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Development of sustainable tourism in the vineyard landscape of Langhe- Roero and Monferrato (Piedmont, Italy) – governance, actors and networking

Case Study Analysis and Policy Recommendations

Abstract

The case study takes place in rural areas, the vineyard landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato. This area has a mobility challenge. Among other things, the area has a low-density settlement structure, lack of facilities and opportunities, high car necessity, and modal segment. In a dynamic society, people and companies have a strong focus on sustainability. "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987). This will affect sustainable tourism. According to the World Commission on the Environment and Development (1987), sustainable tourism is pragmatic in tourist expenses, where activities are developed for an indefinite time and which accomplish to maintain, without damaging the environment, the social and cultural pillars, and the economic development of the resident populations.

We carried out the assignment of the case study vineyard landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato. Listen to stakeholders, and through case analysis, we used tools such as stakeholder- and SWOT- analyses. In the end, we got our rational solutions to policy recommendations. We focused on the main challenge, to structure a local development association, what foundations will give an advantage, and who the vineyard landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato should involve to succeed.

Keywords: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, Italy, Tourism Destination, Spatial Planning, Policy Recommendations, Sustainability

Theoretical and methodological framework

Aim of the report

This paper aims to implement spatial tourism planning addressing sustainable development in Langhe-Roero and Monferrato (Piedmont, Italy). The research focused on government, actors, and networks, the results, challenges, solutions, analysis, and policy recommendations were adjusted to this point of view. The purpose of this paper is to implement spatial tourism planning addressing sustainable development in Langhe-Roero and Monferrato (Piedmont, Italy).

The research focused on government, actors, and networks, and the findings, challenges, solutions, analysis, and policy recommendations reflected this. The lack of interaction between the government's hierarchy level and no inter-municipality relations is the reason behind this proposal. This framework recommends Policies and actions, in order to deliver sustainable tourism in the mentioned study area.

Literature review

Governance is recognized as functions that formerly were carried out by public entities, dispersed among diverse sets of actors, with different skills and capacities. **Actors** may see and interpret the same institution in different ways, which may give rise to contention or conflict over those meanings, and lead to the incremental modification of those institutions over time (Jackson, 2010). The institutional context includes not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society entities, all with different purposes, becoming impossible to be commanded by a single authority. Proper applicability of Governance relies instead on the development and diffusion of various types of norms; both state regulation and self-regulation; market mechanisms; and other processes, such as negotiation, participation, and engagement, which facilitate collective decision-making and action. Practices including contracting and outsourcing; the emergence of new forms of collaboration including public-private partnerships and joint ventures; and the replacement of hierarchical, bureaucratic systems of control with more decentralized network forms of the organization should rise (Tierney, 2012).

New forms of collaboration may be described as **Network** cooperation, which refers to multiple actors' interactions, involving many actors in the same value chain position (Ritala et al., 2014), or the entire value network (Nalebuff & Brandenburger, 1997), aimed at generating superior collective value despite competing interests participants may have (Dagnino & Padula, 2002), leading to the sustainable development of the area where actors are inserted.

Municipalities in Italy constitute the basic unit for the political-administrative institution, which are the closest to the citizen level of government in Europe. A Municipality is typically a small unit, usually made up of 500 to 5,000 residents, and has little or nothing to do with the concept of town or city (Bennet, 1993) in which quaternary services of the knowledge economy tend to be concentrated (Rullani, 2004).

Municipalities, to understand the right path to follow for sustainable development, need to analyse the region's resources and define effective strategies and goals. To face the challenge of the high flow throughout entire territories, which creates the risk of being left behind compared with other municipalities, especially the smaller ones, or the opposite action, being overwhelmed by that same flow, they need to create a well-

connected net-working environmental, intervening in a functional way so as to manage the flow, repositioning themselves within the European and global framework.

Strategy is a continuous and adaptive response to external opportunities and threats as well as internal strengths and weaknesses that can affect the organization (Hax & Majluf, 1988). Meanwhile, according to Pearce et al. (2000) strategic management is defined as a set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve company goals. Could also be seen as a form or plan that integrates main goals, policies, and a series of actions in an organization into a unified whole (Rutherford et al, 1999). Meanwhile, according to Grant (2007), strategy is a way to respond to business opportunities and challenges. Strategic management is a comprehensive and ongoing management process aimed at formulating and implementing effective strategies. An effective strategy that encourages the creation of perfect harmony between the organization and its environment and with the achievement of its strategic objectives. One example is the case of Douro Valley in Portugal is now known as one of the more significant wine producers and with six million guests, 12 million overnight stays, and 700 million euros in income recorded in 2019, has defined a strategic Tourism Development Plan for the period 2007-2013 with the main goal of Making the Douro Valley a tourist destination of excellence through a dynamic process of sustainable development (The president of Turismo do Porto e Norte, Ambitur, 2021).

Methods

To be able to contribute with policy recommendations to this project, the assignment contains a research approach to generate an understanding of the phenomena in a complex concern in an everyday context (Crowe et al., 2011). The case study has a well-known exploration purpose that is expanded broadly in a wide range of regulations, particularly in the social disciplines. The methodology is a suitable instrument to use to figure out what is the problem, why, and how firms can develop in a dynamic society. The tourism in rural areas mobility challenges are wide-ranging and variable. Among other things, they have problems with low-density settlement structures, lack of services and opportunities, and high car dependence and modal share.

To isolate the rural area's mobility challenges, we began with stakeholder analysis. Consideration of collective meaning to individuals or groups, who can affect or be affected by an organization's intention, policies, and following actions. It is important for our team to have the ability to isolate and explain a diversity of interests and essentials to staff, clients, or investors as they can influence certain production experiences in the project. Further, we applied SWOT analysis, the teams' intentions were to identify the vineyard landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato's internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external elements (opportunities and threats). The internal factors are within the establishment's control, while the external factors are beyond their control. Begin by functioning the internal dynamics. By using these tools, the group can get the necessary information and knowledge about the vineyard landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato's challenges. The team can deliver a useful direction to classify values, pressures, opportunities, and threats conferring to the assigned subjects. Through the policy creation activity, maybe we will be providential, get the right strategy actors to read our convincing arguments, experience a eureka moment then get into the achievement for implementing our recommendations (Engbers & Rubin, 2018).

Case study analysis

Case study area

The vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato is in the northern part of Italy in the Piedmont region. It stands between Asti, Cuneo, and Alessandria provinces. To be able to understand spatial planning in Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato, different spatial planning systems in Italy should be taken into consideration. Taking spatial planning from regions to provinces and to municipalities there are different instruments to be used. At the regional level, there is Regional Territorial Plan (RTP), RTP is binding for sub-regional levels. Besides, the RTP municipalities are compelled to design Municipal General Regulatory Plans (PRGC). The presence of RTP and PRGCs provides the possibility of a multilevel perspective to approach tourism-related challenges. Except for RTP and PRGCs, there is the responsibility of Italian regions to design Regional Landscape Plans (RLP). As the vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato is on the UNESCO World Heritage List UNESCO management plan is another instrument of spatial planning (Assumma et al., 2022).

The vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato is a UNESCO-certified cultural landscape that consists of six core zones and two buffer zones (UNESCO, 2014). The cultural landscape was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014. The vineyard landscape stands between Asti, Cuneo, and Alessandria provinces in Northern Italy and consists of 100 municipalities and has a total population of 300,000 inhabitants (Assumma et al., 2022).

The vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato has centuries of traditional viticulture and wine production, because of this the entire land in the area is devoted to vineyards. Certified wines named 'Nebbiolo' and 'Barbera', which find demand all over the world, are produced by different companies under their own brand on the land designed with the terracing method in the region. German, Swiss and Austrian visitors, who came to the region with their own means starting from the 1970s/80s, started the tourism activity here, and the region is visited by tourists from different parts of the world today, thanks to its reputation as being on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Almost all of the regional economy revolves around income from tourism. The settlement in the region, which is a hilly area surrounded by vineyards, is scattered and sparse, and it is very sensitive to the tourism carrying capacity since the settlement areas are mostly agricultural land devoted to vineyards.

In developing regions, most, if not all, development of the tourism sector is a product of central planning. In the area of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato and with the inclusion in the UNESCO WHL list resulted in increasing tourism fluxes, which undoubtedly constitute an important economic asset for the area, but they also open up a set of challenges that need to be tackled carefully, in order to preserve the cultural, environmental and landscape quality of the area. The impact of private motorized means of transport on an area that is unique in the world and needs to be preserved and developed sustainably is indeed a challenge that needs to be weighed vis-à-vis tourists' mobility needs and the quality of their experience. At the same time, the attractiveness of the various places in the UNESCO area is differential, leading to an uneven concentration of tourists that favour selected locations – e.g., the municipalities of Barolo and Barbaresco, and the city of Alba. This generates infrastructure congestion problems, as well as an uneven distribution of the economic benefits of tourism, while also unevenly concentrating the negative impact of tourism pressure on the territory.

In order to face these and other challenges that the increasing tourism fluxes are bringing along with them, a number of planning and management instruments have been developed. Through time it has been possible to develop a number of synergies between them and to consolidate them within a more or less coherent, multilevel governance framework aimed at the sustainable spatial planning of the area.

The adoption of instruments (the RTP, but also other ad hoc introduced strategies) should attempt to manage the tourism pressures that are incrementally increasing in the area, in order to redistribute these pressures on the territory in a more homogeneous way. Interventions specifically dedicated to accessibility and mobility are needed. The latter should focus on the introduction of green mobility means in the area, for instance, electric buses and minibuses, feeders, the UNESCO heritage railway, etc. At the same time, it should reduce the concentration of mobility paths towards the main centres, to diffuse accessibility potentials on the territory in a way that all municipalities of the area may benefit more homogeneously. The challenges related to the increasing impact of climate change also need strategies to favour the relocation of vineyards to higher territories, in order to preserve the quality of the products while at the same time avoiding impact on the landscape and environmental system of the area (Assumma et al., 2022).

Stakeholder analysis

As the topic of the study deals with governance, actors, and networking, stakeholder analysis becomes a crucial part of the findings to find out the challenges. A meeting took place in Barolo city, with several involved stakeholders, including the mayor, UNESCO and tourism office representatives, and a landowner. The final outcome of this meeting and literature review will be the conducted stakeholder analysis. In the light of the observation on-site and literature review, the stakeholders' analysis is presented at Figure 1.

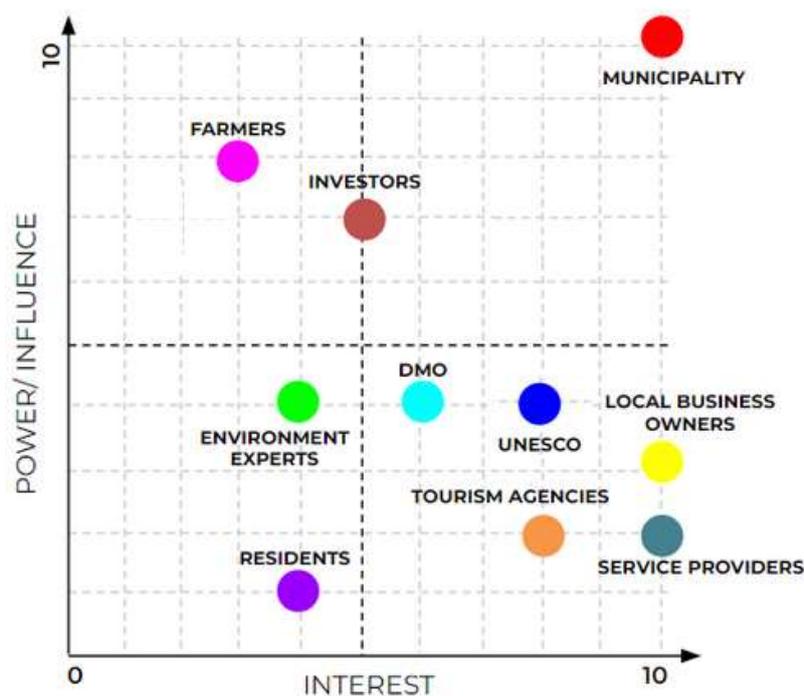


Figure 1: The map of the stakeholders influence and interest.

Source: own elaboration.

Findings of stakeholder analysis demonstrate that municipalities in the vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato hold the most power in the context of sustainable spatial planning as they hold the regulatory and legislative instruments. In line with this, the municipalities in the region receive funds from national and international organizations because the vineyard landscape is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. As tourism is a strong form of revenue they have the highest interest level as well. Farmers hold a higher level of power than the municipalities as they hold the land and means of production. In addition to that, they generate revenue and have the main tourism product of the region. The farmers have one of the lowest levels of interest in spatial sustainability for they have no trust in governmental bodies and they have a business-centred perspective on sustainability.

The investors also hold a high level of power, and just like the farmers, they also hold financial instruments which give them the power to influence decision-making processes. They have a medium interest level in sustainability because, on the one hand, their profit rates depend on it, and on the other hand, they have the flexibility to move their investments elsewhere.

UNESCO as a stakeholder, has a high level of interest in keeping the vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato a certified cultural landscape, and does not have much decision power compared with the other stakeholder.

The Destination Management Organization (DMO) has a medium level of power because it is one of the interventions in inter-municipality relations, however it is not the one in higher decision making position. Regarding the level of interest, it has the third highest, as it consists of different stakeholders and players who will benefit from sustainable development. Local business owners, service providers, and tourism agencies have the highest level of interest among the stakeholders, due to the fact that the profitability of their business depends on tourism demand and wine production. All of them have a very low level of power because they are in the buffer zone. Environmental Experts have the same very low level of interest and power, as it is a body of policy recommendations, but has no power of execution. Finally, Residents as a stakeholder have the lowest level of power, because they constitute a minority in the game.

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a technique for identifying and analyzing internal and external strengths and weaknesses, while also considering opportunities and threats, that form both present and future processes and aid in the development of strategic goals, which lead to a sustainable business.

The vineyard landscape of Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato has well-experienced various wine and truffle producers which is a result of the traditional vineyard culture of centuries, this is one of the strengths of the destination. The area holds a very rich cultural and natural heritage and splendid landscape that attracts tourists and enables public and private entities to generate revenue to implement sustainable practices. The number of municipalities in the region and the Municipal General Regulatory Plans (PRGC) they have are crucial strengths. This provides the possibility of guiding lines toward dealing with challenges related to tourism. Another strength of the destination is the desire to develop business in vineyard and tourism, this not only promotes cooperation between different actors but also helps them to create networks.

Being a UNESCO-certified cultural landscape is at the forefront of the opportunities. Other opportunities for the area are receiving international funds, the presence of a destination management organization, new tourist products potentiality, potential events, and the competitiveness between players. Considering the weaknesses of the area, the lack of network relations on different layers is a big challenge that is to be

managed. The lack of combined tourism products as a weakness demonstrates the weak cooperation between different stakeholders. While different mindsets on the matter of sustainability issues between actors constitute one of the major weaknesses this can be the result of another weakness which is a loss of trust in governmental bodies. Seasonality narrowly targeted the tourism market and lack of marketing and promotion strategies are related weaknesses.

Having only one product for economic development, tourism marketing, and agriculture leaves the area vulnerable to external wine markets and wine tourism destinations. Another threat that the area may possibly face is the lack of marketing diversification to resist external crises such as wars, pandemics, inflations, and drought. A slow decision-making process which is mostly about bureaucracy does create a threat towards acting quickly on emergencies.

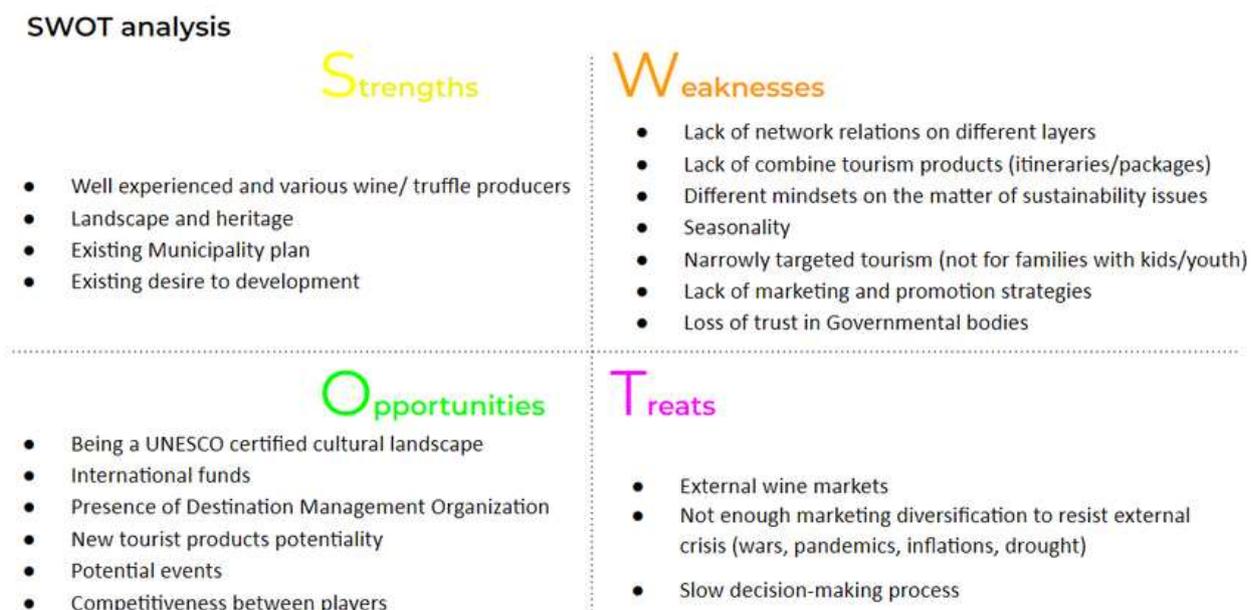


Figure 2: SWOT analysis.

Source: own elaboration.

Policy recommendations

Based on prior decades' experience, it is now critical to consider how new governance models may emerge. In order to anticipate and prepare for various governmental futures and citizens' needs, it is necessary to establish a plan. *The Future of Government 2030+* (Alujevic et al., 2019) possibilities have revealed patterns. The following proposal will provide policy recommendations focused on governance, actors, and network issues, in order to develop better practices for the region of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, which should lead to an action plan for the next 5 years.

During the stakeholder study, it was identified that there is a lack of communication and insufficient inter-municipality relations across the three key areas of interest. The main solution that has been considered to mitigate these issues, is to create a local development organization that focuses on the UNESCO World Heritage Site and its core and buffer zones of Langue, Roero, and Monferrato.

This association is in charge of organizing a collaborative work structure among all sorts of stakeholders and raising awareness about sustainable development. This statement is expressly emphasized in the most recent Regional Innovation Report, the necessity of a board approach in Piemonte, and it has been accepted by regional development policy committees.

This local development association (LDA) will work with the mentioned stakeholders to establish a strategic development plan for the towns indicated, combining strategies with Pro-Loco, a local tourism association that exists. The members of this association will have different fields of expertise, being a sustainable enterprise organism. In order to create a touristic destination brand for the region, to be promoted worldwide. Another action will be the formation of local players, such as workshops and technique courses.

The action plan of LDA will be defined by marketing and promotion strategies, resulting in packaging designs and itineraries; also, stakeholders' formations; consultant offices; and collaboration with locals. These actions will be obtained by identifying various capital sectors to facilitate plans and mitigate inter-municipality challenges. The income will be primarily provided by the regional sector- Piemonte, which can be obtained from several governmental associations such as the European Union funds and programs.

Another issue in the area is the absence of trust between local players and municipality officials. According to the Future of Government 2030+ study, the government needs to increase efficiency, coherence, and trustworthiness, which will be achieved by the following actions: creating a network website with a forum, with relevant and updated information, organizing systematic Q&A meetings, involving both sides, government and other players in active networking. All effective economic models must address society's demands. It is critical to carry out this activity and develop the link between responsible authorities and local players, in order to achieve a sustainable future government (Alujevic et al., 2019). Based on the most recent circular economy report, communication is now an increasingly essential target of demands between stakeholders and responsible authorities (*Circularity Gap Report*, 2021). To reduce the distance between the interested parties, both commercial and governmental sectors, need to become more cohesive, being one of the primary actions to be implemented by the local development association.

One of the challenges that both the government and actors face is a lack of marketing strategies and advertising. The solution to consider is to work with an external consultant company, to offer marketing services to the stakeholders, exchanging agreements with tour operators, and tourism entities, and create tourism products and packages (accommodation, transportation, activities, and catering). Advertising and marketing campaigns should also be considered, being financed by the municipalities and various external stakeholders. These actions would enhance the tourist economy and boost the income of the region of interest. Also, another source of income that should be taken into consideration is an establishment of a percentage of the city tax going to the region's development. Region development and an increasing tourism flow will be considered as expected results.

Should exist a close relationship between actors in the governance hierarchy, I distinguished as actor-actor and municipality-actor. If the relationship between these actions breaks, the hierarchy will lose its capacity to meet its goals. To improve this relationship and increase the correlation between stakeholders, members must be involved, and contact among stakeholders must be strengthened. organization of regular meetings, involving different stakeholders depending on the issue, and different workshops for increasing awareness can be action taken by the association.

Summary

The Langhe-Roero and Monferrato area suffers from the lack of interaction between actors in Institutional context and it is crucial to create strategies to mitigate the problem. The proposal provides policy recommendations focused on governance, actors, and network issues, in order to develop better practices for the region of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, which should lead to an action plan for the next 5 years. The main solution that has been considered to mitigate these issues, is to create a local development organization, which will be in charge of organizing a collaborative work structure among all sorts of stakeholders and raising awareness about sustainable development, involving a set of members from different fields of expertise, to create a touristic destination brand for the region, to give formation of local players, and to create a marketing strategic program. This focal ideal aims to increase and strengthen the correlation between stakeholders to achieve sustainable development in the area.

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