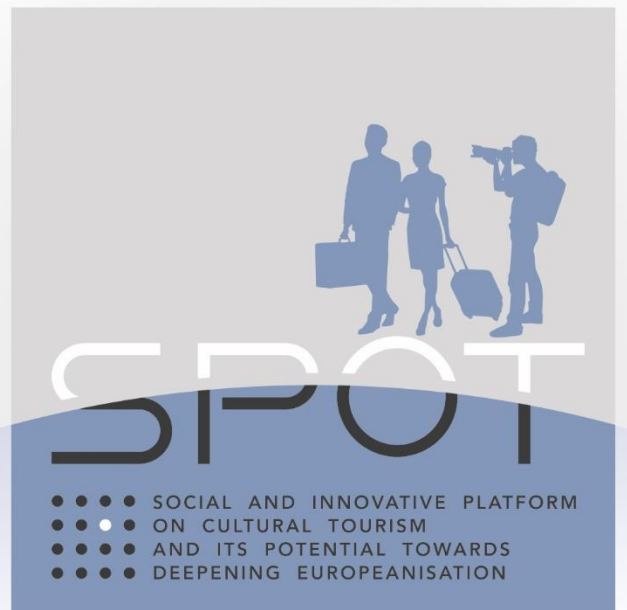


ITALY

POLICY BRIEF

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Potentials and problems of Langhe, Monferrato and Roero excellence

For local policymakers and stakeholders

Authors: UNIVR team

Introduction

Alba and the surrounding areas of Langhe and Roero were subjects of a case study for the EU-funded SPOT cultural tourism project.

In the case study area, named in Project Piedmont Landscape and Literary Park, cultural tourism has been contributing to the diversification of the local economy since the late 1980s, thereby making it a strategic and considerable economic and social sector until the pandemic. The area was already developed from an industrial, rural and economic point of view. In Alba and its neighbouring territory, industrial production and agriculture were both sources of employment and wealth for the local population. In the last decades, rural activities and related jobs with low skills have been more and more ensured by foreign and immigrant manpower, while real estate price in the whole area has significantly grown.

A survey on tourists, residents and cultural and tourist entrepreneurs was carried out in 2020. In 2021, four round tables with local relevant key stakeholders in tourism, culture, and other tourism-related activities and with mayors of municipalities involved in the UNESCO site of Piedmont Vineyard of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato were conducted to identify avenues of improvements in cultural tourism. These activities took



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place amid intermittent lockdowns in Italy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation definitively affected the UNIVR team's findings.

During the SPOT project running, a relevant policy problem was observed using different instruments (surveys, round tables, researchers' observations and interviews). At both regional and local levels, tourism is increasingly being considered an industry based on tangible and intangible cultural resources, but these resources must be handled differently, considering tourism's social sustainability from a medium-term perspective. At the regional level, the lack of a coordinated vision of tourism in the light of specific local cultural assets and resources is elsewhere addressed (see UNIVR_PB_1). At the local level, from the point of view of cultural tourism proposals and heritage management, the multiplicity of cultural and organisational layers must be carefully considered and their interplay negotiated among stakeholders belonging to public, private, civil society and third sectors.

1. Evidence and Analysis

The pandemic break and its overall consequences are particularly distinct in the case study area. In Italy, since Spring 2022, restrictions due to the pandemic have been gradually and completely removed. Subsequently, the case study area has been experiencing an improved wealth of cultural and tourist activities.

Firstly, the reason is the return to the events and festivals without limits to the number of attending people, to the extent that the sector seems to be returned to the pre-pandemic conditions or even to a greater inflow of visitors for long-lasting events in the area, such as literary, music and gastronomic festivals.

Secondly, big events are linked to both the cultural and wine and food sectors. In particular, the intangible cultural sector of literature in Alba and in the Langhe area is largely benefitting from the extended hiatus of the pandemic owing to the potential of the local cultural assets, especially in the literary resources of the major writers Beppe Fenoglio and Cesare Pavese. The Centenary of the writer Beppe Fenoglio's birth (1 March 2022 – 1 March 2023) led by the Centro Studi Beppe Fenoglio is an opportune event to produce new knowledge and develop connections among different arts, performative or figurative, and creative industries. Constraints due to the pandemic pushed the Fondazione Cesare Pavese to realise and use audio-visual products to enlarge and illustrate the writer's roots through places narratives and testimonials.

The excellence of the wine sector and its tourism potential was recognized, among many other ways, by hosting in Alba the 6th UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism in September (19–21 September 2022). If the wine sector is an affluent economic sector, its implications for cultural comprehension and local identity perception pass through the landscape.

Based on the two-year research previously conducted, it could be affirmed that tourism is very different and, in the area, is recovering to the pre-pandemic levels or higher. All the territory of Langhe, Roero and Monferrato has been gaining greater visibility due to the work done by local public administration and interested associations to improve citizens' awareness of distinctions and designations earned in the last decade. This acted towards the excellence stated through the success in two participatory processes which resulted in the UNESCO recognitions, in the World Heritage List of Piedmont Vineyard Landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato and in the Creative Network of Cities for the Gastronomy of Alba. The agro-tertiary sector of wine production and restaurants is recognised and documented nationally and internationally, deeming this sector as the main lever for tourism, services and connected industries.

At the local level, tourism has been reorganised after the fusion of two local destination management organisations, which took place between 2020 and 2021 and, in fact, clearly stated the need to present the

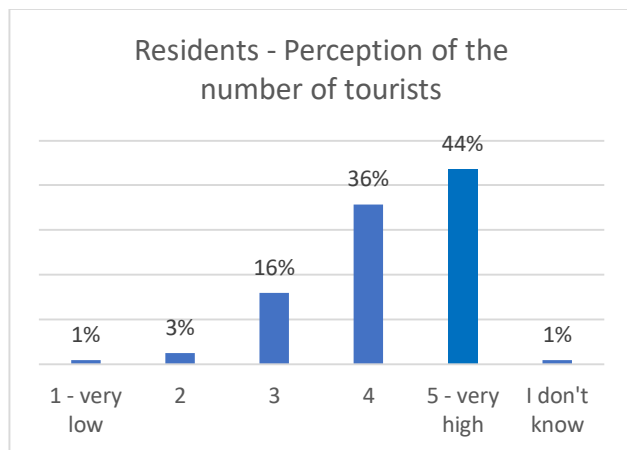


area of Langhe Monferrato and Roero as a unique destination on the tourist market. Food and wine are the unifying and strongest lever of this area, but what is evident after the SPOT research is that under the production of excellent wines and high-level gastronomy, there is the rural landscape and its management from an environmental, social and cultural point of view. Landscape needs and feeds on complex governance that may be established not only at the national but also at the regional and local levels.

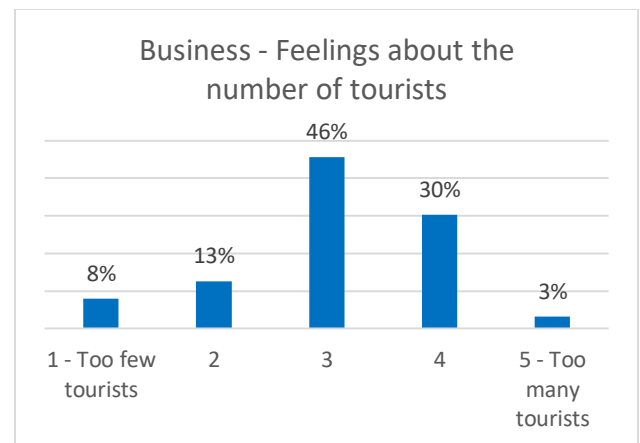
These general considerations are based on several research results and here are illustrated the most telling ones.

Residents' and tourist businesses' attitudes towards the number of tourists

Perception of the number of tourists in the area is an important item to indirectly test if the local population and the enterprises in the tourist sector have a clear idea of the case study area crowding (and indirectly vocations to tourism).



Graphic 1. Residents: perception of the number of tourists in the area (N=400). Source: Survey on stakeholders (2020)



Graphic 2. Business: feelings about the number of tourists visiting their business every year (N=215). Source: Survey on stakeholders (2020)

What visitors value according to local businesses and cultural institutions

Local stakeholders in the tourist sector consider mostly important for their visitors to get a taste of the local culture and traditions in the area, spending a considerable part of the visit time in cultural attractions, site or events. They consider themselves a good source of recommendations for tourists, confirming the tourists' trust in them.



Graphic 3. Business: Visitors' attitude in the local business and cultural institutions' opinion

2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Stakeholders involved in 2020 surveys and 2021 roundtables highlighted the timely ambition to cope with two characteristics of tourism in the case study area: seasonality and visitors' short stays. First, the seasonality is quite high to the extent of becoming an over-touristic destination during the Autumn, especially during the weekends, because of seasonal events and holidays. Directly connected to this and to the concentration of tourist demand for high-quality wine and food products, there is the need for a diversified offer that pushes the visitors to stay longer in the area and visit more decentralised villages without traffic congestion which could often occur in these minor places.

The area is already very well developed, but some adaptations could further lead local society to reflect on their tourist lifecycle and their mid-term future, especially in the direction of a more inclusive offer for visitors and greater involvement of residents in the territory narration. Some suggestions are as follows:

1. From an infrastructural point of view, reaching the case study area and exploring the different places and villages is still quite difficult without private (or rented) vehicles, and the public transport network is still being reorganised (at the moment of writing this paper). A more sustainable transport system goes beyond the local-level direct powers but represents an important stake to be endorsed for a greener and lower carbon-producing mobility, starting from the network of footpaths and cycle paths.
2. From a practical point of view, extending cultural itineraries to connect decentralised and rural areas to more mainstream cultural heritage and information sources would contribute to balancing the visitors' crowd. In this area, it could be beneficial to connect the different routes present in the area under a coordinated image, for instance, inspired by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is a large space for proposals inspired by the different cultural resources, such as wine and vineyards and their importance for landscape shaping, literature and literary real or imaginary places, historical stratifications from the Roman period to the World War II memories and the economic boom of the mid-twentieth century led by industrial expansion.
3. To be more inclusive from a social point of view, creating the possibilities of events and festivals lead to the celebration and spread of culture at all levels, that is, the Culture (explicitly intended big C) intended as the high culture of classical and contemporary arts, history, literature and excellent know-how skills and the culture intended in its popular, vernacular, folk, ancient, holistic (or other specific) modes.



4. To foster the involvement of residents and local people in events, festivals and visits to local cultural institutions (for instance, museums, castles and monuments) not only through the support of educational paths in schools but also with specific discounts for residents.
5. To support a reflective and either inclusive approach to local recent history, social situation and its transformational capabilities, some chapters of the local community's past and present are a difficult heritage or onerous condition that deserves to be carefully handled but locally dealt with by, from the Partisan War during the Nazi-fascist occupation in the World War II to the methanol affair in the wine production in the 1980s, to the actual efforts of social integration of immigrants whose work is necessary for many tasks in the primary sector.



FIGURE 1. The Landscape of Langhe. Picture by Giovanna Rech (2021)

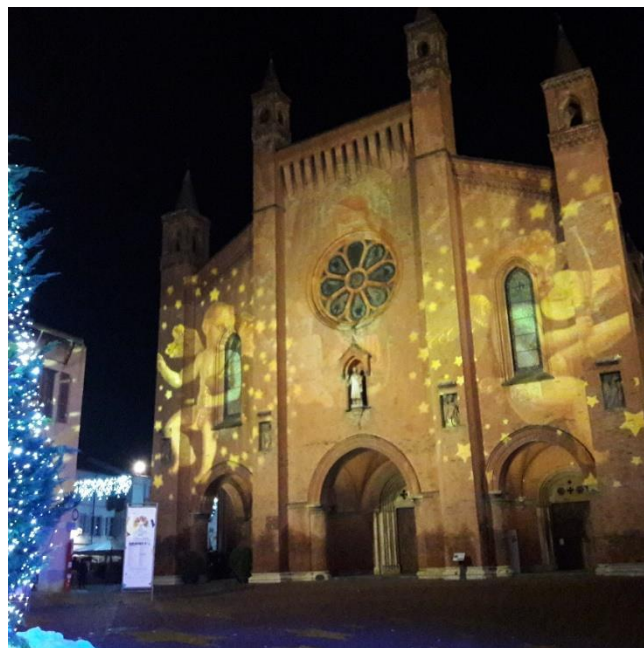


FIGURE 2. Alba (CN) Cathedral of San Lorenzo. Picture by Giovanna Rech (2021)



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FIGURE 3. The Castle of Grinzane Cavour (CN): the built component of UNESCO site, the first Regional Winehouse of Piedmont and the In Vigna Open-air Museum. Picture by Lorenzo Migliorati (2020)



FIGURE 4. Belvedere point on the Barbaresco hills, Neive (CN). Picture by Giovanna Rech (2022)





FIGURE 5. La Vigna dei Pastelli, Coazzolo (AT). Picture by Giovanna Rech (2021)



FIGURE 6. S. Benedetto Belbo (CN). The centenary of Beppe Fenoglio's birth. Picture by Chiara Pini (2022)





FIGURE 7. The Cesare Pavese Foundation. Santo Stefano Belbo (CN). Picture: courtesy of Fondazione Cesare Pavese website



FIGURE 8. Piazza Rossetti 1. Installation for the Centenary of Beppe Fenoglio’s birth. Alba (CN). Picture by Giovanna Rech (2022)



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Project Identity

Project name	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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Budget	3 000 000 EUR
Website and social networks	www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu fb: @SPOTprojectH2020 twitter: @H2020Spo
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