-made' routes where tourist and cultural attractions can be found (e.g., [128–130]). Unfortunately, their use in the field, as is well known, can 'suffer' in some areas due to an internet connection that is not always adequate in the Park.

Alongside this platform, the most popular social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram) have been activated. They have become essential tools for communicating 'at a distance' effectively with a large group of people interested in geodiversity. For this reason, monthly presentations on social media of a geosite or geological event of relevance to the Park were initiated [25,114]. Each of these presentations highlighted the geological or geomorphological character of the geosite, as well as its formation, with a video or a series of photos and a short text that could be understood even by a non-expert audience. A great deal of interest was aroused, and the initiative also led to the discovery of places in the Park that should be visited and thus the need to secure them. Alongside these posts, school initiatives aimed at spreading knowledge and artistic events held to enhance geological heritage were published (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Attachments to social media posts on the Taburno-Camposauro Park. (**a**) Late 18th century painting by the German painter, Jakob Philipp Hackert, featuring Montesarchio Castle. The castle is situated on a huge carbonate olistolith (*30*), and for this reason the painting was attached to the presentation of this geosite via social media; (**b**) the sinkhole in karst field of Trelleca (*3*) visited during a mountain bike tour was diffused via social media; (**c**) artistic photo by Michele Stanzione in Cave Uria (*1*) was disseminated via social media.

In contrast to many 'traditional' approaches, social media are able through particular functions to be able to verify the effectiveness of communication by assessing the performance of posts in a given time period. In practice, through the Social Media Report, it is possible to actually show how many people are looking at the content that has been published and thus how much it has been able to attract the attention of users [86–88]. Users that can be configured are both men and women (the percentage is almost balanced), born before the beginning of this millennium and of Italian origin. Young people, on the whole, are few, although they increase sharply in number in the posts of school initiatives. It should be noted that foreign users (English, American, Swiss, Spanish, etc.), who frequent the social page are few (2%), probably also because the posts are exclusively in Italian.

With regard to content, the results show that posts containing a video, which generally provide an overall view of the environment, with an emphasis on geological features, are preferred over photos. As far as time is concerned, viewing increases significantly at times when one would like to visit, but weather conditions (snow, cold, etc.) do not favour this, while peaks are concentrated in the summer period.

The analysis performed started from the identification of performance indicators (KPIs), such as coverage, impression and interaction. These indicators are applied for the different time ranges: one year for the geosites, and about one semester for the school initiatives and for the artistic events that took place in the Park and in the municipalities concerned. Taking the three blocks of posts (Geosites, GeoArt and Schools) as a reference, the total result in the reference period recorded 413,863 contacts (268,095 for Geosites, 90,401 for GeoArt, and 55,367 for Schools). If we add to the total figure of Coverage, i.e., of people who viewed the content of the posts (396,107), the total figure of Impression, i.e., of people who simply viewed the posts (413,863), correlated with the fact that in the same period there was an increase of more than 3000 followers, 3264 to be precise, we can safely speak of an increase in social awareness. In addition to this, the report allowed us to understand the increase in engagement (ERR: Engagement Rate by Reach), i.e., the level of interaction on published content. Through simple numerical calculations it was possible to obtain an Engagement Rate by Reach of 13%, which is a good level of engagement.

6. Conclusions

The role of the Taburno-Camposauro Park is to safeguard and protect the rich natural and cultural heritage of its territorial area, as well as to raise awareness and enhance its value, but also those who have had the opportunity to discover it themselves cannot but

be enthusiastic. Indeed, they should help to add new forms of communication, capable of attracting tourists, to traditional presentations (e.g., [113,131]). This is what happened in the Park, leading to a significant increase in visitor numbers and also to promoting knowledge of the area far beyond its boundaries. In fact, as the report found on social media, there was a marked increase in awareness, as evidenced by the significant number of digital visitors. In addition, there was a good level of interaction on the published content that would suggest not only an increase in knowledge about the geoheritage, but also in its understanding. An attempt was made to erect a "bridge" between geology and a wider public by providing people with essential geological information ("Geo-facts": [6]) as well as reaching them with expressions linked to popular tradition ("popularized geo-preservation" [42]).

It can be argued that the promotion of such information through social media and indirectly through photo exhibitions and artistic performances probably produced more than printed information material. This comparison in favour of less traditional methods was validated by an increase in attendance in the Park to the point that those walking and observing the Park's geological heritage, after having been a digital visitor or a spectator of the artistic events, stated that: "It is time to stop and observe the spectacle before our eyes".

However, the reasons for this increase could also be attributed to the creation of various educational projects aimed at spreading knowledge of geosites for schools of all levels, as well as to the acquisition of a greater awareness on the part of tourists that excitement is a priority. In both cases, the Authority that manages the Park's territory realised that it was not sufficient to simply equip the sites with improved accessibility, better comprehension through the use of explanatory panels, or to enforce rules for the use of geosites, but it was necessary to find ways of promoting collective behaviour towards these sites. In achieving these objectives, the Park Authority received strong support from the University of Sannio, as well as concrete collaboration from schools, local entrepreneurs, and municipal administrations in the area. Believing in a form of communication that integrates environmental, economic and territorial aspects has made it possible to broaden the audience of those who find themselves in that territory and intend to defend it from threats, through effective and sustainable planning and management interventions. This would bring about and facilitate recognition as well as the attention of the Global Geopark Network.

Finally, it is clear that geoparks that play an important role in the development of geotourism can contribute to the development of a non-coastal, much more disadvantaged area [132–134]. In particular, the promotion of geoheritage within the Taburno-Camposauro Regional Park can generate not only new job opportunities, but also new economic activities as additional sources of income. This challenge in this rural area may be difficult, especially if the social and cultural life of the locals is not taken into account. Some positive policies can be a driver for participation, but in today's life it becomes important to inform correctly, starting with the younger generation. The protection of natural capital does not mean preventing the growth of the economy and well-being of those places. Therefore, the involvement of society is a key element and, as already pointed out, could foster a better production of local products and crafts related to geotourism, as well as products derived from a sustainable use of resources. This is demonstrated by the growth in quality and quantity of wines produced in the Taburno-Camposauro area and the number of visits to springs and disused mining areas. However, landscaping should be able to arouse emotions, especially about the beauty of the geoheritage with photos, videos, exhibitions and even social media. These applications could foster this virtuous process and potentially gain in tourist movement [4,24,36,78,119,135]. Of course, those who manage that heritage will have to be able to respond equally effectively and evocatively by offering services and knowledge in different formats. We would like those involved in geotourism promotion to keep in mind what the French painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) used to say: "First of all, emotion! Only then understanding!".

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