

## TRANSLATING ECOLOGIES: ECOSYSTEMS REPRESENTATION IN THE PROMOTION OF ROME'S NATURE-BASED TOURISM

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Citation: Buonvivere, Lorenzo (2025) "Translating Ecologies: Ecosystems Representation in the Promotion of Rome's Nature-Based Tourism", in Laura Diamanti, Eleonora Gallitelli and Eleonora Natalia Ravizza (eds) *Towards an Ecology of Translation: Translating Nature, Places and Identities in the Global World*, mediAzioni 49: A11-A32, <https://doi.org/10.60923/issn.1974-4382/23785>, ISSN 1974-4382.

**Abstract:** This article explores the relationship between eco-translation and nature-based tourism, with a focus on how ecological knowledge is conveyed across languages and cultures in the promotion of protected areas in and around Rome. While tourism discourse is often framed as inherently persuasive and promotional, the study argues that in the context of the current ecological crisis, translation plays an additional role in shaping ecological consciousness and fostering sustainable travel practices. Building on recent developments in ecolinguistics and ecocritical translation studies, the article positions eco-translation as not only a metaphorical framework but also a practical concern in the transmission of site-specific environmental knowledge. The investigation focusses on the website of RomaNatura, a regional body managing a large system of parks and nature reserves. By analysing and comparing nature-related words and semantic categories in parallel corpora of the Italian and English versions of the website, the study examines how natural entities and ecosystems are represented and translated. Findings suggest that RomaNatura's translation practices succeed in transmitting ecological content, but often at the expense of engaging descriptions that could strengthen tourists' affective connection with natural environments. The study concludes that eco-translation in tourism should not only preserve ecological accuracy but also foreground eco-cultural narratives, thereby integrating environmental education with promotional goals. In this way, translation can contribute more effectively to ecoliteracy and to the development of sustainable tourism practices in urban destinations such as Rome.

**Keywords:** ecolinguistics; eco-translation; nature-based tourism; Rome; tourism discourse.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism and translation are most directly linked with the necessity to market leisure travel beyond domestic borders, since the availability of promotional materials in multiple languages increases accessibility to international audiences. While a thorough discussion of the variables that partake in shaping tourist motivation may exceed the scope of this article, tourism is inherently cross-cultural, and hence effective communication – and persuasion – is tied to the correct understanding and transfer of cultural information from source to target texts (Sulaiman and Wilson 2019).

In the context of the current ecological crisis, however, translations that ensure tourists' correct reception of cultural aspects may not simply contribute to successful marketing strategies. In fact, education is one of the core principles that shape tourism activities in natural areas, and participants expect to gain increased knowledge about the environment as a result of their experiences (Fennel 2020). It is through the information and interpretation provided both on-site and off-site by guides, operators, and other facilitators, that tourists may become knowledgeable about and sensitive to the nature of the places they visit (Mühlhäusler and Peace 2001). As they mediate important environmental intelligence, translations arguably play a considerable role in how prospective international tourists conceive of and approach host ecosystems. Translated material could influence visitors' appreciation of local flora and fauna, and inform their understanding of local people's connection with domestic landscapes.

According to Milstein and Castro-Sotomayor (2020), cultures are always also “eco-cultures”, meaning that “ecological affiliations and practices” are “inextricable from – and mutually constituted with – sociocultural dimensions” (*ibid.*: xvii). In other words, ecology is as much a scientific as it is a cultural fact, and the kind of relationships that make up ecosystems are not simply – albeit primarily – biological, but they are influenced by how we think and talk about them in specific geographical, political, social, and cultural contexts. As a form of socially and culturally situated activity, translation contributes to the negotiation, reinforcement, or challenging of such relationships (Mason 2014). Its role towards ecological consciousness – hereby intended as awareness of and sensitivity to the complexity and fragility of natural ecosystems, and humans' responsibility towards their preservation – is not limited to enabling the linguistic transposition of texts that contain environmental information. Rather, it is carried out by an ecologically conscious disposition towards texts and their cross-linguistic mediation. This approach has been named “eco-translation” (Cronin 2017), of which more will be said in the following section, and particularly applies to tourism products describing and promoting natural areas.

Surely, all forms of tourism may involve visits to non-urban spaces and “natural attractions”. Nevertheless, the recent years have witnessed a growing interest in tourism activities whose primary focus is on the experience of natural environments and close encounter with local wildlife, plant species, and other more-than-human entities (Ahmed 2025; Batool *et al.* 2025). This type of activities – ranging from passive enjoyment of landscapes and outdoor recreation

up to voluntary work in conservation initiatives – collectively constitute nature or nature-based tourism (Coghlan 2016). The broadness of this categorisation implies that the role of nature may be either incidental – i.e., provide little more than a pleasant background or scenery – or constitutive, as is the case with ecotourism, which dictates that tourism in and across natural areas is conducted in line with the principles of sustainability and environmental education (Fennel 2020). At any rate, given the specificity of its setting, nature-based tourism often involves the production – and possibly translation – of promotional materials addressing the ecological importance and diversity of its destinations.

This article investigates the transmission of ecological knowledge in the context of nature-based tourism within and around Rome. Despite the predominant appeal of its historical and cultural heritage, the city is home to a large number of parks and reserves that offer an alternative to over-touristed landmarks (Roma Capitale 2015). By examining how these areas are advertised, this study strives to address the following research questions: how is Rome's biodiversity translated across languages, cultures, and ecosystems? Is the ecological value and specificity of the source text preserved, reduced, or enhanced in the target text? And finally, bearing in mind the inescapable persuasiveness of tourism communication, how are environmental awareness and promotional goals negotiated in the translation of tourism texts?

The study was conducted as part of the research carried out by Roma Tre University within Spoke-9 (no date) of the extended partnership CHANGES (Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Next-Gen Sustainable Society). As Spoke-9 – or CREST (Cultural Resources for Sustainable Tourism)<sup>1</sup> – broadly aims at addressing the integration of tourism, cultural heritage, and local communities with an emphasis on sustainability, the Roma Tre research unit was particularly concerned with identifying alternative narratives about Rome as a tourist destination, in order to foster more positive and sustainable ways to explore it beyond its most renowned and targeted sites.

The following section delineates the theoretical framework adopted in this study, and defines its focus against the broader agenda of eco-translation.

## **2. Which “eco” in eco-translation?**

The notion of ecology has frequently lent itself to metaphorical uses beyond the domain of biological knowledge. By describing the complex of relationships between living organisms and their environment, it provides an effective image to conceptualise interrelations of all kinds and among all subjects, as well as highlighting the importance of interconnections themselves in determining the functionality of the whole system. The ecological metaphor has been particularly productive in linguistic research, where it has inspired an ever-growing variety

<sup>1</sup> Spoke 9 (CREST), funded by the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), focusses on enhancing local contexts. For further information on the project, see the official project website: <https://pric.unive.it/progetti/spoke-9-changes/home> (visited: 16 December 2025).

of theoretical approaches and studies that observe the behaviour and impact of language within and upon the social and physical realities where it is spoken.

Ecolinguistics as a combination of ecology and language began this way. The processes triggered by contact among languages and between language and society were captured through the comparison of language diversity with biological diversity (Haugen 1972). Research on “the ecology of language(s)” focusses on issues related to the role of languages within social and individual environments, encompassing multilingualism, minority and majority languages, language endangerment and death, language evolution, and language planning (Fill 2018).

The interpretative potential of the ecological metaphor is not limited to objects of sociolinguistic research, however, but rather applies to several sub-disciplines across the wider domain of linguistics. For example, *ecolexicography* proposes that the design of valuable dictionaries and other lexicographic resources is tied with the comprehension of “ecosystemic” interactions among users, lexicographers, media, dictionary interface, definitions, grammar notes, examples of usage, etc. (Liu *et al.* 2021).

A similar concern for the diversity and complexity of variables that concur in the activity of translation is at the heart of Cronin’s (2017) eco-translation. He envisions it as addressing “all forms of translation thinking and practice that knowingly engage with the challenges of human-induced environmental change” (*ibid.*: 2). Cronin’s view is informed by political ecology, and his preoccupation with the role of translation in the preservation of minority – or “minoritised” – migrant languages undoubtedly resonates with the original metaphor of linguistic ecologies.

Nonetheless, eco-translation also investigates other aspects which are more closely linked with literal ecosystems as made up of organisms and their interrelations, starting from inter-species communication. In this regard, Cronin (2017) puts forward the notion of a “tradosphere”, corresponding to

the sum of all translation systems on the planet, all the ways in which information circulates between living and non-living organisms and is translated into a language or a code that can be processed or understood by the receiving entity. (*ibid.*: 71)

For the most part, this refers to the acknowledgment of non-human animals’ communicative abilities<sup>2</sup>, marking a first step towards “the possibility of interspecies communication” (*ibid.*: 79) and the displacement of anthropomorphic interpretations of the more-than-human world.

Zhao and Geng (2024) include the latter as an example of one strand of research within the class of “ecocritical translation studies”. They pair Cronin’s exploration of the “tradosphere” with studies like Zhou and Xie’s (2020), who cite the process of protein production to argue for translation as a prototypical mechanism of information transfer in nature. While such a perspective may not

<sup>2</sup> Cronin describes different instances of coded communication among non-human animals, referring for example to studies on prairie dogs’ alarm calls and dolphins’ use of whistles to identify themselves to other dolphins.

solve the metaphorical predicament (but simply turn it the other way around, i.e., by assimilating biology with linguistic translation), it is still relevant insofar as it shifts the attention to actual ecosystemic interactions. Indeed, in Zhao and Geng's (2024) theorisation, ecocritical translation studies do not employ ecology epistemologically, but are explicitly environmental; they are characterised by a genuine "ecological concern, that is, the care for nature and the attention to the human-nature relationship in the Anthropocene" (*ibid.*: 40).

This emphasis on the human/more-than-human nexus as opposed to the anthropocentric focus on language/language or language/society interactions, is in line with the predominant concern of ecolinguistics nowadays. In spite of the temporal primacy of the sociological approach to language and ecology, the majority of ecolinguistic studies in recent years have engaged with ecosystems in their literal sense. As pointed out by Steffensen (2024) through the support of bibliometric data, at present "ecolinguistics is used to denote the study of how language impacts on the natural ecology in ways that change the conditions for life on Earth" (*ibid.*: 24). This objective is primarily met by following Stibbe's (2015/2021) understanding of the discipline as the analysis of language directed at unveiling the underlying stories that shape the way we see the natural world and play a role in the exacerbation of the ecological crisis.

This article approaches eco-translation from the perspective presented above. In particular, it may be seen to fall within one of the categories of ecocritical translation studies as identified by Zhao and Geng (2024), *viz.* the study of translations of source texts with an explicit ecological focus. While the latter has received very limited attention with respect to translated texts in the context of nature-based tourism, recent works point towards the development of a research path in this direction.

To begin with, some earlier studies are relevant to this strand of eco-translation insofar as they observe culture-bound differences in the language of ecotourism between Italian and British, American (Spinzi 2010), and Canadian English (Spinzi and Turci 2013). For instance, Spinzi and Turci (2013) notice contrasting linguistic patterns in the representation of "eco participants" visiting national parks in Canada and Italy. The authors remark that while Canadian texts use the word "tourist" in past tense constructions to connote it negatively – referring to unecological practices of traditional mass tourism – this is not the case with the Italian ones. Supported by the classification of clauses according to the processes defined by Systemic Functional Linguistics, they conclude that in Canadian texts, visitors are mainly concerned with perception, control, and action over nature (roles of Actor or Beneficiary). Instead, language in the Italian corpus favours emotive response, since it portrays the "eco participant" as Beneficiary of sensorial or emotionally charged abstract objects. This contrast is also emphasised by the use of modalisation, which is more prescriptive in the Canadian texts as opposed to the Italian ones.

Similar results are found by Lazzeretti (2021). She offers a contrastive look at discursive strategies employed in the wider sustainable tourism discourse in English and Italian. She finds that English displays a preference for the label "responsible tourism", considered to have a stronger ethical connotation than "sustainable tourism", which is instead more frequent in Italian texts and seen

to be especially informed by the socio-economic aspects of travelling. As for figurative language, the English corpus is not rich in metaphors, apart from highly conventionalised expressions, confirming the prevalent informative and neutral character of English texts. Conversely, texts in Italian are more evaluative – particularly as they establish a negative semantic prosody to characterise “turismo di massa” (“mass tourism”) – and richer in metaphors (e.g., the likening of mass tourists to insects).

Instead, recent studies that explicitly adopt the perspective of eco-translation are interested in how translation shifts may affect the perception of natural environments in readers of the target texts. Li and Ng (2024) address the issue through a corpus-based interdisciplinary study focussing on Chinese-to-English translations of texts in two Chinese UNESCO Global Geoparks. Grounded in Hu’s (2020) Eco-Translatology framework, they identify the linguistic, cultural, and communicative challenges involved in accurately conveying biotic information. The authors find that literal translation is the most frequent strategy used to translate knowledge about flora and fauna found in the parks. However, they argue that it is insufficient, and in turn propose a taxonomy of interpretation strategies to improve the semantic, stylistic, and cultural equivalence of translated materials in ecotourism settings.

Malamatidou (2019) considers Greek and English promotional websites to investigate how nature-based tourism discourse differs from mass tourism and how translation negotiates these differences. She finds that different cultures emphasise different aspects of nature-based tourism (e.g., ecological values vs. recreational motives), and stresses how translation plays a pivotal role in either reinforcing or diluting these emphases. Indeed, she observes that translated texts prioritise some natural aspects (e.g. fauna) over others, as opposed to source texts. While calling for further research to test her hypothesis, she finally suggests that the translation of nature-based tourism discourse is performed so as to align with the conventional tropes found in mass tourism discourse.

Finally, Soeta Bangsa *et al.* (2025) examine how non-human animals are represented in English-to-Indonesian translations of ecotourism articles published in in-flight magazines. Referring to Stibbe’s (2015/2021) ecolinguistic framework and Katan’s (2016) cultural filters of deletion, distortion, and generalisation, they observe that translations often reduce the ecological salience of non-human animals, undermining conservation messages. The authors call for conscious translation practices that retain ecological narratives and foster awareness of and empathy towards the natural world.

Together, these studies confirm that the translation of nature-based tourism promotional materials poses considerable challenges. They expose the role of cultural variation in the representation of the natural world across languages; reveal how translation can inadvertently dilute or erase ecological meanings and hinder the objectives of environmental communication; and ultimately advocate for systematic translation strategies based on ecological accuracy that can support the tourism industry in meeting its sustainability goals.

### 3. *Data and methods*

This article offers a small case study of the promotion of nature-based tourism in Rome by comparing the Italian and English versions of the website of RomaNatura, a regional body that manages a wide system of parks and nature reserves found within and around the city of Rome. While not traditionally thought of as the capital's most prominent type of heritage, this "web" of natural areas comprises as many as sixteen protected areas, plus a marine reserve located off the Roman coast. Together, they add up to 16,000 hectares of land, home to a range of ecosystems that host over 1,000 plant species, 5,000 insect species, and 150 other wildlife species (RomaNatura no date).

In spite of these figures, the website of the official Italian tourism board does not refer to the city's protected areas, and its claim that "Rome is the perfect destination for sustainable tourism" (Ministero del Turismo no date) is merely supported by a set of proposed itineraries with a "shallow emphasis on sustainability" (Gallitelli 2024: 56). Rome has never been awarded the European Green Capital or Green Leaf Awards (European Commission 2025). Still, more and more efforts are being made towards the development of opportunities for ecologically conscious ways of visiting the city, in light of the astounding crowds of tourists that travel there every year (Valeri 2015). The latest tourism regional plans both refer explicitly to such actions (Regione Lazio 2020, 2025). Although the presence of natural environments is not sufficient to achieve sustainable tourism, it grants opportunities for nature-based tourism, which may or may not evolve into forms of ecotourism, provided they are conducted sustainably and aimed at fostering ecoliteracy. At any rate, RomaNatura offers an interesting case study to observe how the promotion of nature-based tourism in urban areas is discursively achieved.

The importance of websites among the text-types of tourism communication has long been acknowledged (Gotti 2006; Maci 2012), as well as the role of translation in making them a valuable resource for tourism promotion (Cappelli 2007). The internet represents the first source of information for potential tourists, and websites are the means by which all types of enterprises, including those working in the tourism sector, influence the impressions of their audience and differentiate themselves from the competition (Breeze 2015). For this reason, they play a considerable role in the construction of anticipation, representing the first phase of the tourism experience, during which travellers collect information, contemplate, and visualise opportunities (Pearce 2016). Accordingly, the website of RomaNatura provides an illustrative example to reflect on how people, both domestically and internationally, are inspired to engage in nature-based tourism activities and develop heightened ecological consciousness about the ecosystems they are going to visit.

The investigation is carried out in two steps, starting from the construction of two corpora containing texts from both the Italian and English versions of the website, totalling 35,295 and 36,154 tokens, respectively. Only relevant sections were considered for the collection of data – i.e., texts describing the parks and nature reserves within the RomaNatura system – whereas webpages such as "Administration" and "Contacts" were disregarded.

In the attempt to address the first and second research questions, which are concerned with the translation of the ecological value and specificity of the source text – that is, the transfer of the information about the biodiversity and ecological characteristics of the local ecosystems described in the source text – the study partly follows the procedure adopted by Malamatidou (2019). The latter consists in comparing the frequencies of the main categories of “natural resources” (e.g. Landscape, Climate and weather, Flora, Fauna, etc.) between the original and the translated text, as measured by the number of words belonging to each category in both corpora. In the present research, the classification of items into semantic groups was performed by means of the software WMatrix (Rayson 2008), and thus adheres to the tagset developed for the UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS). The resulting list of categories was filtered to keep only the ones pertaining to the “natural world” domain among the top fifty semantic fields identified for the Italian and English corpora (Table 2).

The presence of potential shifts between Italian and English suggested by the comparison of semantic categories is examined in the second step of the analysis, which involved the combination of the Italian and English texts into a parallel corpus. Parallel corpora are collections of bi-texts containing source texts and their translations, and are particularly suitable for descriptive studies on translation like the present one (Bernardini 2022). Parallel corpora are aligned at the segment level, so that corresponding concordances can be easily queried to see how specific items have been translated into the target text and understand equivalents in context. The texts of the Italian (“RomaNatura\_par\_IT”) and English (“RomaNatura\_par\_EN”) website for this study were automatically aligned through the parallel concordancing facility of Sketch Engine.

The following section first explores frequency lists of words and semantic categories obtained from both corpora, and then offers a qualitative examination of salient items describing the natural world to observe potential differences and/or convergences in the translation of ecology vocabulary from Italian into English.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Table 1 contains the most frequent lemmas found in both corpora. At a first glance, the comparison of the frequency lists for the Italian and English websites would seem to reveal no striking differences between the lexical content of the source and target text.

**Table 1.** Frequency list of words in the RomaNatura parallel corpora.

RomaNatura_par_IT			RomaNatura_par_EN		
Lemma	Raw frequency	Relative frequency (per million)	Lemma	Raw frequency	Relative frequency (per million)
area	120	3399,915	area	167	4619,12928
specie	108	3059,9235	oak	119	3291,47536



naturale	99	2804,92988	species	99	2738,28622
via	72	2039,949	such	90	2489,35111
romano	66	1869,95325	century	86	2378,71328
piccolo	64	1813,288	small	75	2074,45926
grande	62	1756,62275	tree	71	1963,82143
Roma	59	1671,62488	Rome	59	1631,90795
S.	59	1671,62488	family	58	1604,24849
sua	54	1529,96175	Via	58	1604,24849
secolo	52	1473,2965	large	54	1493,61067
famiglia	51	1444,96388	Roman	53	1465,95121
parte	50	1416,63125	forest	52	1438,29175
villa	49	1388,29863	di	51	1410,6323
antico	49	1388,29863	Reserve	51	1410,6323
suo	48	1359,966	natural	48	1327,65392
Riserva	48	1359,966	ancient	47	1299,99447
ambiente	48	1359,966	road	47	1299,99447
presenza	47	1331,63338	name	47	1299,99447
agricolo	47	1331,63338	Nature	46	1272,33501
acqua	47	1331,63338	presence	45	1244,67555
presente	44	1246,6355	plant	44	1217,0161
nome	43	1218,30288	villa	43	1189,35664
zona	42	1189,97025	vegetation	42	1161,69718
diverso	41	1161,63763	hill	41	1134,03773
vegetazione	40	1133,305	environment	41	1134,03773
territorio	40	1133,305	city	40	1106,37827
città	38	1076,63975	reserve	40	1106,37827
fosso	38	1076,63975	water	39	1078,71881
albero	37	1048,30713	Della	38	1051,05936

Greater insight, however, may be gained by examining Table 2, which compares categories of nature-related terms in the two corpora. As shown by relative frequencies, there are minor differences in the number of Italian and English items describing landscape, vegetal, and non-human animal life in the reserves and parks of RomaNatura. The richness of biodiversity is conveyed also by the considerable size of categories A4.1 (“Generally kinds, groups, examples”) – which contains common taxonomical terms such as “specie/species” and “esemplare/specimen” – and B1 (“Anatomy and physiology”) – including a list of terms to describe anatomical and morphological features of creatures populating the local ecosystems.

**Table 2.** Frequency list of nature-related categories in the RomaNatura parallel corpora.

USAS Tag	Category	RomaNatura_par_IT			RomaNatura_par_EN			Log-likelihood
		Examples	Absolute freq.	Relative freq.	Examples	Absolute freq.	Relative freq.	
W3	Geographical terms	riserva, collina, territorio	709	1.98	hill, river, countryside	422	1.10	83,07
L3	Plants	albero, pineta, acero	551	1.54	tree, willows, poplars	575	1.50	0,05
L2	Living creatures	insetti, ghiro, rondine	441	1.23	birds, porcupine, beetles	561	1.46	13,71
A4.1	Generally kinds, groups, examples	specie, natura, esemplari	250	0.70	species, specimens, kinds	249	0.65	0,16
B1	Anatomy and physiology	becco, pelo, ventre	141	0.39	beak, toes, skin	171	0.45	2,01

The values of the log-likelihood statistic – a statistical measure often employed to gauge whether differences between corpora are likely to be due to chance or are statistically significant (Brezina 2018) – suggest that, despite small, there is a meaningful divergence as far as the “Geographical terms” and “Living creatures” categories are concerned<sup>3</sup>. What this would seem to imply is that the Italian version of the website makes greater use of words to describe the geographical features of the natural areas that surround Rome, whereas the English version contains a higher number of items referring to non-human animal species within the same environments.

The extent to which such discrepancies may actually hint at a loss or gain of ecological information in the translation from Italian into English ought to be assessed through a qualitative examination of the source and target texts. Starting from the category of non-human animals, the English corpus contains, for example, 27 occurrences of the word “owl”, even though the Italian most

<sup>3</sup> Log-likelihood values were obtained using the “Log-likelihood and effect size calculator” wizard tool developed by the UCREL Group at Lancaster University and available at <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html> (visited: 29 November 2025). The cut-off point for significance at  $p > 0.05$  is 3.84 (Rayson et al. 2004).

direct counterpart “gufo” never appears in the Italian corpus. The analysis of parallel concordances reveals that “owl” is often found in the noun phrase “little owl” (11), which translates the Italian “civetta”. In all other instances, “owl” features as the headword of similar phrases used to translate different species of nocturnal birds – e.g. “barn owl” for “barbagianni”, “tawny owl” for “allocco”, and “scops owl” for “assiolo”. Similarly, the word “tit” (6) figures in “long-tailed tit” for “codibugnolo”, “penduline tit” for “pendolino”, and “blue tit” for “cinciarella”.

The same behaviour concerns plant names. One of the items that stands out from the English wordlist in Table 1 is the word “oak”, which occurs more frequently than the Italian equivalent “quercia”. Indeed, it is even more recurrent than its hypernym “tree”, whereas the corresponding “albero” registers more hits. What may first appear as a mismatch in the correct transposition of local plant names from the source to the target text is soon explained by examining aligned segments in the parallel corpora. The search for counterparts of “oak” reveals a difference in the Italian and English nomenclature of arboreal specimens, which mirrors as well compound lexemes observed above that denote different classes of non-human animals. With respect to plants, whereas Italian resorts to different names to denote different types of trees belonging to the same genus, English differentiates them by means of modifiers, while preserving the head “oak”. Therefore, the *Quercus pubescens* is a “roverella” in Italian and a “downy oak” in English; the *Quercus cerris* corresponds to a “cerro” in Italian and a “Turkey oak” in English, and so on. The quotation below exemplifies some of these possible equivalences:

RomaNatura_par_IT	RomaNatura_par_EN
Per esempio la Riserva Naturale di Decima Malafede per la sua collocazione più meridionale risente della vicinanza del mare e per questo motivo presenta in prevalenza specie quali il <b>leccio</b> , la <b>sughera</b> e le querce caducifoglie, quali la <b>roverella</b> e la <b>farnia</b> .	For example, the Decima Malafede Nature Reserve, due to its southernmost location, is affected by the proximity of the sea and for this reason it mainly features species such as the <b>holm oak</b> , the <b>cork oak</b> and the deciduous oaks, such as the <b>downy oak</b> and the <b>common oak</b> .

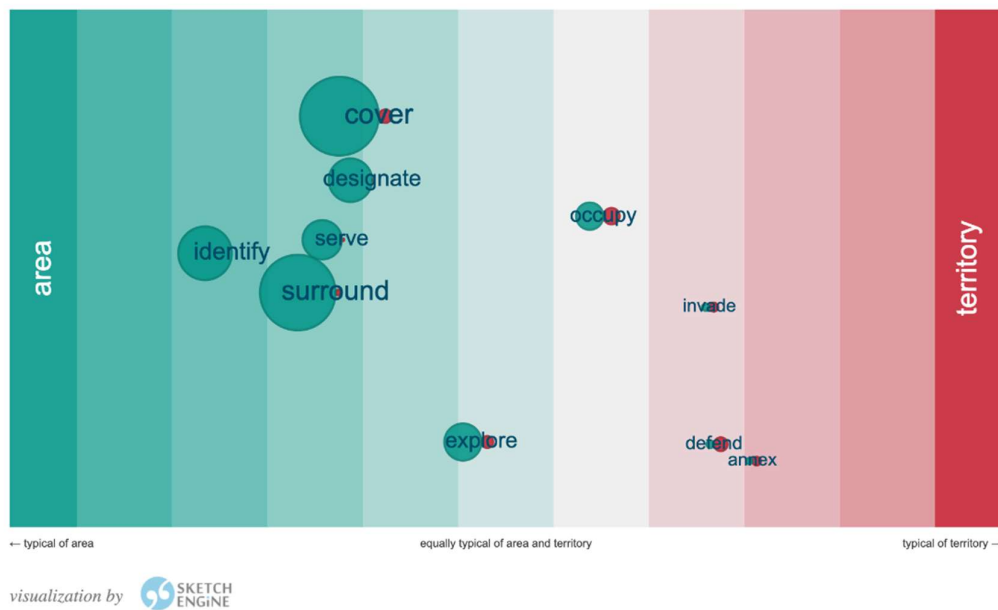
These and other apparent “deviations” are due to structural differences between Italian and English. In a similar vein, the higher frequency of the adjective “naturale” in the Italian corpus does not mean lower concern for the natural world in the English one. The explanation lies, in fact, in the “regressive tendency” (Bertuccelli Papi 2016) of the English noun phrase, which commonly employs nouns as premodifiers. This often results in the creation of lexicalised compounds, such as “nature reserve”, wherein the noun “nature” replaces the adjectival postmodifier in the Italian equivalent “riserva naturale”.

On the contrary, the difference observed in the frequency of “Geographical terms” between the Italian and English versions of the website (Table 2) may carry other implications. For instance, what is interesting to explore from a cross-cultural perspective is the distinction among “area”, “zona”, and “territorio”, all of which are used in the Italian texts to designate a tract of land and their

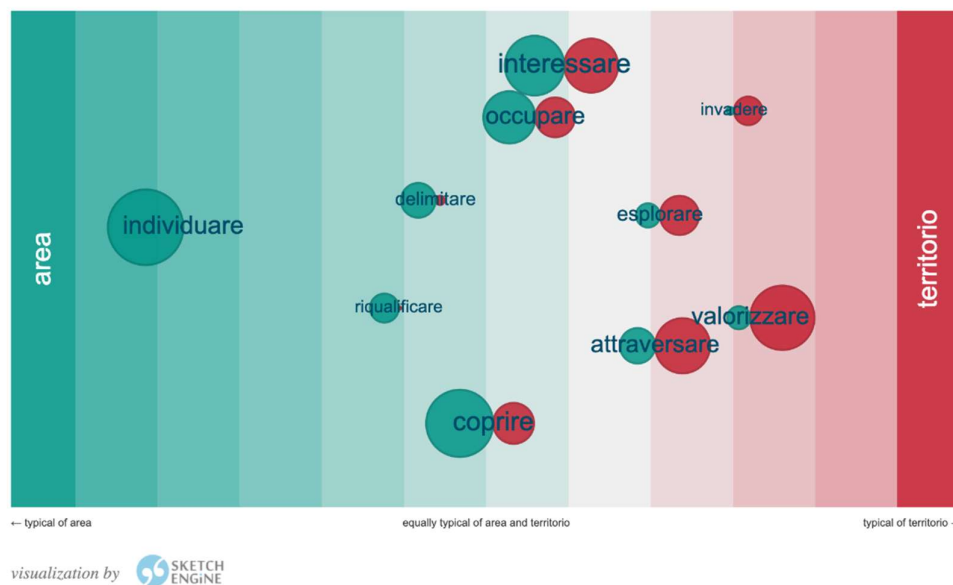
geographical features. Both “area” and “zona” are rendered through the English “area” – explaining the higher frequency of the word in the English corpus. Instead, “territorio” is translated literally as “territory”:

RomaNatura_par_IT	RomaNatura_par_EN
Attraversando queste <b>aree</b> , si può notare che la morfologia del paesaggio è ancora quella tipica della Campagna Romana.	Crossing these <b>areas</b> , you can notice that the morphology of the landscape is still typical of the Roman Countryside.
Caratterizzata morfologicamente dal fosso di San Basilio, che dà rifugio a specie di valore come il rospo smeraldino e la biscia dal collare, la <b>zona</b> ospita una fauna non troppo diversificata anche se con alcune eccezioni di rilievo come la gallinella d’acqua e l’airone cenerino.	Characterized morphologically by the San Basilio ditch, which provides shelter to valuable species such as the green toad and the grass snake, the <b>area</b> is home to a fauna that is not too diverse although with some notable exceptions such as the moorhen and the grey heron.
Il <b>territorio</b> è caratterizzato da una vallata profondamente incisa, denominata Valle dell’Inferno, e da alcune colline circostanti, che digradano verso il Vaticano.	The <b>territory</b> is characterized by a deeply incised valley, called Valle dell’Inferno, and by some surrounding hills, which slope down towards the Vatican.

The term “territorio” is rather recurrent in Italian ecotourism discourse: Spinzi (2010) observes that it is preferred over “environment” in discussions about conservation and environmental education, as opposed to English and American ecotourism texts. However, the two words hold different connotations in the two languages. While “territorio” can be used to refer to a geographical region in general, the English equivalent “territory” holds strong jurisdictional connotations, and denotes the land or district belonging to and administered by a city, town, state, or any other ruling body. Certainly, implications about judicial authority are equally possessed by the Italian word, although geographical and political elements tend to overlap in Italian culture, and indeed the emphasis on “territorio” highlights “the relevance of geo-political boundaries to Italian identity” (Spinzi 2010: 15). It follows that instances in which “territorio” is translated as “territory” in the English version of the website charge the target text with implications that non-translated English nature-based tourism discourse would not probably share. A quick comparison of the collocates for “area” and “territory” in the enTenTen21 is enough to show that the latter is predominantly discussed in terms of “occupation”, “invasion”, “defence”, etc (Fig. 1). In turn, a similar comparison between “area” and “territorio” in the itTenTen20 shows the latter to collocate with such words as “valorizzare” (i.e., increase the value of) and “esplorare” (i.e., explore) (Fig. 2). “Territory” does not entirely capture the link between ecosystems and their dwellers, which might have been rendered through alternative equivalents with stronger connotations, like “land”.



**Figure 1.** Comparison of verbs collocating with “area” and “territory” in the enTenTen21.



**Figure 2.** Comparison of verbs collocating with “area” and “territorio” in the itTenTen20.

In general, the Italian text presents slightly greater variation in landscape terms that describe the morphological features of the natural areas. A further example is that of “hill”, which translates both “collina” and “altura”, as well as, in one instance, the word “costa”, which specifically refers to a slope, and thus describes the acclivity, rather than the hole elevation:

RomaNatura_par_IT	RomaNatura_par_EN
Il Forte Monte Mario, che indica con il nome l' <b>altura</b> su cui si trova, fu il primo ad essere costruito.	Forte Monte Mario, which indicates with its name the <b>hill</b> on which it is located, was the first to be built.
Il primo cartello del sentiero natura si trova su via Tilli, strada che offre una panoramica su tutta l'area del sentiero natura, nei pressi dei resti di una villa Romana, che si oltrepassa a mezza <b>costa</b> verso est fino ad arrivare ad un caratteristico gelso isolato, con altri tabelloni.	The first sign of the nature trail is on Via Tilli, a road that offers a panoramic view of the entire area of the nature trail, near the remains of a Roman villa, which you pass halfway up the <b>hill</b> towards the east until you reach a characteristic isolated mulberry tree, with other signs.

Similar – and arguably marginal – “mismatches” nonetheless amount to a few instances. To mention but a further example pertaining to the description of local wildlife, there is one occurrence in which “tritone punteggiato” (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) is translated as “dotted newt”, which may hint at the Eastern or red-spotted newt, belonging to a different species, the *Notophtalmus viridescens viridescens*. The proper English equivalent is “smooth newt”, which is indeed employed correctly in all other translations of “tritone punteggiato”, so that the only exception is perhaps the result of a “slip” attributable to the literal rendering of “punteggiato” as “dotted”.

Furthermore, the translation of collocates that characterise descriptions of local flora and fauna would appear to suggest close semantic proximity. As noticeable in Table 3, modifiers of the most recurrent words referring to the natural world mainly consist of objective, specialised ecology lexicon that appreciates natural entities’ formal biological characteristics.

**Table 3.** Modifiers of “specie/species” and “vegetazione/vegetation”.

RomaNatura_par_IT		RomaNatura_par_EN	
Modifiers of “specie”	Modifiers of “vegetazione”	Modifiers of “species”	Modifiers of “vegetation”
animale	ripariale	alien	riparian
diverso	spontaneo	animal	spontaneous
numeroso	boschivo	extinct	path
arboreo	tipico	low-risk	thick
presente	arboreo	key	broad-leaved
floristico	seminaturale	floral	prevailing
censito	sub-costiera	migratory	sub-coastal
arbustivo	erbacea	territorial	semi-natural

Following the comparison of nature-related semantic categories – which hints at no particular differences in the communication of ecological knowledge between the two corpora – as well as examples discussed in the qualitative stage of the analysis, these findings might point towards a close correspondence between the Italian and the English versions of the RomaNatura website. Aside from the occasional errors and the dissimilarities imposed by structural divergences between the two languages, ecological information contained in the

source text is transferred into its target. Therefore, the first and second research questions of the study – how is Rome’s biodiversity translated? Is the ecological value and specificity of the source text preserved, reduced, or enhanced in the target text? – may be answered by saying that the English text strives to preserve ecological information contained in the source text and thus seemingly achieves to communicate the diversity of Roman parks’ ecosystems to an international audience.

However, some of the insights gained by the qualitative analysis of the two corpora point to interesting patterns as to how ecological consciousness is discursively construed and passed on in nature-based tourism. This has more to do with the ways in which the original material is produced rather than translated, though it nonetheless has implications on its rendition across different languages.

Indeed, the source text appears to be highly specialised, with descriptions of local systems often employing technical and infrequent geographical terms. This is partly due to the situational context in which the genre under examination is created (Bhatia 2016). RomaNatura is a regional body in charge of the management of local parks and nature reserves, meaning that most of their efforts go into the surveying and conservation of the ecosystems they are responsible for. It follows that the main function of their texts is informative: they aim to brief and educate about the ecological characteristics of these areas, as well as the richness and diversity of animal and plant creatures that populate them. This explains the degree of technicality shown by the RomaNatura website, leading to the assumption that its webpages might have been probably written by expert ecologists, botanists, or geographers<sup>4</sup>.

This level of specialisation is, in truth, not uncommon in tourism discourse. Tourism text-types range from the most informative (e.g., guidebooks) to the most persuasive (e.g., adverts), and usually combine features of both pragmatic functions<sup>5</sup> (Maci 2020). Moreover, the incorporation of vocabulary from the semantic fields of other specialised domains is a distinctive feature of tourism language, which borrows lexical items from economics, geography, art, cuisine, etc. (Gotti 2006). Given the specificity of nature-based tourism, as well as the type of places described by RomaNatura, the high frequency of ecology terms is not exceptional.

Still, the technicality of some expressions may at times render the text unintelligible to laypeople, particularly when these occurrences are left unexplained. An example is found in such occurrences as “sclerophyllous” and “xerophilous” in the quotation below:

<b>RomaNatura par IT</b>	<b>RomaNatura par EN</b>
Non caratteristico di associazioni definite ma un po' ubiquitario principalmente nei querceti <b>planiziali</b> a Farnia ma anche in	Not characteristic of defined associations but somewhat ubiquitous mainly in the <b>lowland</b> oak forests of English Oak but

<sup>4</sup> This was not possible to ascertain, since the website contains no indication as to the author of the texts.

<sup>5</sup> On the matter, see also Bhatia (2005), who maintains that all types of informative texts are ultimately persuasive.

querceti collinari sia a Farnia che a Rovere e nei carpineti, ma anche in formazioni di transizione di questi in fasi più primitive, da pioppeti a Pioppo nero e Salice bianco in <b>aree golenali</b> ; nel meridione d'Italia partecipa anche a formazioni di <b>sclerofille</b> nelle fasi meno <b>xerofile</b> .	also in hilly oak forests of both English Oak and Sessile Oak and in hornbeam woods, but also in transitional formations of these in more primitive phases, from poplar groves to Black Poplar and White Willow in <b>floodplain areas</b> ; in southern Italy it also participates in <b>sclerophyllous</b> formations in the less <b>xerophilous</b> phases.
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The Italian text is possibly even less transparent than its English counterpart; for instance, by preferring the rare adjectival modifier “planiziali” in the phrase “querce planiziali”, instead of the common noun “pianure” to denote the location of oak forests in lowlands.

Aside from instances of specialist-to-specialist communication, such as tourism planning, regulations or recommendations, tourism discourse is quintessentially promotional (Maci 2020), and thus aimed at non-specialists, i.e., visitors, as is the case with RomaNatura. Websites are actually among the most frequent examples of persuasiveness in tourism (Maci 2012). While this is primarily true of private businesses and tour operators marketing special packages for activities and/or stays, it applies to some degree to all kinds of subjects involved in the tourism sector.

In spite of this, the RomaNatura website prioritises scientific over promotional content. As shown in part by the collocation analysis performed above, ecosystems are essentially described with reference to their morphological characteristics and by means of taxonomic modifiers. Instead, appraisal items that may convey a subjective stance on their value and help readers in visualising personal opportunities for deeper engagement with the more-than-human world are scant, even in descriptions of non-human animals living in the reserves, which are of a nearly encyclopaedic character:

RomaNatura_par_IT	RomaNatura_par_EN
La Volpe comune ( <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> ) è un piccolo carnivoro appartenente alla famiglia dei Canidi. Distribuita in tutta Europa (Islanda esclusa), nel nord-Africa, nell'Asia temperata ed in gran parte del nord-America, introdotta in Australia, è presente in tutta Italia ad eccezione della pianura Padana. Ha il muso appuntito, orecchie grandi e coda folta. Il colore del mantello è bruno-fulvo tendente al rosso con arti biancastri.	The Common Fox ( <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> ) is a small carnivore belonging to the Canidae family. Distributed throughout Europe (excluding Iceland), in North Africa, in temperate Asia and in much of North America, introduced in Australia, it is present throughout Italy with the exception of the Po Valley. It has a pointed muzzle, large ears and a bushy tail. The coat color is brown-tawny tending to red with whitish limbs.

Although necessary, the level of abstraction found in environmental discourse is sometimes counterproductive as regards the construction of ecological consciousness. Stibbe (2015/2021) links it to the idea of salience, which has to do with how concretely, vividly, and specifically the more-than-human world is represented in discourse. “Plainer” language, by requiring no



specialist knowledge for its understanding, may be more effective in producing powerful images in the mind of readers, and in turn increase the latter's ability to relate to the ecosystems being talked about. On the contrary, "the more abstract the description is, the less salient the entities being described" (*ibid.*: 163). "Xerophilous" is arguably opaquer than "thriving in dry weather", and less prone to evoking thoughts of plants that belong to the category.

These observations pave the way towards answering the last research question of the study – how does tourism communication combine marketing and environmentalism? With respect to the specific case considered here, the negotiation between promotional and educational goals is achieved by a "technicisation" of tourism discourse. In other words, the creativity and iconicity of tourism language are reduced in favour of specialised lexicon, with the effect that the texts of RomaNatura look more like those of an ecology textbook than a tourism website.

Technicisation might facilitate translation: the interpretation of highly codified and monoreferential language is possibly easier as opposed to subjective and creative linguistic uses that are more prone to ambiguity. At the same time, it could result in the simplification of eco-cultural aspects, whose nuances are lost to the recipient. On the one hand, this is a byproduct of the quintessential rule of translation, namely, the lingering of information residue. On the other hand, it demonstrates that ecological approaches to translation must especially acknowledge such a risk (or inherent fallacy), for the natural is also cultural, and human/more-than-human engagements are site-specific, as shown for example by the subtle yet significant semantic differences between "area" and "territorio" discussed earlier.

## 5. Conclusion

The proliferation of research efforts exploiting the ecology metaphor has tended to divert attention from actual ecologies, i.e., the literal ecosystems supporting human and more-than-human lifeforms. While this is certainly the case, understanding reality in terms of ecologies has undeniable value insofar as it captures the pre-eminence of relations and processes over individuals and products.

This article aimed at re-claiming the literalness of the "eco" in eco-translation, and accordingly offered a case study on the translation of texts which explicitly discuss natural environments and their ecological importance. In doing so, it inevitably highlighted the complex interactions that such a task puts forward, starting from the inextricable link between biological and cultural formations.

RomaNatura's translated texts seem to be concerned with the accurate transfer of ecological knowledge from the Italian source, whose specificity and comprehensiveness appears to be largely preserved in the English website. This confirms Li and Ng's (2024) results with respect to Chinese national parks, and hence delineates a likely preference for the literal interpretation of source messages in the translation of texts in and about nature reserves. This practice

may be facilitated by the character of the source texts themselves, which are of a pronounced informative character and frequently resort to specialised jargon.

The overall persuasiveness of tourism discourse is thus attenuated, not so much by the particularity of the destination or “attraction” being advertised – local parks – but rather by that of the entity that manages them. Earlier studies on the language of nature-based or ecotourism refer to a romanticisation of the natural world that strips it of its materiality (Dann 1996). Instead, as an organisation devoted to the preservation of regional ecosystems, RomaNatura focusses first and foremost on educating about the biological differences that characterise the habitats and wildlife of its reserves. Stamou and Paraskevopoulos (2003) reach a similar conclusion when comparing texts displayed at the information centre of a forest reserve and those written by visitors at the observation site. They notice that the former are more focussed on conservation, while the latter address the recreation potential of the place, thus establishing a link between tourist space and text function. However, in a later study concerned with the representation of tourism in protected areas in travel magazines (Stamou and Paraskevopoulos 2006), they argue that this separation of aims is detrimental to ecotourism itself, since it fosters the idea that environmental education cannot be effectively paired with the kind of experiences sought after during travels.

Certainly, the analysis presented here only discusses a restricted number of examples. Furthermore, the study itself is small-scale and concerned with a single website, meaning that its results are limited to the scope of the dataset used and may not be generalised to all types of promotional materials advertising nature-based tourism around Rome. Greater insight could be gained by expanding the corpus to cover more sources or genres, and the investigation could be implemented by performing a broader and more systematic collocation analysis to extend knowledge about cross-cultural representations of biodiversity. Still, the study is valuable in that, to our knowledge, is the first of its kind to address the topic of nature-based tourism in Rome from a linguistic and translation perspective. Particularly, it can contribute to the timely debate on the challenge of determining what sustainable tourism means for cities (Day 2021).

Ultimately, the examination carried out in this article may point to a factual and measured tone in the Italian source text of the RomaNatura website, which refrains from particularising the ecosystems within and around Rome from the perspective of local communities. Not only could this result in promotional material that struggles to arouse interest in nature-based and ecotourism; furthermore, some favourable opportunities for communicating the eco-cultural values of these places might be lost. In developing his argument for eco-translation, Cronin (2017) indeed refers to “the place sensitivity of language and usage” and a “place-based [...] sense of identity” (*ibid.*: 16) to be aware of when translating. Following his recommendations, it could be maintained that, in addition to preserving ecological knowledge unaltered, translation should try to exploit and emphasise cultural differences in site-specific human/more-than-human engagements, and ultimately enhance the potential of the source text to contribute to the achievement of ecoliteracy. As a result, a further shift from an eco-translation into an eco-cultural translation may be achieved.

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