THE TOURISTISATION AND COMPROMISE OF ITALY'S UNESCO RURAL LANDSCAPES

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Abstract

Overtourism and the agricultural landscape form a combination around which one of the debates for the long-term future of Italian cultural landscapes unfolds. Amidst exogenous and endogenous pressures, this phenomenon risks altering the essence of places and compromising their social structure, which is vital for their continuity. With both positive and negative aspects, including the acknowledgment of past and ongoing political-administrative and managerial responsibilities, the article aims to pose relevant questions in order to provide practical suggestions. A paragraph also explores considerations regarding the ongoing changes in the perception and aesthetics of these landscapes, as well as the layout of the agricultural mosaic.

Keywords: overtourism, Italian rural landscapes, UNESCO cultural landscapes, local communities, integrated management plan.

1. Introduction

The discussion surrounding the connection between changes in the Italian agricultural landscape, particularly the culturally recognised landscape by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and tourist exploitation is a difficult, controversial, and long-standing issue (Terkenli et al., 2019; Panzera et al., 2021; Boháč & Drápela, 2022).

The "List of Factors Influencing the Properties", compiled by UNESCO (2008), recognises tourism as one of the secondary factors that compromise the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties, both in tangible and intangible terms. In terms of tangible factors, tourism impacts the "Buildings and Development" aspect due to "Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure" (ibid.). Regarding intangible factors, it affects the "Social/cultural uses of heritage" through "inappropriate/non-existent interpretation", "High levels of visitation", and "Increase of vendors inside/outside the site" (ibid.).

According to the State of Conservation (SoC) Information System and its reports produced by the States Parties as of June 28, 2023, 6 world cultural landscapes suffer from "Major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure", with half of them located in Europe (3 out of 6, i.e., 50%) (UNESCO, n.d.). Similarly, 13 international cultural landscapes are affected by the "impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation", with most of them being located in the European Union (5 out of 13, i.e., 38%) (ibid.).

Similarly, the Reflection Period (2015-2017) after the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting identified the "Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation" among the main threats in the Mediterranean Europe sub-region in which Italy is part of, with an impact of "23%" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 21). The same report concludes that the impacts of tourism can be considered as positive as well as negative factor, in the same sub-region (ibid., p. 48).

Therefore, the compromise of the agricultural landscape resulting from these issues seems to be one of the many facets of mature capitalism, neoliberalism (Estevens et al., 2023): when uniqueness becomes a business and a form of "neo-extractivism" in a broad sense (Chagnon et al., 2022; León-León & Rendón, 2022).

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2. Mass tourism as a driving factor of change

To this day, many individuals are attributing uncontrolled mass tourism as the genuine adversary of Italian cities and productive cultural landscapes (Figure 1). Tourism now appears to be one of the significant culprits contributing to the extensive destruction of the environment, encompassing its various dimensions.
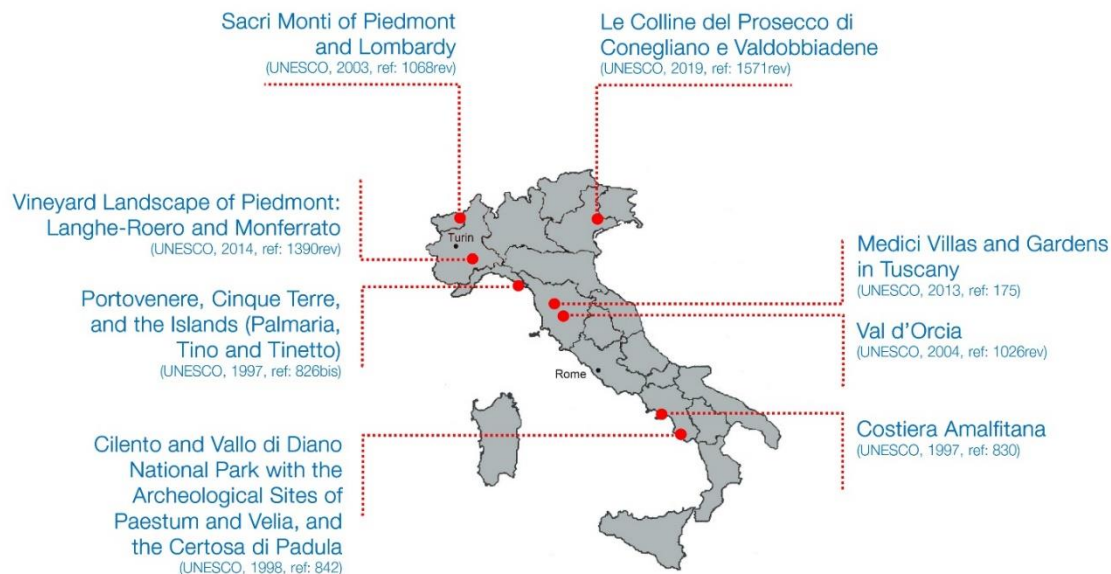

Figure 1. The 8 UNESCO cultural landscapes in Italy, as of June 29, 2023.
Source: UNESCO, n.d. Author's elaboration.

Mass tourism, characterised by significant economic resources, is often accused of transforming places into a kind of "amusement park" for foreigners. This mechanism is observed at different scales, both in the historic centres of many European art cities (García-Hernández et al., 2017; Porfido et al., 2023; Milano et al., 2023), and on a larger scale, involving an entire regional area (Jansen-Verbeke, 2009). Among the latter, one can find the rural landscapes of Tuscany, particularly the Val d'Orcia, which are highly sought after by tourists and consequently subject to significant external pressure on the system (UNESCO, 2004).

Opposing these trends is another type of mass tourism characterised by limited economic resources and a limited cultural demand, which seeks 'Instagrammable' moments. This form of tourism seeks quick and superficial experiences, with little interest in in-depth information. For them, so-called rural packaging is offered, consisting of opportunities linked to postcard-perfect photos and simulated immersive activities. Among these activities is the continuous branding of various nature-related experiences, such as 'forest bathing' and 'glamping' (a combination of glamour and camping). These activities represent concrete steps towards commodifying something that should not be a commodity. Additionally, there are short and easily accessible educational activities that allow the certification and sale of these new products to a wide audience of consumers.

This split between two strands of tourist demands and offerings is governed by the market. Italy and its regions, which have relied on tourism for decades, are now facing a changing tourism landscape and evolving tourists. The resulting demands create pressures that require constant adjustments and changes in the management of these landscapes, sometimes at the expense of tradition.

The result is a changed landscape, standardised, commercialised, and sometimes even distorted, including in the gastronomic offerings catering to tourists. It is characterised by events such as 'white dinners' in vineyards at 6:30 pm or experiential perspectives, exemplified by the recurring presence

of Big Benches in the municipalities of the UNESCO site "The Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato" (Big Bench Community Project, n.d.). Under such pressures, this landscape undergoes transformation, running the risk of becoming a mere stage (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Notable architectural contributions in the form of authorial churches in the UNESCO cultural landscape "Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato". On the left, the "Cappella delle Brunate" in La Morra, by Sol LeWitt and David Tremlett. On the right, the chapel of the "Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel" in Coazzolo, by David Tremlett.
Source: the author.

3. Communities and systemic pressures

According to estimates produced by The World Bank and the modelled International Labour Organization, the employment in agriculture (% of total employment) in Italy has decreased from approximately 8.5% in 1991 to just over 4% in 2021 (The World Bank, 2023a). Similarly, the rural population (% of total population) in Italy has declined from over 33% in 1991 to nearly 28% in 2022 (The World Bank, 2023b). Based on these figures, it appears that those engaged in subsistence farming or family-run agricultural activities constitute an increasingly smaller minority.

These recognised sustainable practices seem to contribute to the preservation of places "as they once were", although such a statement invokes concepts that are challenging to interpret, such as "authenticity" and "integrity" (UNESCO, 2021, articles 79-95; Jokilehto, 2006). In particular, the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention state that "... properties may be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values (as recognised in the nomination criteria proposed) are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including: ... spirit and feeling" (UNESCO, 2021, article 82). They further state that attributes such as spirit and feeling "... are important indicators of character and sense of place, for example, in communities maintaining tradition and cultural continuity" (ibid., article 83). Integrity, on the other hand, emphasises that "Relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscapes ... essential to their distinctive character should also be maintained" (ibid., article 89). Therefore, what kind of balance between the territory and human activities are we heading towards?

The demographic decline in rural areas of Italy is accompanied by a loss of local specialisations and their skilled artisans, including traditional craftsmanship. This leads to a weakening of the connection between the local population and their historical and cultural roots, in a longstanding process that has been ongoing for decades and is not solely related to tourism.

The detachment from one's roots, which leads to a loss over generations, opens up multiple possibilities for a nostalgic and backward-looking reinterpretation of what can be defined as "traditional" (Hugo, 2020). Often, this transformation becomes a staged performance for the benefit of tourists (Figueiredo & Raschi, 2011).

The artificiality of the concepts of authenticity and integrity further undermines the social component of the landscape. The tourist attraction in rural areas of excellence (e.g., those protected by UNESCO) and the foreign demand for ownership of material assets in these areas also prevent local people from

accessing such assets due to the significant increase in costs, such as the purchase of residential properties. Local farmers are forced to resort to financial instruments such as loans in order to invest in an area where costs have risen, thereby facing a trend that makes it impossible for them to further invest in local businesses. Additionally, the remuneration for agricultural production per unit of agricultural measure is often not profitable in several cases. Given these factors, the combination of the aforementioned factors leads to a gradual transformation of valuable rural areas into tourist landscapes.

These pressures originate from both external and internal sources within the system, and both have an active and passive impact on the residents of these places. Considering that these individuals are primarily in search of employment and services, their availability and quality at the local and territorial levels need to be assessed. It is indeed challenging to persuade local people, who often have a high percentage of elderly individuals, to reside in an isolated area or in a location with limited bus services to neighbouring cities. In terms of services, these communities are more attentive than others to the issue of healthcare, such as the proximity of the nearest healthcare centres and the time required to reach them by car. Lastly, the issue of infrastructure connections, such as highways and railways, is also important for work purposes. Once again, the location and accessibility of these services prove to be central factors.

These potential limitations have led, over the decades from the 1960s to the present day, to the transfer of agricultural estates owned by residents to large investors. This commercialisation process (Meini, 2004) involves the sale or rental of properties and the relocation of local inhabitants, often to urban areas, with a low percentage of them returning to these places in the short to medium term. Those who acquire these houses perceive them as investment assets, resulting in an increase in local market prices that encourages other families to emulate these sales or, in worse cases, to relocate to other contexts due to the rising cost of living generated in these areas.

However, while there appears to be a certain stability coupled with a slight inclination towards depopulation in the villages of the Val d'Orcia region during the period 2019-2022 (ISTAT, 2023), there is a concern regarding the age demographic of those returning. Additionally, the ability to attract new families to embrace a "new rurality" (Maduro et al., 2022; Kajdanek et al., 2022) should also be considered, whereby these families choose to live and work in these places and provide a future for their children. In general, it can be said that if predominantly older individuals or tourism workers are the ones returning, along with foreign investors purchasing hectares of land to cultivate high-value crops such as vines, the demographic decline becomes a tangible risk. These changes in the social structure threaten to transform the valleys, which constitute these productive landscapes, into the domain of a few privileged individuals who reside there for limited periods, along with their employees. If this were to occur in an even more pronounced manner, the territory would become a mere tool for financialisation, even for foreign investment funds, where large land ownership and related phenomena of land grabbing are already underway.

Therefore, more than the mere disappearance of the landscape itself, the problem of greater concern seems to be the loss of the indigenous people who, through the incessant work of generations, have created those landscapes that we now define as "cultural landscapes" (UNESCO, 2021, articles 47, 47bis, and 47ter). Indeed, without the vital and daily presence of residents, cities, towns, and the landscape are nothing more than images, devoid of value and destined to fade away over time.

4. Shortcomings and faults in the management of Italian agricultural landscapes

Potential shortcomings in the management of Italian agricultural landscapes are related to the political sphere, which should establish and disseminate a comprehensive and forward-looking vision.

Within this discourse, political authorities at the local level also bear culpability as they should create and/or implement existing regulations to plan for the preservation of heritage (Korstanje & George, 2020), both directly and indirectly. In terms of direct actions, Urban-Planning and Building Regulations (RUE) and/or Municipal Operational Plans (POC) should curb changes in land use from residential to commercial, as well as processes of deruralisation, including cases where agricultural

industrialisation leads to monoculture (such as wine, rice, oil, etc.). In terms of indirect actions, there should be more careful planning to maintain existing agricultural activities and provide appropriate incentives.

The governance of a territory should also encompass the ability to balance tourism with the needs of residents, with the aim of encouraging the influx of new residents and not just additional tourists. In this sense, taking care of these agricultural landscapes also means monitoring whether conditions are being created that prevent them from being identified as productive and therefore transformable. Divergent visions from different political parties, even in opposition to each other, can result in inaction or a lack of timely adoption of actions or strategies aimed at containing or limiting ongoing phenomena. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that local politics often lack the strength and expertise to frame these issues and attempt to establish balanced solutions.

Among the potential shortcomings, there are also those attributable to the allocation of investments aimed at increasing the reach and quantity/quality of public transportation and services for residents, such as railway services. Placing greater emphasis on this service system, such as logistics, would have slowed down the process of spectaclising these landscapes or at least allowed for a local perspective to coexist, thanks to people's prolonged presence in these places. Butler also argues for the need to assess the state of existing infrastructure and services in a given area prior to prematurely exposing it to media promotion (Butler, 2020).

Clear imbalances within a dynamic equilibrium thus appear to be the result of liberal policies that endorse the notion that the market determines the tourism model, which, as already highlighted in this paper, is largely characterised by a mass tourism approach oriented towards exploitation. This can also give rise to other complementary issues, such as the increase in environmental pollution in terms of climate-altering emissions, whether they are of an airborne nature (e.g., CO_2, particulates) or perceptual in nature (e.g., excessive use of the outdoor artificial light during nighttime).

Lastly, others also attribute indirect blame to third-sector associations that claim to protect the territory. Territorial enhancement activities, especially in areas where visitor access should be restricted, often attract excessive numbers of people, promoting maximum visitation instead of focusing on the quality of the environment's visitation experience.

5. Will the landscape image change?

The agricultural landscape of the late twentieth century is primarily an expression and outcome of the post-war agricultural revitalisation and mechanisation, which increasingly altered the stratified landscape composed of Roman, medieval, Renaissance, and/or eighteenth-century elements. In the specific case of the Val d'Orcia, for example, during the post-World War II period, "New spaces for agriculture were gained by reshaping the hills, even through the use of dynamite. Sardinian shepherds arrived to tend the sheep, and Sicilian cereal farmers came to work the wheat. It was they who introduced mechanisation" (Calvi, 2023).

Since the 2000s, individuals from outside the region who sought these productive landscapes as a retreat from their working lives introduced new functions and elements that were previously foreign to the area. These include swimming pools, lawns, non-native tree species in unusual locations, and fences that detract from the open field character, even leading to the loss of inter-farm roads.

Today, mass tourism seems to merely amplify and generalise a trend that has been underway since the 1960s and 1970s.

Although the modifications to the landscape are often associated solely with construction activities, current building regulations appear to be quite stringent, making it difficult for significant visual alterations to occur. It is clear, therefore, that the rural landscape changes not only through construction, but also through variations in agricultural practices, which alter the pattern and colour of cultivated surfaces (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The distinct colour palettes of the viticultural rural landscape in Langhe-Roero and Monferrato (1.a, 1.b, 1.c) compared to the visual alterations observed in new buildings in the same area (1.d).

Source: 1.a, 1.b, 1.c the author, 1.d phhere.com under CC0 Public Domain. Author's elaboration using Adobe Color.)

As a result, the typological and morphological characteristics of the landscape are altered, as well as the underlying ideology and theoretical speculation. Even the minor components of these landscapes, such as dry-stone walls and drainage ditches, are at serious risk due to the progressive lack of maintenance. For instance, in Val d'Orcia, this phenomenon is evident in the deterioration of the perimeter walls along the Leopoldina road.

In Italian UNESCO cultural landscapes, the risk also manifests itself in the conversion of some fields located alongside roads into parking lots for cars, motorcycles, and campers, catering to a type of occasional 'hit-and-run' tourism. Another ongoing trend is the consolidation of land ownership among small landowners to create large estates and land grabbing, as observed in some areas of the UNESCO site of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato (e.g., in Components 1390rev-001 "Langa of Barolo" and 1390rev-003 "Hills of Barbaresco") and in Val d'Orcia (e.g., Capalbio). In these cases, when the

small farms that characterise the area cease to exist, the land associated with them is acquired by large entrepreneurs, thereby erasing its distinctive features and identity.

With such actions, the very essence of a place changes, even to the point of disappearing. Thus, all that remains is to rely on our memories, having acknowledged a certain commodification of our cultural identity. Does it still make sense to refer to a cultural landscape in the light of these ongoing dynamics? Furthermore, considering what has been described, do these landscapes face the risk of being removed from UNESCO's World Heritage List?

6. Possible solutions and strategies

Aware of the delicacy and fragility of such areas, as highlighted by the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis conducted in the UNESCO site of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato (UNESCO, 2014, p. 58, fig. 12) and further elaborated in Figure 4, it is necessary to consider viable alternatives to this tourism-based development model.
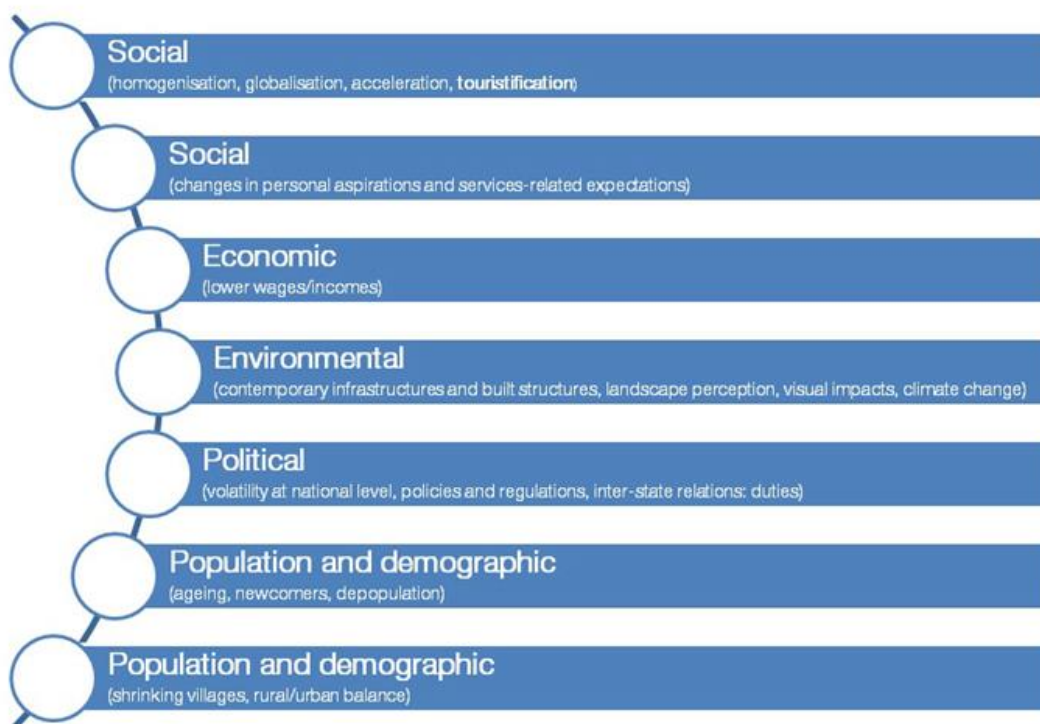

Figure 4. The current driving forces of change in the UNESCO site "Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato".
Source: Author's elaboration.

Traditionally, development hypotheses have considered alternatives based on large commercial and/or industrial activities, either in opposition or in synergy with the offerings of the tourist park. The latter model seems to be more widely accepted as it is limited in time, occurring only between April and October, allowing the local population to enjoy the area during the rest of the year. On the other hand, industrial areas characterised by warehouses and large shopping centres with continuous motor vehicle traffic risk visually impacting the landscape, especially in the valley bottoms. This creates problems for the media image that the territory intends to convey. In this regard, an emblematic case was the 12th stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race on May 22, 2014, which was diverted from the original route between Barbaresco and Barolo due to the excessive presence of warehouses in the valley bottom. The new route was designed to traverse the hilly areas between the two locations (The Editorial Board, 2013).

A third approach is that of the advocated sustainable tourism, especially for areas that have not yet been affected by mass tourism (Králiková & Kubát, 2022). However, despite proposing a slow, socially compatible, experiential, and empathetic tourism, the consequences of such premises are then the consequences described in the first paragraph of this paper. Often, 'sustainable' projects lack a holistic vision, thus failing to create a circuit that can foster the growth of a territory together with its population.

Therefore, it is necessary for communities to assert their right to maintain a balance of spaces as places of life, as a sort of spaces of resistance. Public entities and governments should support them with stronger actions in the short term, introducing stringent measures aimed at protecting specific assets based on their carrying capacity (Seyhan & Russo, 2020). However, this should be agreed upon with the local people, giving greater space to a vision carried forward by the locals (Chang et al., 2018; Cerquetti & Romagnoli, 2022; Nemes & Tomay, 2022) and opening up more to bottom-up initiatives.

Nonetheless, some limitations may arise regarding the lack of consensus on how to address overtourism, in terms of strategies and methods (Yrigoy et al., 2023). Among these, one approach is the dynamic adoption of daily, monthly, or annual limits on the number of tourists allowed to access a given asset, identified based on studies on the carrying capacity of the so-called "tourism resources" (He et al., 2023), taking into account the socio-ecological, physical-instrumental, psycho-social, and economic dimensions. Such actions would allow for the gradual dispersion of tourist masses in the medium term, thus avoiding peaks of influx during specific annual periods (e.g., summer or agricultural harvest seasons) through the adoption of toll tickets at the entrances of villages included in the components of the UNESCO site. An example of the aforementioned is the villages within the World Heritage site "Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces" in China, where visitors need to pay a ticket of 30 yuan (as of 01/03/2023) to access the Azheke village within its component. On the other hand, the adoption of such practices raises questions about the fairness of a management system that regulates the freedom of access to a cultural asset and, therefore, the meaning of democracy. Moreover, "The implementation of monitoring programmes and the definition of indicators is a common difficulty and there is a need for guidance and capacity building according to many comments … in large and complex cultural properties, for example historic cities and cultural landscapes" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 62) in the European sub-region.

Therefore, it is necessary to preserve and add culture to conservation, while also being open to accepting dynamism (Vaz & Soto, 2019) and landscape projects. For example, consider the Val d'Orcia and, specifically, the famous road with cypress trees near the La Foce estate in Monticchiello, a small urban centre southeast of Pienza. This was the work of landscape architect Cecil Pinsent and Marquise Iris Origo, who, in the 1940s, contributed to creating an image that still represents an archetype of the local Tuscan landscape in the collective imagination today.

On the other hand, it is also important to avoid a new type of tourism known as nostalgia tourism, which rejects any form of modernisation and seeks refuge in an idealised golden age of these landscapes, blaming them for having lost their authenticity in the face of contemporary changes.

Indeed, one possible action towards sustainable development is exemplified by Denmark, which aimed to prevent its coastal areas from being predominantly acquired by foreign tourists. To achieve this, Denmark implemented restrictions on the purchase of vacation homes, requiring a residency period of 5 years in the country before being eligible to buy such properties. In light of this, it would be worthwhile to explore compensatory systems that can strike a balance between conservation and development approaches (Iannucci et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this article deals with a review of the well-known topic of overtourism and its effects in its global significance, extending beyond Italy. For an effective examination and resolution, the matter should also address the core of the problem, namely, a broader reconsideration and reformulation of the prevailing economic model (Milano et al., 2019).

7. Other Italian cases at risk

Several productive landscapes and cities in Italy have been threatened by this phenomenon for several decades.

In Sardinia, the National Parks have become attractive destinations for those arriving from cities (Battino et al., 2023), as well as a large part of South Tyrol, which is experiencing the effects of quantitative tourism that risks altering the quality of the landscape (Kreisel & Reeh, 2011). In Apulia, the Itria Valley shows some signs of ongoing changes, triggered by the construction of houses with different shapes and types from the traditional *trulli* houses since the 1970s. The area of Salento in the same region of Italy, on the other hand, is characterised by significant overtourism (Pasini, 2023), similarly to what is happening at the World Heritage sites "Portovenere, Cinque Terre, and the Islands (Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto)" in Liguria (UNESCO, 1997a) and the "Costiera Amalfitana" in Campania (UNESCO, 1997b).

Similar phenomena seem to be occurring in certain areas of the Langhe region in Piedmont, although with some mitigating factors at present (Fiori, 2021). Even in this UNESCO cultural landscape of productive type, the touristic transformation of the lower Langhe region began in the late 1990s to early 2000s. During this phase, various farm sales were concluded with citizens from the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany. On the other hand, the Langhe still has several less anthropised locations where a different form of tourism is still possible and developed sustainably, such as in the Alta Langa area (e.g., Bossolasco, Borgomale, Cortemilia, Loazzolo and Carpeneto, among other localities). However, even in these areas, which are outside the perimeter of the UNESCO site, the first signs of touristic transformation can be observed. As a serial site consisting of 101 municipalities and 6 Components, plus 2 Buffer zones, wine tourism in the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato macrozone is not characterised as mass tourism in every area, both due to cost factors and the niche product offered (i.e., wine). There is a significant portion of occasional Italian visitors who are low spenders and do not undertake investments that indirectly undermine the landscape. There are also cases of foreign tourists from Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United States (Regione Piemonte, 2023, p. 5) who continue to purchase properties mostly as second homes or for retirement purposes, with limited or no interest in intensive vineyard cultivation. Even the large residential and winery structures seek to blend in with the surrounding context, aiming not to distort the experience for those who visit these areas with the intention of enjoying their nature and landscape.

Moving to the cities, almost all medium to large-sized Italian art cities suffer from this issue, including the historic centres of Bologna (Celata & Romano, 2020), Florence (Loda et al., 2020), Venice (Salerno, 2022), Matera (Iaffaldano et al., 2021), Rome (Celata & Romano, 2020), and Naples (Cerreta et al., 2020). Smaller-sized centres, on the other hand, are experiencing depopulation and transforming into scattered hotels also known as *Alberghi Diffusi* (Vallone et al., 2020), such as Pienza, Montalcino, Montepulciano, and San Gimignano in Tuscany, and Alberobello in Apulia.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study highlights the intricate and contentious relationship between tourism and Italian agricultural landscapes, particularly UNESCO sites. The influx of tourists poses a significant challenge to maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of these sites, impacting both tangible and intangible aspects. The transformation of these landscapes into tourist attractions often leads to homogenisation, commercialisation, and the loss of their authentic character.

Moreover, the local communities residing in these areas face numerous challenges stemming from tourism. Demographic decline, cultural dilution, and the erosion of traditional practices are among the key issues encountered, as the picturesque is not the harmless refuge we naturally think of. Preserving the unique identity and heritage of indigenous communities becomes imperative in mitigating these negative impacts.

To address these challenges, effective management strategies need to be implemented. This necessitates a comprehensive political vision and regulatory framework that strikes a balance between tourism development and the preservation of residents' well-being and cultural roots. Failure to take

decisive action can hinder the formulation of appropriate solutions and exacerbate the issues faced by these communities.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The absence of quantitative data hampers a deeper understanding of the exact impacts and dynamics at play in a given case study. Therefore, further research should be conducted to gather empirical evidence and enhance the study's robustness.

Moving forward, several steps can be taken to promote sustainable tourism practices and mitigate the adverse effects on Italian agricultural landscapes. Engaging local stakeholders, including indigenous communities, in decision-making processes is crucial. Their insights and perspectives can inform the development of context-specific strategies that prioritise the preservation of cultural heritage and the well-being of residents.

Additionally, the study suggests the implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives that focus on responsible visitor management, education, and the promotion of authentic and sustainable experiences. These initiatives should be supported by policymakers, tourism organisations, and relevant stakeholders.

In summary, the study underscores the need for proactive measures to address the impact of tourism on Italian agricultural landscapes, particularly UNESCO sites. By considering the limitations of the study and embracing further research, engaging local communities, and implementing sustainable tourism strategies, it is possible to strike a balance between tourism development and the preservation of these valuable landscapes and cultural heritage.

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