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The educational potential in tourism: The case of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, Italy

Case Study Analysis and Policy Recommendations

Abstract

The Langhe-Roero and Monferrato region, located in Italy, is a place basing on the wine as a main tourist attraction, however it is going to reach its maximum capacity. Due to the established UNESCO site and a beautiful landscape, which should not be degraded, its infrastructure cannot be rebuilt. After visiting the area referred above and having the conference with the stakeholders from the region we were able to come up with ideas and suggestions. That is why we emphasize in our report that an educational value can be used to increase the capacity of tourist destinations. The main aim is to rechange the tourism into educational tourism basing more on the experiencing than only visiting touristic areas. Meeting this goal can be beneficial for many stakeholders and the region itself.

Keywords: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, Italy, Tourism Destination, Educational Tourism, Sustainability

Theoretical and methodological framework

Aim of the report

The Langhe-Roero and Monferrato region is known for its best quality wines and the exclusive type of grapes that can be only grown in the region due to the different soil conditions existing in the area. In this report we aim to identify and nurture the existing knowledge potential the site can offer in order to educate both the tourists and the local community in the region. This is primarily done in the project through inculcating the education institution and the museum in the area of study.

Literature review

According to Ritchie (2003) the definition of educational tourism is "Tourist activity undertaken by those who are undertaking an overnight vacation and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom education and learning is a primary (education first segment) or secondary (tourism first segment) part of their trip". Experiential learning is an essential part of the experience of tourism, and consequently is particularly significant when it comes to educational tourism, where the learning component is core. Experiential learning in the tourism context has been studied by several scholars. Travel necessarily involves experiential learning (Liang, 2015).

In recent decades, universities have paid increasing attention to their engagement with civic society, collaborating in place-based projects with local stakeholders to enhance sustainable local economic development (Tomasi, 2020). It has studied (Pitman et al., 2011) the role of higher education institutions in educational tourism, recognizing that "educational tours are an interesting site of study, first, because they are explicitly about learning, and second, because they provide an opportunity for universities to reach beyond their walls and directly teach members of the broader community".

To be sustainable, the development of educational tourism practices in a destination, where the university always plays a coordinating role, should be the result of the combination of the 3E principles (Sharma, 2015):

- Environmental factors: provide tourists with knowledge-based information and educate them to respect the local environment. Sustainable actions promote the preservation of biodiversity and enhance attention to the cultural heritage;
- Engagement: active participation of tourists is central to making them feel fully immersed in the context and to cultivating their special interests;
- Exploration: help tourists authentically experience the place by contributing to in-situ learning-by-doing practice.

In the context of hosting educational tourism, universities can also achieve their civic purposes. For example, they could run place-based research and extend teaching to address the challenges faced by local society, also with the aim to valorise the place. The holistic approach and sense of place could lead them to create new connections with other universities and local stakeholders, involving students in local activities. This could be done through specific projects and by using new methodologies and approaches (Goddard & Kempton, 2016).

Methods

Conducted research based on the strong data background. First of all it assumed theoretical information provided on the macro and micro level. The general knowledge comes from the document prepared by the Politecnico di Torino, while the detailed knowledge was gathered on the set of lectures and workshops dedicated to the case area, theoretical spatial planning knowledge and tools useful to solve the problem.

However the theory was completed by empirical knowledge. The external output comes from the meeting with stakeholders and local authorities, which gave detailed information about local residents and their needs as well as their attitude. While the internal empirical knowledge was the result of the study visit on the research field. This kind of information was crucial for solving the affected problem.

To organize the gathered material there were used two spatial planning tools. The first one - stakeholder analysis – through which we recognized which socio-political actors are the most important for the final solution. Meanwhile, the SWOT analysis allowed to categorize the strong and weak features of the region, as well as the external factors being a danger or causative factor for the chosen policy.

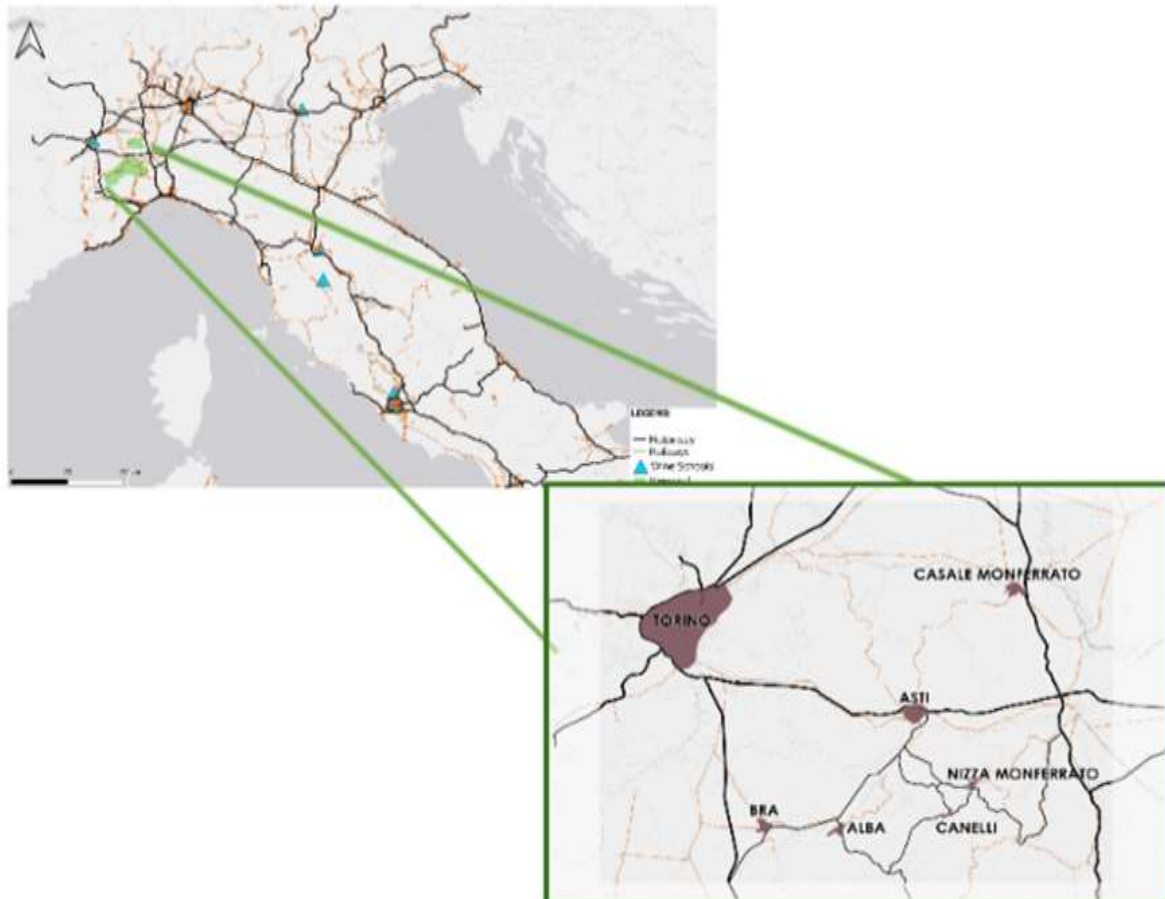## Case study analysis

Case study area

Figure 1: Case study area.

Source: own elaboration.

Langhe, Roero and Monferrato are located in lower Piedmont, in an area between the River Po and the Ligurian Apennines, divided between the provinces of Alessandria, Asti and Cuneo. Piedmont's wine-growing landscapes of Langhe, Roero and Monferrato became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. The classified area includes several municipalities and 6 areas in particular: the Langa del Barolo the hills of Barbaresco, Nizza Monferrato and the Barbera, Canelli and Asti Spumante, the Monferrato of the Infernot and the Castle of Grinzane Cavour.

Figure 2: Vineyard location.

Source: own elaboration.

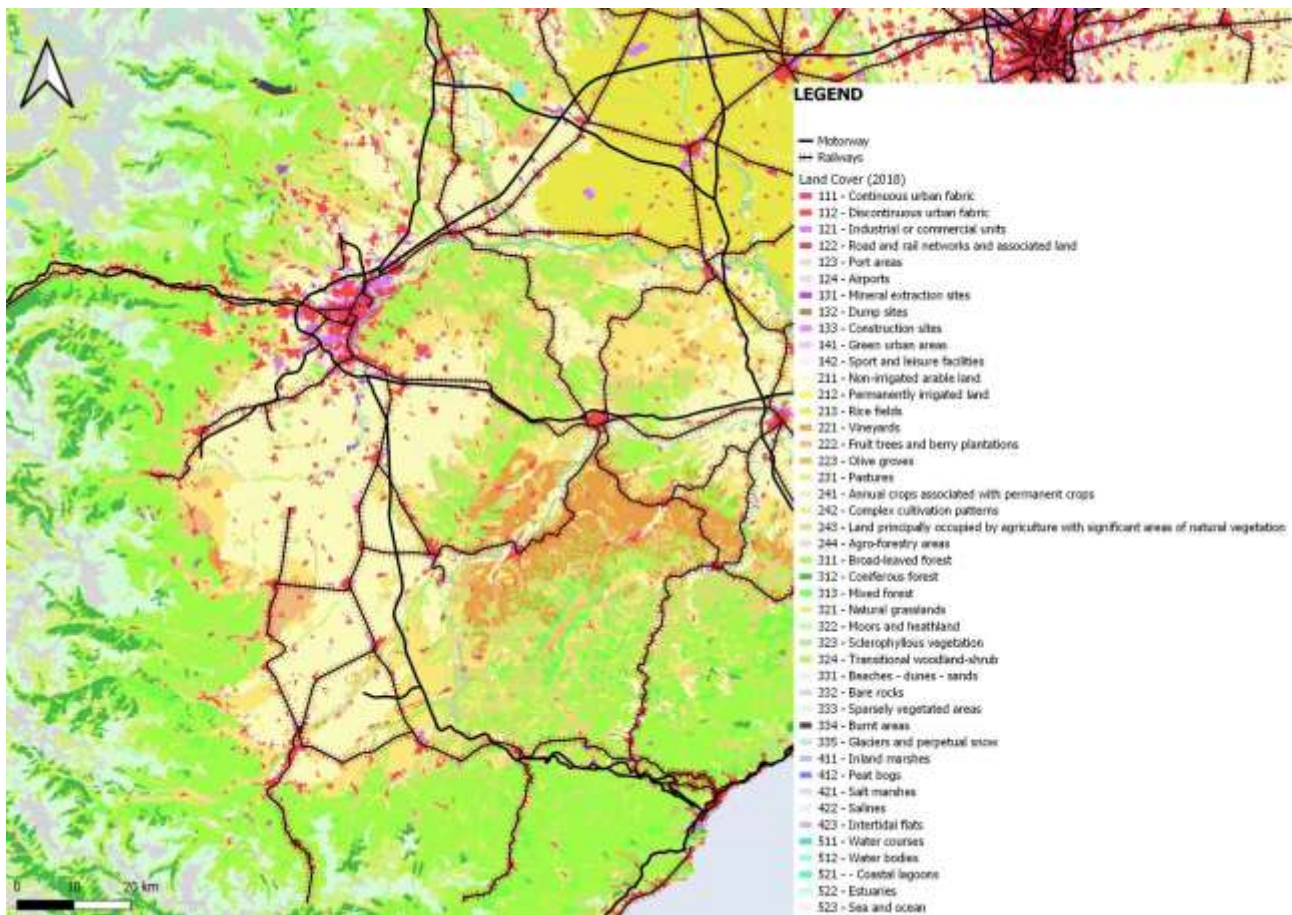Figure 3: Vineyard.

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 4: Land cover.

Source: https://land.copernicus.eu/pan-european/corine-land-cover.

Meeting stakeholders

The discussion with stakeholders were organized by the faculty of Politecnico di Torino, few stakeholders of the area were present to share their thoughts and perspectives about the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato region and also regarding their future perspectives on the planning and tourism development.

The Tourist Development Head of the region discussed about the difficulties in tackling the sustainable tourism in the current scenario. They also discussed about the lack of synergy between the existing individual plans, which need to be completed as a system. The far eye vision is lacking and there is a need to explicitly link the activities and make it exclusive to the tourists.

The Mayor of Seralunga gave us information on the type of crowd or touristic flows they experience during each season of the year. He also mentioned that 20 percent of the workers in the vineyard are migrant workers. The architect of the region discussed the reasons why the area is nominated as an UNESCO site, how the UNESCO is more interested in the relationship between preserving nature and the man made activities in the area rather than tourism of the area. Also she mentioned about understanding the tourist carrying capacity of the area to be unclear. The local wine producer in the area discussed the importance of new technological advancement in the field of winery. Through the use of Bio-dynamic agriculture there

exists lots of advantages for preserving and improving the existing ecological conditions. This could be an interesting educational resource for the community.

Figure 5: Meeting with stakeholders.

Source: https://spot-erasmus.eu/2022/09/langhe-roero-and-monferrato-for-sustainable-tourism-locals-talking/.

The discussion with the stakeholders revealed that the main problem the region deals with is the lack of tourists who stays back longer period in the area. The area has a lot of interesting and exclusive factors that they would like to portray to the public but they lack the policies and actions to do so. They want equal touristic flows during all the seasons over the years and also they want to make use of the already existing educational institution to become a factor to attract tourism.

Stakeholder analysis

We have used stakeholder analysis, which is the tool dedicated to investigate the role of some socio-political actors in enforcing our project. Two factors - power and interest - were graded on the scale from 1 to 10. The justifications to grade the power were financially possible and possibilities for enforcement of a new law or provision of any support for the final policy recommendation, while the justifications for interest rate were the social requirement of the change and utility of the solution for a group of stakeholders. The following stakeholders has been identified – see Table 1. To organize their role for the project, stakeholders were divided into four groups basing on the values of both factors – see Figure 6.

Table 1: The power and interest of the stakeholders.

No.	Name of Stakeholder	Power (1-10)	Interest (1-10)
1	Tourists	2	8
2	Municipality	9	8
3	Local residents	5	6

No.	Name of Stakeholder	Power (1-10)	Interest (1-10)
4	Ministry of Tourism	7	8
5	Ministry of Education	6	7
6	NGOs	4	7
7	Transportation companies	4	2
8	Local businesses	4	9
9	Land owners	7	8
10	National government	9	3
11	UNESCO	8	7
12	Vinery owners	4	9
13	University of Gastronomic Science	6	9
14	Marketing sector	2	7
15	Museum authorities	5	8

Source: own elaboration.

Key players who are stakeholders that are featured through high interests as well as the high power. They are the most important partners in the project. In the research zone key players are followed by the Municipality, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Education, Land owners, UNESCO structures and University of Gastronomic Science. The political institutions were chosen because of their high influence on the spatial policy shaping. The University has the best knowledge about educational possibilities of the region, as well as being a valuable partner in organizing information. Whereas the Land owners are decisive people in organizing the space for it. In the meantime all of these stakeholders would be interested in our project because increasing the sustainability of local tourism means higher income or better prevention of the landscape.

Stakeholders **Keep satisfied** with high power, however with low interest. In the researched area this kind of role have: National Government and Winery owners. Winery owners are not interested in the project, because they are divided and gain the profits for the current situation, however they are an important part of the project because of knowledge which they can share.

Keep informed who are stakeholders with low power, but with high interest. In the researched area this kind of role have: Tourists, Local Residents, Non-governmental organizations and Local businesses. All stakeholders listed in that group would benefit from the new solution, however they have not enough power to enforce any change alone.

Monitor who are stakeholders with low both factor power and interest. In the researched area this kind of role has transportation companies, since mobility is important for the project, however companies have limited money, as well as new or longer routes can get operating costs higher.
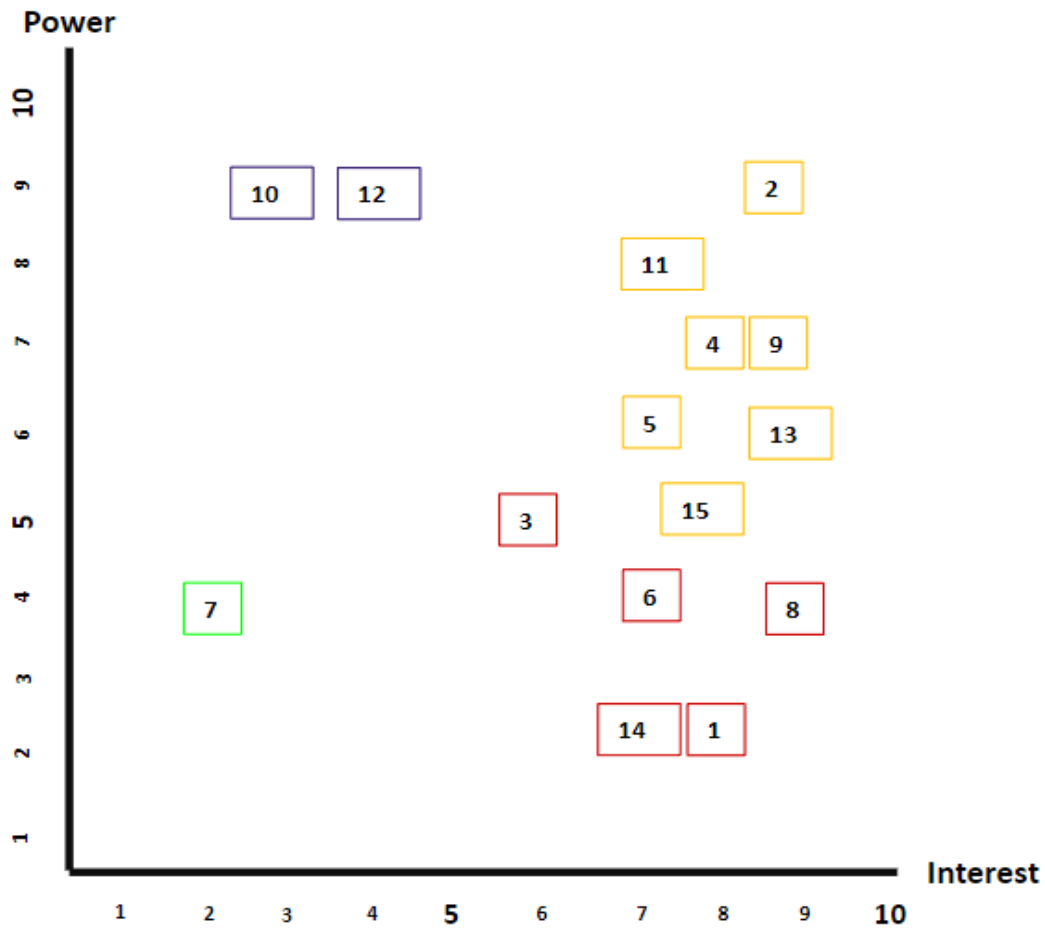

Figure 6: Stakeholder analysis.

Source: own elaboration. Abbreviations: 1 Tourists, 2 Municipality, 3 Local residents, 4 Ministry of Tourism, 5 Ministry of Education, 6 NGOs, 7 Transportation companies, 8 Local businesses, 9 Land owners, 10 National government, 11 UNESCO, 12 Vinery owners, 13 University of Gastronomic Science, 14 Marketing sector, 15 Museum authorities.

SWOT analysis

The region has a huge potential, but at the same time many weaknesses. By implementation of educational tourism the weakness could be eliminated and in connection with strengths and opportunities of the region the threats could be limited in future.

Essential advantage of the research field is the existing University of Gastronomic Science, as well as existing good quality wines and established brands of wine. While the wine brand can be a good marketing item encouraging people to come to the region, the University is the agent having the best infrastructure to provide interesting and complex education not only about wine and its producing method, but also about

cuisine culture of the region. However the region also has many educational potentials, on the one hand the diversity of soil and land can be a geological attraction, on the other hand due to historical, cultural and architectural uniqueness the Piedmont land is also one of the most important for Italian culture. There are a few disadvantages which diminish the potential of the region. The most serious weaknesses are the lack of transportation connectivity inside the area and incongruence of some policy actors groups. The problems are also the limited capacity of the touristic infrastructure connected with poor marketing and information about existing places worth seeing and their meaning. Both groups of issues cause the region to be very hard in shaping the expected touristic flow.

STRENGTHS

- Existing university of gastronomic science;
- Existing good quality of wine an established brand;
- Historical, cultural, architectural uniqueness;
- Existing unique species of mushroom (white truffles).
- Diversity and quality of the territorie's land (ex: geological interest);

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of connectivity inside of the area (transportation);
- Absence of promotion of tourism (as well as marketing);
- Deficit on the capacity of touristic infrastructures.
- Lack of communication between villages;

OPPORTUNITIES

- Existing railway line connecting the villages;
- Marketing companies to improve the visibility of advertising;
- University students and teachers in the region;
- Increasing "Experience Tourism", looking for an authentic experience in their travel destination,
- Existing UNESCO site;
- Workshop activities;

THREATS

- Energy price inflation (resulting in other products price inflation);
- Climate change;
- Poor mobility system;
- Landslide (due to terrace farming);
- Lack of instruments and regulations (specially dedicated to the development, management and regulation of tourism).
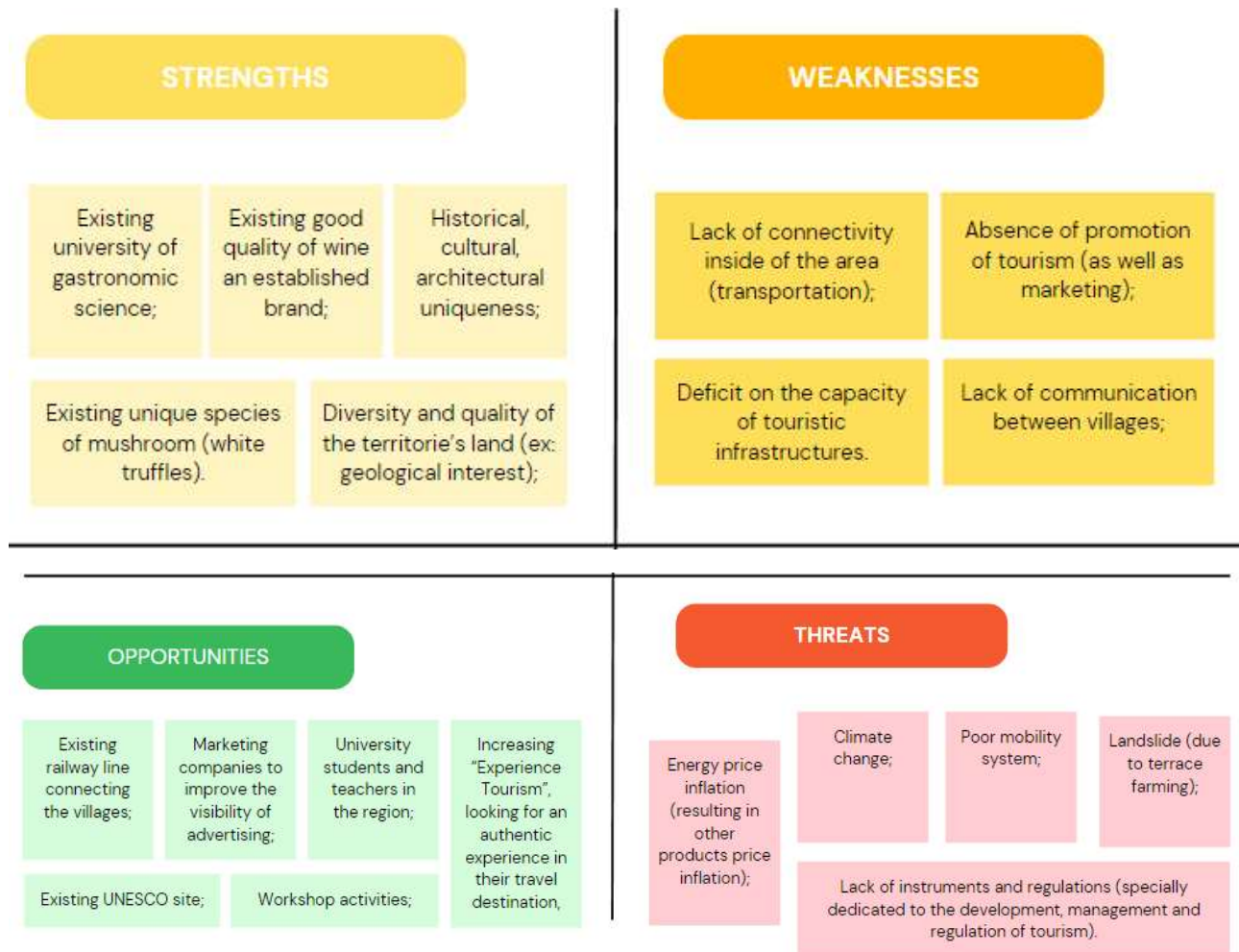
Figure 7: SWOT analysis.

Source: own elaboration.

The external factors influencing the touristic potential of the region is mainly the change in the global tourism trend giving the opportunity to change the tourism more into experiencing the authentic local culture, which helps to enhance the sharing of knowledge and culture. The additional advantages are the possibility of organizing educational workshops and involving scientific staff from the University into the project. The existing railway connection can be used as a shuttle transportation system, which delivers people into places full of attractions, solving the transportation problem in the region. The wine brands can be used to create a

marketing campaign, which will spread tourists among other smaller destinations. Existing UNESCO site can help in promotion of the region.

Policy recommendations

The project will be implemented on a few different scales. Some of the actions should be done by local institutions, like municipalities or NGOs. However the main action should be supervised by the national institutions (Government Ministries) or even the supranational scale (UNESCO).

Table 2: Policy recommendations.

POLICIES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	EXPLAINATION	STAKEHOLDERS
1) PROMOTING A SYNERGY BETWEEN THE EXISTING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE LOCAL COMMUTINITY	1.1) CREATING MUTUALLY DEPENDENT PROGRAMS.	1.1.1) Selecting a best practice guide for the tourists who visit, by the university and the local authorities		S13 S8 S4 S1
		1.1.2) Providing a space for the local farmers to interact with the tourists on the need for sustainable agriculture methods.		S2 S4 S8 S3 S9 S12
		1.1.3) a wine tasting program to help the educate the tourists on different qualities of wine.	picking the right grapes,explanation about the cycle and maintain the vineyard after produced the fruits.	S12 S1 S13
		1.1.4) Training the students to take up part time as tour guides and spread knowledge on the are to the tourist.		S13 S6 S4 S5
		1.1.5) Demonstrations by the TaTuTa project to both the locals and the tourists.		S4 S10 S5 S8 S12
	1.2) INCREASE COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL MUNICIPAL UNITS	1.2.1) Establish union body to facilited the interaction between the municipal units.		S2 S8 S10
		1.2.2) Providing funds from regional level to organize events.		S2 S4 S10
		1.2.3) Inviting professionals and experts to support the union body.		S6 S4 S3 S7 S13

POLICIES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	EXPLAINATION	STAKEHOLDERS
1) PROMOTING A SYNERGY BETWEEN THE EXISTING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE LOCAL COMMUTINITY	1.3) CREATING PHYSICAL SPACE TO PROMOTE THE CULTURE	1.3.1) Adaptive re-use of abonded hictorical buildings to convert it into a cultural centre.	The tourist can taste the traditional food and beverage made from grapes	S2 S4 S9 S10 S11
		1.3.2) Creating farmers market to sell organically produced items	The tourist can see many other kinds of products produced along with grapes	S2 S8 S4 S1 S12
2) INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN METHODS TO EDUCATE TOURISTS	2.1) THE USE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICES IN THE PROCESS OF PROMOTING EDUCATION TO THE TOURIST	2.1.1) Identifying the spots where the number of tourists will be high		S2 S7 S4
		2.1.2)Establishing 'Digital interactive Board' to educate the tourists about the exclusiveness of the area	It comes with all the guides and pamphlets of the vineyards and the special and exclusive areas to visit and try including the entry tickets and stay at the places	S2 S4 S9 S3 S1 S11
		2.1.3)Introducing smart box for the tourists.		S2 S1 S4 S7 S5
	2.2)ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL PRODUCTS AND BRANDS THROUGH BRAND POSITIONING TO FIT THE NATIONAL SYSTEM.	2.2.1) introducing QRcodes on the already establishes wine brand companies which educate the people on		S14 S4 S5 S1

POLICIES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	EXPLAINATION	STAKEHOLDERS
3)Enhancing the role of museums as center of knowledge and education.	3.1)Maximising the potential of the existing museum for educating tourists.	3.1.1)Efficient use of museum resources for stable and balanced tourism development.		S15 S1 S2 S4 S5
		3.1.2)Upgrading the museum knowledge and collections for visitors of different ages and social groups.		S4 S1 S15
		3.1.3)Working with visitors to provide oppotunities for creating involvment and knowledge and inter-cul-		S1 S5 S4 S15
	3.2)Analysis of the status of museum education and cultural tourism in other wine producing countries	3.2.1)Keeping in contact with similar museum and conducting a unanimouse museum event .		S4 S5 S15
		3.2.2)Including the evolution and transition of wine cultivation and methods over time to the existing agenda of the museum.		S15 S1 S12 S2

Source: own elaboration.

The key role should have Ministries, because they the highest privileges to organize the cooperation of the institutions lower in the hierarchy structure. The main group of benefactors would be tourists because of the increase of the variety of touristic infrastructure. The local residents, like vineyard owners, would also gain on this initiative, because the transfer of knowledge would be intergenerational. The main kind of required resources are knowledge and financial resources. They have a crucial role in implementing our strategy. The other important resources are working power as well as material resources like wine, kiosks and surface to hold the events.

The main sponsor would be the Government, because it has the biggest resources and from institutions it will have the biggest profit. The rest of resources would become from a bottom-up initiative, for example from the NGOs or private owners. Some actions should be started now to prepare the ground for more demanding once. The prepared for use division for short term, medium term and long term actions allow to organize them due to the time needed to gain the outcomes.