

Local governance practices for the management of heritage agricultural landscapes.

The role of local voluntary associations

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Heritage agricultural landscapes - The recognition and protection of traditional agricultural landscapes are gaining a new meaning, in view of the most daunting challenges facing humankind such as climate change, rural emigration and food shortage. Notwithstanding the growing number of globally recognized agricultural landscapes, the agricultural landscape is often questioned as a blurred concept and heritage uneasy to manage. It can be assumed that the main objective in managing the heritage agricultural landscape is to ensure the integrity of a sustainable cycle, where the production of food results in the preservation of landscape and vice versa (Daugstad, 2016; Briffaud & Davasse, 2012; Agnoletti, 2014). However, several factors affect its integrity.

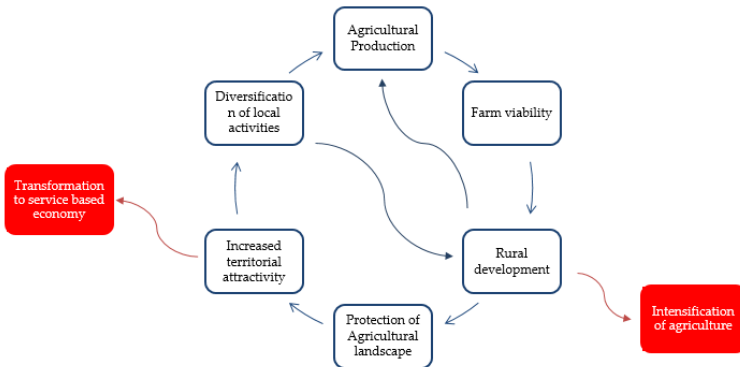
The study focuses on two case studies in Italy: The vine hills of Soave and the terraced agricultural landscape of Cinque Terre. Both are vine landscapes, recognized as heritage at the global level. However, the role of agricultural activities in their rural

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economies differs considerably. The case studies demonstrate two main points of deviations in the sustainable cycle of AL. The first point of deviation occurs when the productive interest competes with the environmental and socio-cultural interests, like in the case of Soave. The second deviation occurs when the service-based economic activities outbalance the farming activities, like in Cinque Terre (fig., 1).

Fig. 1 - Sustainable cycle of heritage agricultural landscapes and its points of deviation

Source: Own elaboration



The role of the local associations - The analysis of primary sources, including management plans and regulations, field observations, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, the research has elucidated a crucial role played by the local NGOs in enforcing sustainable cycle of heritage agricultural landscapes. In Cinque Terre, there has been a sharp increase in the number of civil society organisations following the disastrous flood of 2011, when a substantial part of the territory has been damaged. Currently, the governance system of the territory is characterised by the active involvement of citizens through several voluntary associations aimed to rehabilitate the abandoned terraces and mitigate the risk of

land sliding. Similarly, in Soave, the study on management practices has shown a vital presence of the local and provincial NGOs in the local governance system. The interviews have shown the importance of community events on rural traditions organised by these associations, in enforcing the sense of local identity.

There can be no 'one size fits all' approach for governance of agricultural landscapes. However, based on the case study analysis it is possible to draw few principles to consider in the management of heritage agricultural landscapes – the balance of local interests; upholding the continuity of the agricultural activity; diversification of local economic activities; fostering active citizenship.

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