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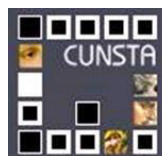
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Macerata  
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# The management of cultural heritage and landscape in inner areas

edited by Mara Cerquetti, Leonardo J.  
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Guardo le canoe che fendono l'acqua, le barche che sfiorano il campanile, i bagnanti che si stendono a prendere il sole. Li osservo e mi sforzo di comprendere. Nessuno può capire cosa c'è sotto le cose. Non c'è tempo per fermarsi a dolersi di quello che è stato quando non c'eravamo. Andare avanti, come diceva Ma', è l'unica direzione concessa. Altrimenti Dio ci avrebbe messo gli occhi di lato. Come i pesci<sup>1</sup>.

Quando cammino nei prati attorno al Santuario, quasi sempre solo, ripenso a nonno Venanzio che, da giovane biscino, pascolava il gregge negli stessi terreni. Mi affascina il fatto che in questo luogo la cui cifra, agli occhi di chi guarda adesso la mia scelta di vita, è la solitudine, nei secoli addietro abitassero oltre duecento persone. Ancora negli anni Cinquanta, ricorda mio nonno, erano quasi un centinaio gli abitanti di Casette di Macereto tra contadini, mezzadri, mogli, pastori e un nugolo di bambini che costringeva il maestro a salire ogni giorno da Visso per fare lezione a domicilio.

Era una comunità compatta, coordinata come lo può essere quella delle società operose degli insetti: api, formiche, termiti, ma cosa più sorprendente che mai, una comunità niente affatto statica o chiusa<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Balzano M. (2018), *Resto qui*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Scolastici M. (2018), *Una yurta sull'Appennino*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 50.

# Inner Areas and UNESCO World Heritage: what possible convergences?\*

Dante Di Matteo\*\*, Giacomo  
Cavuta\*\*\*

## *Abstract*

This paper constitutes an exploratory study about the possible relationships between Inner Areas and World Heritage Sites in Italy. For each pilot project area individuated by SNAI, it was designed a potential tourism gravitational basin, by taking into account the average yearly nights spent of all the neighboring provinces with WHS endowments, for the 12-year period 2005-2016. General results show that the central-northern pilot areas are more willing to intercept cultural heritage flows, while the majority of southern areas are significantly far from possible convergences with UNESCO place markers. Descriptive statistics and synthetic cartographic representation of potential tourism gravitational basins are provided, policy implications are discussed.

\* The §§ 3, 4, 5 and 6 are to be attributed to Dante Di Matteo, §§ 1 and 2 to Giacomo Cavuta.

\*\* Dante Di Matteo, Research Fellow in Applied Economics, Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani (DAStU), Piazza Leonardo da Vinci, 32, 20133 Milano, Italy, e-mail: dante.dimatteo@polimi.it.

\*\*\* Giacomo Cavuta, Associate Professor of Economic Geography, University "G. d'Annunzio" of Chieti-Pescara, Department of Economics (DEc), Viale Pindaro, 42, 65127 Pescara, Italy, e-mail: giacomo.cavuta@unich.it.

Questo lavoro costituisce uno studio esplorativo circa le possibili relazioni tra Aree Interne e Siti del Patrimonio UNESCO in Italia. Per ciascuna delle aree del progetto pilota individuate dalla SNAI è stato disegnato un potenziale bacino gravitazionale di utenza turistica, prendendo in considerazione la media annuale delle presenze turistiche delle province confinanti e aventi sul proprio suolo almeno un sito UNESCO, per un periodo di 12 anni dal 2005 al 2016. I risultati generali mostrano che le aree pilota del centro-nord Italia sono più predisposte ad intercettare flussi turistici culturali, mentre la maggior parte delle aree del sud sono significativamente distanti da possibili convergenze con i marcatori territoriali dell'UNESCO. Si forniscono le statistiche descrittive e una rappresentazione cartografica sintetica dei potenziali bacini gravitazionali, si discutono inoltre le principali implicazioni politiche.

## 1. Introduction

The early debates around inner areas date back to the late seventies<sup>1</sup>, when the concept was mainly used for describing the shift processes from a metropolitan industrial structure to a more mobile manufacturing industrial system, in which the “outer” areas did gain benefits from this “net shift” process<sup>2</sup>. Later, the concept was extended also to the rural peripheral areas characterized by a significant geographical distance from major centers and by substantial phenomena of depopulation, highlighting the role of emerging rural clusters for improving innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises<sup>3</sup>. The tourism industry did not stay exempted from the concerns about the peripheral areas and, already during the two decades of the late nineties and the early 2000s, literature has contributed with several works examining the role of tourism for the development and recovering of peripheral and inner areas<sup>4</sup>.

The recent institution of the Technical Committee for the Inner Areas in Italy has reiterated the problem of the significant spatial distance – in terms of development levels, accessibility to main services and lack in infrastructures – from the major centers to the peripheral destinations in Italy, giving birth to the *National Strategy for the Inner Areas* (SNAI)<sup>5</sup>. While not having been recognized as a primary objective in the early plan documents, tourism development in Inner Areas has progressively obtained an important weight in local strategies' planning. Several regions, with the related local areas' managers, have focused on the role of local cultural heritage and the community-engagement in tourism planning. In a national context where the cultural heritage has been the object of interest of worldwide protection programs deriving from the UNESCO

<sup>1</sup> Cheshire 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Virkkala 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Wanhill 1997; Brown, Hall 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Barca *et al.* 2014.

convention of 1972, and it has resulted in 54 active sites currently posed under the World Heritage List (WHL), it is necessary to understand what possible intersections between the Inner Areas and those World Heritage Sites (WHS) areas already developed, in terms of tourism maturity, could be significant for each other.

For these reasons, this work starts with a general review of the concept of peripherality in tourism and then this last is applied to the Italian scenario, understanding the role of SNAI in tourism development for Inner Areas. In a further moment, the main characteristics for managing a World Heritage Site are discussed, with particular reference to the role of local communities in the process of building a local strategy. The last step concerns the comparison between the Pilot Project Areas, individuated by the SNAI technical committee, and the already established tourism flows answerable to the Italian provinces involved in UNESCO protection programs. This will lead to the construction of a descriptive map, in which are highlighted – for each Pilot Area – the potential tourism gravitational basins coming from the neighboring provinces with WHS endowments.

Although this work cannot be considered as exhaustive for understanding if there are potential linkages between peripheral areas and the tourism flows generated by world heritage destinations in Italy, it can constitute an attempt to track preliminary considerations about synergies, sharing and joint planning within and beyond the boundaries of Inner Areas.

## *2. Tourism in peripheral areas: the theoretical background*

Peripherality has been traditionally associated with specific rural functions as agriculture, sparsely populated areas, geographically dispersed settlement patterns<sup>6</sup>. Over the decade of the 1990s, in Europe, tourism has started to assume a key role in facing social and economic challenges of peripheral and rural areas, especially for territories under traditional agrarian industrial decline<sup>7</sup>. In peripheral communities, tourism could represent one of the few tools for creating development opportunities<sup>8</sup> and the networking between the public tourism planner and stakeholders (firms of any size in various combination) may help the recovering of regional economies and the economic restructuring of peripheral and rural areas<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, Page 2006; Cloke 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Opperman 1996; Williams, Shaw 1998; Baum, Hagen 1999; Sharpley 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Getz, Frisby 1988; Müller, Jansson 2007; Hall 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Butler *et al.* 1998.

Not only the decline of industrial systems, but other several reasons could be identified behind peripherality and they can assume the contours of “barriers” to the tourism development. For example, for what concerns *economic barriers*, some authors<sup>10</sup> discussed the low structure of local supply in regards to tourism development in peripheral areas, while others<sup>11</sup>, next to the agricultural-based industry decline, have identified some features for peripheral areas looking for tourism development and diversification, such as: spatial distance from endowments of necessary resources, slow adapting to tourism changing economic circumstances, low funding capacity and consequently employment flattening in smaller local communities, lack and denial towards innovation capacity and technology adaptation, uncompetitive SMEs if compared to core-areas’ firms.

Climatic conditions, difficult in accessibility<sup>12</sup> and geo-morphological characteristics can be listed among other main reasons for peripherality. Such *orographic barriers* often lead to seasonality<sup>13</sup>, which frequently affects the demand-side of the tourism industry and the issue of seasonality is frequently noticeable especially in peripheral areas. In these terms, literature has individuated a series of key reasons, such as: periods of inaccessibility or un-hospitality due to weather conditions; high distances from major population centers and lack of local consumer market for short-breaks or city-trips to key attractions; priority of other economic sectors that may overshadow tourism activities; reticence of local operators regarding the less profitable periods that can influence third parts due to a finite system-wide capacity, and other external structural impediments for jurisdictional reasons. In case of islands’ peripheral areas, the problem of seasonality can be even amplified by access problems due to time, reliability and cost, or due to specific labor markets or political and macro-economic issues which can invalidate early tourism purposes<sup>14</sup>.

In terms of *organizational barriers*, peripheral destinations, due to their weaknesses in marketing, management, planning and resources, are increasingly forced to follow the instructions of vertical-hierarchical multinational corporations, boosting their overdependence upon conventional distribution channels, reducing the uniqueness for increasing and reinforcing tourism effects on local economies<sup>15</sup>. However, under some circumstances (increasing of accommodation capacity, stimulating the tourists’ novelty-seeking behavior etc.) peripheral areas could benefit from the preference of people from central areas, who are usual to prefer spending their recreational time in periphery, as

<sup>10</sup> Zhang *et al.* 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Wanhill 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Hohl, Tisdell 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Connell *et al.* 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Baum, Hagen 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Buhalis 1999.



in the case of Israel<sup>16</sup>. Anyway, although the best efforts are commonly headed to reinforcing accommodation structure development, it is unavoidable to pay attention also to the motivational factors necessary to encourage visitors towards peripheral destinations, such as in the Book Town case<sup>17</sup>.

It is not negligible to highlight that all these kinds of barriers produce as their first effect the issues of depopulation and socioeconomic decline of the peripheral area concerned. In the view of recovering destinations affected by peripherality, already remote literature has recognized in tourism a possible and practicable leverage to stimulate or re-engage local communities' development. In the early seventies, as a possible line of development of the remote and depopulated rural area of North Norfolk (England), the establishment of recreational facilities along the coast was assumed, in an area which was characterized by a considerable natural endowment, but in which no tourism plans were designed before<sup>18</sup>. Shortly after, in a review of the primary needs regarding the rural depopulated territories of the Irish country, it was underlined that tourism was supposed to be an integral part of regional and local development plans, predicting that the expansion of tourism activities was considered as essential for readdressing the future of rural areas in Europe<sup>19</sup>. The centrality of tourism in regional planning was reaffirmed in the case of Sweden, where, by reviewing the regional development policy undertaken by the Swedish government in regard to the northern peripheral areas of the country, it was noted that the integration between development policies and tourism activities was reached only after two decades of implementation. In particular, it was claimed that possibilities for local communities become real opportunities only when people, entrepreneurs and planners are involved and aware of the cultural heritage endowment of their area<sup>20</sup>. Tourism development was revealed to be functional also in some very remote regions of Australia among the middle of the nineties, where the majority of the inner areas experienced a strong depopulation against the powerful population growth of the coastal areas<sup>21</sup>. In Japan, the "revitalization" of the three rural depopulated communities of Tsumago, Shiojiri and Yufuin has passed through the development of tourism, where local politics gave emphasis on cultural traditions, religious belief and helped the restoring of many old structures for reconverting them into tourism attractions<sup>22</sup>. More recently, the same concept of revitalization of rural communities was discussed in regard to the Italian scenario, where through an analysis of a series of projects applied to

<sup>16</sup> Krakover 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Seaton 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Drudy, Wallace 1971.

<sup>19</sup> Commins 1978.

<sup>20</sup> Nilsson 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Mckenzie 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Sullivan 1997.

Italian peripheral depopulated destinations, it was found that restoring cultural assets has led to new tourism opportunities for the villages concerned<sup>23</sup>.

A particularly evident common trait which comes up from all the above-discussed cases is that tourism development of a peripheral destination cannot avoid the linkage existing between the local community and the cultural heritage. In other terms, especially for those territories affected by problems of depopulation, the revitalization of local economy may begin when residents get conscious and aware about their territory, playing an active role in the decision-making processes. In this framework, the local and regional governmental bodies should be able to plan policies aimed, at the same time, to valorize cultural or natural endowment, maximize social and economic benefits for local communities and – last but not least – ensure the integrity of available resources.

### *3. Peripherality in Italy. The SNAI's role in tourism development*

The marginalization phenomena of Italian “Inner Areas” started around the 1950s (after World War II) and the reasons at the basis of this decline<sup>24</sup> follow the above mentioned literature<sup>25</sup>, with particular reference to: population decline, jobs cut and falling land use, shortage in public and private services, social costs, hydro-geological instability, degradation of cultural and natural heritage, lack of funding by local administrations, aversion of local communities towards outside intervention. The expression “Inner Areas” summarizes the feature of limited accessibility to essential services of all residents of “minor centers” in Italy. For this reason, 3 main characteristics of the Inner Areas are:

- significant spatial distance from main “service centers” (education, health, mobility);
- abundance of environmental (water, agricultural, forests, natural and human landscape) and cultural resources (abbeys, archaeological assets, museums, historic settlements, skills centers);
- high differentiation between endowments of each area, due to the temporal stratification and differentiation of natural and anthropological systems.

Over times, public and private bodies have extracted – wrongly – a large amount of resources (biomass plants, wind farms, cables, landfill), gaining significant revenues in the short term, but not producing benefits and innovations

<sup>23</sup> Di Figlia 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Barca *et al.* 2014, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Cloke 1992; Wanhill 1997; Baum, Hagen 1999.

in the long term for local communities<sup>26</sup>. In order to map geographically the Inner Areas, the National Strategy has adopted a distance-based approach (travel-time), measuring the distance between the Inner Areas and the “service centers”, as follow:

- single-municipality service center (urban centers);
- multi-municipality service center;
- belt areas (up to 20 minutes far from the centers);
- intermediate areas (from 20 to 40 minutes far from the centers);
- peripheral areas (from 40 to 75 minutes far from the centers);
- ultra-peripheral areas (over 75 minutes far from the centers).

“Service centers” are the municipalities with the following structural endowment<sup>27</sup>: exhaustive range of secondary schools; at least one highly specialized hospital; at least one silver-type railway station. Municipalities falling into the Inner Areas in Italy are 4,185, among which 2,360 are intermediate areas, 1,522 are peripheral areas and 303 are ultra-peripheral areas, representing the 51.7% of the whole municipalities. In terms of average elevation, Inner Areas range from 400 to 670 meters on the sea level in average; as for the population, Inner Areas represent about 23% of the national population, with about 13 million people living in between intermediate, peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas; in terms of national surface, almost 60% of the whole surface is involved into Inner Areas perimeters; the most of “belt areas” are located in the northern Italy, while the majority of “ultra-peripheral areas” can be found in Basilicata and Sardinia; approximately 65% of Inner Areas corresponds to mountain municipalities<sup>28</sup>.

These municipalities have been clustered in 72 inter-municipal areas, 56 of which have already set out a path for being formally recognized as Inner Areas<sup>29</sup>. In order to pick up fast feedbacks about the effectiveness of the SNAI strategy, for each region has been identified one pilot project area, upon which early assessment will be conducted. The pilot project areas are summarized in table 1, and they will be considered in this study as gravitational poles for understanding what the potential basins of tourism flows – deriving from WHS provinces – are able to be intercepted for boosting the growth of local communities.

<sup>26</sup> Barca *et al.* 2014, pp. 10-11.

<sup>27</sup> Lucatelli 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Capece Galeota 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Andreoli *et al.* 2017, p. 2.

N°	Pilot project area	Region	Province(s)	Number of involved municipalities
1	Valli Maira e Grana	Piedmont	Cuneo	18
2	Bassa Valle	Valle d'Aosta	Aosta	22
3	Valchiavenna-Valtellina	Lombardy	Sondrio	18
4	Tesino	Trentino Alto Adige	Trento	3
5	Spettabile Reggenza	Veneto	Vicenza	8
6	Alta Carnia	Friuli-Venezia-Giulia	Udine	21
7	Antola Tigullio	Liguria	Genova	16
8	Appennino Emiliano	Emilia-Romagna	Reggio nell'Emilia	10
9	Casentino-Valtiberina	Tuscany	Arezzo	10
10	Sud-Ovest	Umbria	Terni	20
11	Appennino Basso Pesarese and Anconetano	Marche	Pesaro-Urbino and Ancona	10
12	Valle del Comino	Lazio	Frosinone	18
13	Basso Sangro-Trigno	Abruzzo	Chieti	33
14	Matese	Molise	Campobasso	14
15	Alta Irpinia	Campania	Avellino	25
16	Monti Dauni	Puglia	Foggia	29
17	Montagna Materana	Basilicata	Matera	8
18	Reventino Savuto	Calabria	Catanzaro	14
19	Madonie-Val Simeto	Sicily	Palermo and Catania	24
20	Alta Marmilla	Sardinia	Oristano	20

Tab. 1. Pilot project areas in SNAI strategy (Source: SNAI plan documents, 2016)

These pilot project areas are asked to develop a cohesive local strategy, in order to improve the use of territorial *milieu*, enhance residents' well-being and, definitively, reduce the issues of depopulation and marginalization through an increased level of place attractiveness<sup>30</sup>. In order to pursue these primary goals, these areas will benefit from funding coming from the most common European

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

structural funds, where each region organizes the allocation basing on its own planning tools<sup>31</sup>.

The importance of tourism for recovering peripheral areas has been pointed already from the early document of SNAI strategy. Despite this, the relevance of tourism development was slight and tourism was only mentioned among the categories involved for local development projects, but without any kind of particular deepening. Indeed, tourism was only seen as a natural, cultural or sustainable resource to be valorized, without lines of interventions. In the first SNAI technical report<sup>32</sup>, tourism perspectives were still weak in policies and governmental guidelines. As noted in a following study through a content analysis of plan documents, cross-references to tourism activities and natural environments were identified as cohesive in a cluster, but still “non-specific”<sup>33</sup>. Different are the results of the second SNAI technical report<sup>34</sup>, where tourism assumes more relevance, in terms of driving force for local development, investment measures, governance model, methodological methods for applying tourism-related strategies, innovative and sustainable vision, cultural heritage valorization, professional education. MiBACT (renamed as MiBAC after the forming of the government on June 1, 2018), at this purpose, set up a guideline for tourism development.

The question of tourism development in Inner Areas assumes different extents, depending on the tourism degree of development already held by the area concerned. On this matter, a recent technical note to Inner Areas<sup>35</sup> has pointed that pilot project areas are developing strategies basing on two general lines of action: the first is concerned to those areas whose tourism can already be classified as “mature”, while, as for the second ones, are concerned those areas categorized as “emerging” tourism markets. The heterogeneity of tourism structures in distinct areas requires appropriated and well-defined different strategies, depending on whether the area concerned is experiencing an expansion or a maturity phase of its tourism life cycle. When referring to the tourism destination life cycle, we are considering as starting point the theory elaborated by Richard Butler in 1980, the so-called “Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution”<sup>36</sup>, with which the author reconsiders and applies the *Product Life Cycle* theory to the tourist areas and extends the number of stages previously theorized by Walter Christaller<sup>37</sup>, i.e. *discovery*, *growth* and *decline*. Under this theorization, Butler hypothesized an *S-curve* of the tourist area life cycle, formed by an initial phase of *exploration*, a subsequent phase characterized

<sup>31</sup> Andreoli *et al.* 2017, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> De Vincenti 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Punziano, Urso 2016.

<sup>34</sup> De Vincenti 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Andreoli *et al.* 2017, pp. 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> Butler 1980.

<sup>37</sup> Christaller 1963.

by *involvement* and *development*, a middle phase including the *consolidation* and the *stagnation* of the area, and a final phase where the area, depending on the pursued strategy, may be involved in a *rejuvenation* or a complete *decline* from the tourism perspective. Although several criticisms have been moved towards the TALC theory, due to the presence of a lot of positive and negative externalities which can compress or expand the various phases of the tourism area life cycle (for example, threshold capacity<sup>38</sup>, carrying capacity<sup>39</sup>, planning issues<sup>40</sup>), the general assumption of the *S-curve* of the tourist areas life cycle can still be considered working for explaining the tourism destinations' evolution and for managing and rectifying eventual negative development trajectories. On such premises and in line with the thought of Singh, who argues that when the core destinations start to suffer from carrying capacity problems it is likely that the peripheral (neighboring) destinations become the new "core and fresh tourism attractiveness" taking the contours of satellite destinations<sup>41</sup>, we assume as statement in this paper that the peripheral destinations in Italy (for the most those individuated by SNAI), if properly managed, can surely benefit from the carrying capacity concerns who affect the Italian mature destinations, here identified under the class of the WHS destinations, given the fact that in Italy the majority of the WHS tourism areas can be surely ascribed to the *stagnation* phase of their life cycle.

What is particularly evident from the technical note is that the majority of central-northern destinations in Italy, characterized by already established tourism policies, are developing strategies of "consolidation" and "diversification" of the tourism supply (Valchiavenna and Valtellina, Appennino Basso Pesarese and Anconetano, Casentino-Valtiberina); on the other side, the most of the central and southern areas, due to its "novelty" status in the tourism panorama, are developing "penetration-oriented" strategies, by leveraging on the label of "sustainability" or "experiential" (Basso Sangro-Trigno, Alta Irpinia, Montagna Materana). A particular common trait, both for mature and for emerging destinations, is the recognized importance of cultural and natural endowment for the development of tourism policies. Hence, the research question of this paper is aimed to identify whether, and to what extent, a convergence between Inner Areas and WHS tourism flows is possible.

This broader emphasis on tourism development borne out in the recent findings of some authors<sup>42</sup>, who have clustered the width of tourism in peripheral and ultra-peripheral municipalities in Italy and have identified a tangible trajectory of tourism transition from standardized mass tourism – typical of mature destinations – to locally-based tourism. For the first time since many

<sup>38</sup> Debbage 1990; Martin, Uysal 1990.

<sup>39</sup> Singh 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Getz 1992.

<sup>41</sup> Singh 2011, p. 1185.

<sup>42</sup> Salvatore *et al.* 2018.

decades, not only the already tourism-oriented destinations have experienced a growth in their tourism structure, but mainly those rural municipalities – characterized by weaknesses and lack in their tourism planning – have recorded considerable performances in terms of tourism growth, both from the demand-side and from the supply-side. At this purpose, consistent with the majority of literature, the authors suggest as best practice an approach based on multi-level governance, in which residents, stakeholders and policy-makers should develop an integrated approach in order to pursue considerable achievements in tourism development, with particular regard to peripheral and ultra-peripheral destinations<sup>43</sup>.

#### *4. Managing cultural heritage. The community-engagement in World Heritage Sites*

The World Heritage Convention, signed in Paris in November 1972, represents the most important international agreement for preserving authenticity and integrity of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world, in terms of the number of state parties involved into the agreement<sup>44</sup>. The UNESCO early general agreement has identified as “cultural heritage” those monuments, architectural works, monumental sculptures and paintings, elements of archeological nature, cave dwellings, groups of buildings, which are recognized to be of outstanding universal value from the historical, artistic or scientific point of view; otherwise, for “natural heritage”, the agreement recognized all those formations or groups of formations characterized by physical, biological, geological and physiographical features which are universally relevant from the aesthetic or scientific point of view<sup>45</sup>. This has resulted, in 2018, in an overall number of 167 State Parties worldwide adhering to the general agreement, where the total properties in possess of the UNESCO certification are 1,092, among which 845 represent “Cultural” sites, 209 are concerned as “Natural” sites and 38 are categorized as “Mixed” sites<sup>46</sup>.

As for the Italian framework, seven years after the UNESCO Convention the first WHS was included in the List – the site of Valle Camonica in the province of Brescia (Lombardy) – and, starting from the early eighties, the process has led to the approval of 54 sites ascribed to the List in 2018. The majority of the active sites are listed as “Cultural” with a percentage around 90% of the total, while the remaining are concerned to “Natural” sites. The

<sup>43</sup> Salvatore *et al.* 2018, pp. 49-50.

<sup>44</sup> Alberts, Hazen 2010.

<sup>45</sup> UNESCO 1972.

<sup>46</sup> <<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>>, 30.03.2018.

spatial distribution of UNESCO WHSs in Italy follows a reasonably balanced distribution between north and south, even if the highest densities are visible in northern Italy. Recently, in 2017, the transboundary natural WHS of *Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe* was extended to some central Italian regions, by including a lot of peripheral territories which never had been in the spotlight, such as a share of the central Apennines involving the regions of Abruzzo and Molise, other to some remote destinations of southern Umbria and eastern of Lazio region. This last inclusion in the World Heritage List permitted to cover geographically one tract of Italian peninsula which was out of the gravitational basins of tourism flows interested in experiencing WHS destinations. Given that the majority of WHSs in Italy are listed as “Cultural” sites and they are more targeted to core destinations with universally recognized relevance from historical, cultural and artistic point of view<sup>47</sup>, the possibility to consider rural and peripheral destinations as potential candidates for gaining the status of protection of UNESCO may represent a viable solution for boosting the hoped-for community engagement and emphasizing tourism in remote areas.

Such this last aspect is particularly relevant for the aim of this analysis. Since from the early UNESCO general agreement, the role of local communities represents a pivotal component for developing comprehensive territorial planning strategies. At this purpose, the early general Convention underlined that promoting cultural or natural heritage should be addressed in order to create a «function in the life of the community»<sup>48</sup>. Subsequently, starting from the early 2000s, the UNESCO committee has begun a monitoring process, in order to supervise the state of the art of worldwide protection and promotion programs and this is still being made through the release of periodic papers, reports and manuals. In these regards, a common feature which is particularly evident from some of these reports is the persistent heed to local communities; for instance, the proceedings of a UNESCO workshop held in Ferrara (Italy) in 2002 have focused on the relationships between human and natural environment regarding the conservation of cultural landscapes and, in a case study concerning the rural landscapes of Europe, it was claimed that the integration of experts’ and community-residents’ perceptions should be combined in order to ensure an effective management of cultural and natural endowments in rural communities. In particular, as for the discussed case regarding the plan for management of the Cinque Terre (Liguria region), it was individuated as a main goal «to stimulate the involvement of individuals and communities by giving them responsibility in the management of conservation programmes [...] through the active participation of interested parties»<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Cavuta, Di Matteo 2014

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO 1972, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Besio 2003, p. 65.



Nevertheless, when a site is posed under the attention of UNESCO, especially for what concerns small villages, rural areas and remote destinations, it often emerges various management complexities. The problem of depopulation and/or aging of local residents could represent a threat for maintaining the outstanding value of the site concerned; for instance, in some continuing cultural landscapes something like “gentrification” processes may affect the integrity of the destination: it has frequently happened – such as in the cases of Sintra in Portugal, Cinque Terre in Italy, Hollokö in Hungary or Holasovice in the Czech Republic – that the new owners were more likely to modify some structural characteristics of the supply-side in order to better suit their needs, partially losing their former authenticity<sup>50</sup>. Just as in terms of stakeholders, one other contingent problem could be represented by conflicts between local traditional owners and new commercial operators; the issue of untangling local use areas between residents and external entrepreneurs may lead to conflicts and therefore generate negative impacts for local communities<sup>51</sup>.

One further reminder to the matter of local communities and their challenges for pursuing sustainable tourism achievements in World Heritage destinations was given in a more recent handbook released by UNESCO. It was firstly remarked that the status of “World Heritage” cannot be considered as a luxury item for the certifications’ holders, rather it should work as an instrument for encouraging the welfare of residents, in particular for the local communities where the sites are located in<sup>52</sup>, and, according to the international human rights principles individuated by the UN Declaration, those WHSs who are kept on remote destinations should obtain consent and approval of locally-based communities<sup>53</sup> to hope for a holistic approach towards tourism development. But the role of local communities and its inhabitants shall not be limited to a function of maintenance and conservation of local resources, rather they should be actively involved also in the process of assessment of the values regarding the site concerned<sup>54</sup>, where the interest of a local community should match the interest of the respective national government in nominating a site to the WHL, since it may often happen that one of the two has divergent weights and strategies for requiring the admission to the List. For these reasons, the community involvement is required not only for the nomination process, but also for mitigating clashes between residents and stakeholders, for strengthening the credibility of the site concerned, for the capacity-building with the aim to cooperate to mutual purposes and for emphasizing the communication of the destination<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell *et al.* 2009, pp. 106-107.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>52</sup> von Droste 2012, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Disko 2012, pp. 16-17.

<sup>54</sup> Rössler 2012, p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> Albert 2012, pp. 32-38.

From a tourism attractiveness perspective, intangible impacts on a WHS have to be monitored, as well as environmental and physical ones. The above-mentioned authenticity may be eroded when the flows of visitors towards the site concerned are extremely high with respect to the carrying capacity of the host community. When the local community residents are an integrant part of the attraction itself, tourism management plans should be particularly careful about the protection of identity, since «restoring a site's vitality and spirit is a complicated operation that cannot be obtained by means of monetary investments»<sup>56</sup>. Anyway, tourism presents too massive opportunities not to be exploited by local communities: in this framework, the role of local governments becomes overwhelming in order to manage economic and social relationships between local people and external stakeholders attracted by the emerging destination (such as tour operators). Furthermore, at the moment to set up a strategic planning for the site, it is unavoidable to consider that the international legislation should merge with the local existing planning, in particular considering that it is quite unambiguous that a WHS designation will not produce effects and/or benefits only for the area concerned, but also for the surrounding area. If the WHSs are located into cities or major centers they are already prepared to manage such vulnerabilities, while in the case of smaller peripheral communities various coordination measures should be undertaken in order to gain general benefits for residents: provide training for local people working in tourism, ensure the safeguard of functions, values and authenticity of the heritage, develop an integrated planning for understanding what is the threshold over which tourism produces negative effects in environmental and social terms, harmonize the linkage with external stakeholders, guarantee a continuous dialogue between people and local government<sup>57</sup>.

International literature has provided broad evidence that the UNESCO subscription produces effects on the site concerned, most of the times positive, few times negative. In terms of whole countries, when one country accounts more than 20 sites under the UNESCO protection, it is likely that tourism flows will increase between 300 and 800 thousand visitors towards the country concerned<sup>58</sup> and the positive effects have been confirmed at regional<sup>59</sup>, provincial<sup>60</sup> and local<sup>61</sup> extent. Positive impacts are found also in terms of economic benefits<sup>62</sup>, but the most interesting findings in terms of local communities are in regard

<sup>56</sup> Viñals, Morant 2012, p. 43.

<sup>57</sup> Viñals, Morant 2012, pp. 45-46.

<sup>58</sup> Su, Lin 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Patuelli *et al.* 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Borowiecki, Castiglione 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Caust, Vecco 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Arezki *et al.* 2009.

to positive perceptions<sup>63</sup>, engagement<sup>64</sup> and sense of belonging<sup>65</sup> of residents towards the “own” WHS. Nevertheless, some negative impacts can occur, by generating problems of overcapacity in mature destinations<sup>66</sup>, conflicts between cultural heritage endowment and local policies<sup>67</sup> and environmental concerns<sup>68</sup>.

Such evidence suggests that surrounding areas could benefit from the shadows-effect of WHS destinations and in case of Italy, where about the half of the whole provinces are endowed by UNESCO and another half is characterized by problems of marginalization and peripherality, a possible convergence process could surely encourage positive effects for those “learning regions”<sup>69</sup>.

### *5. Overlaying heritage endowment and Pilot Project Areas: the potential tourism gravitational basins for Italian Inner Areas*

After having rearranged the current framework of Inner Areas in Italy and the main principles to manage a World Heritage Site, with particular emphasis on those WHSs located in peripheral destinations and “hosted” by the respective local communities, this work is proposing a geographical approach in order to understand what are the possibilities of Inner Areas to leverage on neighboring WHS destinations and what are the most prone to intercept cultural heritage flows. As place markers of this analysis, the 20 Italian pilot project areas individuated by the SNAI<sup>70</sup> were taken into account. This has led to building a map of potential tourism gravitational basins for the aforementioned areas and this could be helpful for areas’ managers for understanding if preconditions exist to modeling the areas’ strategies relying on the cultural heritage of surrounding WHS areas.

For introducing this kind of analysis, a graphical representation of pilot project areas (represented by municipalities) and WHS endowment (represented by the province of belonging) was regarded as necessary. In figure 1 these two dimensions have been overlapped and the first evidence stands out.

It appears quite clear that we are in presence of pilot areas who are almost completely merged with WHS destinations (Valli Maira and Grana, Tesino, Spettabile Reggenza, Alta Carnia, Antola Tigullio, Sud-Ovest, Montagna Materana); in other cases, the neighboring proximity is approximate (Bassa

<sup>63</sup> Rasoolimanesh *et al.* 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Vollero *et al.* 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Jaafar *et al.* 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Kirkpatrick 2001; Cuccia *et al.* 2015; Park, Almeida Santos 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Xu *et al.* 2017; Zhang *et al.* 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Hawkins *et al.* 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Hauser *et al.* 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Lucatelli 2016.

Valle, Valchiavenna-Valtellina, Appennino Emiliano, Casentino-Valtiberina, Appennino Basso Pesarese and Anconetano, Alta Iprinia, Monti Dauni, Madonie-Val Simeto); while, in some cases, the spatial linkage between Pilot Areas and WHS provinces is only marginal or even absent (Valle del Comino, Basso Sangro-Trigno, Matese, Reventino Savuto, Alta Marmilla). From a general perspective, the first glance on the figure 1 returns a framework in which northern Inner Areas seem to be the most concerned towards WHS endowments, the central areas may be fairly involved, while the most southern areas seem to be far from a possible convergence with WHS provinces.

In order to understand to what extent pilot areas could benefit from neighboring WHS provinces in terms of tourism flows, for every pilot project area each neighboring province with WHS endowments was detected, and for each WHS province the average number of nights spent involving the 12-year period of 2005-2016 was computed. In a further moment, the flows of the province in which pilot areas are located and the flows of the *k-neighboring* provinces were aggregated. In this way, it was possible to point out a gravitational basin of tourism flows for each pilot project area. Depending on the width of the potential tourism gravitational basins, the 20 pilot areas were classified through a level of convergence (low, robust, consistent, high, excellent), for understanding which are the areas who can hypothesize an integrated approach with local governments of WHS provinces, and who cannot. The results are summarized in the following table.

N°	Pilot project area	Province(s)	<i>In-province tourism flows (nights spent per year; av. value 2005-2016) – in millions</i>	Neighboring WHS province(s)	<i>Neighboring WHS tourism flows (nights spent per year; av. value 2005-2016) – in millions</i>	Gravitational area's global flows (nights spent per year; av. value 2005-2016) – in millions	Convergence level
1	Valli Maira and Grana	Cuneo	1.49	No	0	1.49	low
2	Bassa Valle	Aosta	3.15	Torino, Biella, Vercelli	6.16	9.31	consistent
3	Valchiavenna-Valtellina	Sondrio	2,44	Bolzano, Trento, Brescia, Como	54.67	57.11	excellent
4	Tesino	Trento	15.31	Belluno	4.36	19.67	high
5	Spettabile Reggenza	Vicenza	1.87	Trento, Belluno	19.67	21.54	high
6	Alta Carnia	Udine	5.33	Pordenone, Belluno	4.85	10.18	consistent
7	Antola Tigullio	Genova	3.48	La Spezia, Alessandria	2.42	5.90	robust

8	Appennino Emiliano	Reggio dell' Emilia	0.78	Lucca, Modena	4.95	5.73	robust
9	Casentino-Valtiberina	Arezzo	1.13	Firenze, Forli-Cesena, Pesaro-Urbino	20.28	21.41	high
10	Sud-Ovest	Terni	0.75	Perugia, Siena, Viterbo	10.74	11.49	consistent
11	Appenino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano	Pesaro-Urbino and Ancona	6.02	Perugia	5.13	11.15	consistent
12	Valle del Comino	Frosinone	1.13	L'Aquila	1.25	2.38	low
13	Basso Sangro-Trigno	Chieti	1.13	L'Aquila	1.25	2.38	low
14	Matese	Campobasso	0.47	Caserta	0.86	1.33	low
15	Alta Irpinia	Avellino	0.20	Salerno, Potenza, Foggia	11.70	11.90	consistent
16	Monti Dauni	Foggia	4.34	Potenza	0.60	4.94	robust
17	Montagna Materana	Matera	1.37	Potenza	0.60	1.97	low
18	Reventino Savuto	Catanzaro	1.42	Cosenza	3.02	4.44	robust
19	Madonie-Val Simeto	Palermo and Catania	4.85	Enna, Messina, Agrigento	5.07	9.92	consistent
20	Alta Marmilla	Oristano	0.44	No	0	0.44	low

Tab. 2. Tourism gravitational basins of Pilot Project Areas (Source: own elaboration on SNAI plan documents and ISTAT data, 2005-2016)

From table 2, what was previously assumed by a spatial observation is corroborated by numerical support. The majority of the pilot areas with large potential gravitational basins are located in the central-north of the Peninsula; in particular, the area of Valchiavenna-Valtellina in Lombardy region has a potential basin of about 57 million tourist nights spent per year, followed by Spettabile Reggenza in Veneto region with 21.5 millions of potential nights spent, the area of Casentino-Valtiberina in Tuscany region with a potential gravitational basin of 21.4 million tourists and the Tesino pilot area with 19.6 million of nights spent.

Wide basins of potential nights spent are also found in Bassa Valle (9.3 million), Alta Carnia (10.2 million), Sud-Ovest (11.49 million), Appennino Basso Pesarese and Anconetano (11.15 million) and, for what concerns southern regions, good values are found in the area of Alta Irpinia (11.90 million) and in the Sicilian pilot areas of Madonie-Val Simeto (9.92 million).

Lower, but still robust, values are found in cases of Antola Tigullio, Appennino Emiliano, Monti Dauni and Reventino Savuto, with potential tourism gravitational basins ranging from 4.40 up to 5.90 million of nights spent per year. Few possibilities to intercept WHS flows are found in pilot project areas of Valli Maira and Grana, Valle del Comino, Basso Sangro-Trigno, Matese, Montagna Materana and Alta Marmilla, where the potential gravitational basins are well below 3 million of nights spent per year.

Another relevant aspect which comes up from the table 2 is that there are some pilot areas in which the “hosting” province provides low values and the neighboring WHS provinces provide very high values of potential nights spent (such as in Valchiavenna-Valtellina, Spettabile Reggenza, Casentino-Valtiberina, Sud-Ovest and Alta Irpinia), while there are other pilot areas where the “hosting” province accounts for good or even higher values if compared to the neighboring WHS ones (like in Tesino, Alta Carnia, Antola Tigullio, Appennino Basso Pesarese and Anconetano, Monti Dauni and Madonie-Val Simeto). A graphic representation of the tourism potential gravitational basins for each pilot project area and the related convergence level is provided in figure 2.

## 6. *Conclusions and limitations*

Once the potential tourism gravitational basins for those areas designed as a pilot project by the *National Strategy for Inner Areas* have been identified, some fundamental questions are going to come out: what are the mechanisms which should be activated to encourage this convergence? Are Inner Areas able to handle eventual tourism flows coming from the gravitational basin of provinces involved in UNESCO protection programs? What could be the motivating factors able to engage a heritage tourist towards an inner and/or peripheral area? Are there common features for launching cooperation between an inner area and a World Heritage Site? Well, the answers to these questions are presented as difficult, but what is particularly true is that we need more time for understanding what the real advantages of the national designation of Inner Areas are.

For instance, one of the first goals of those areas who are planning to develop major or minor tourist strategies should be the recognition of the accommodation capacity of the area concerned. This is missing in a lot of areas for which the early general plan has already been approved. For understanding what the potential tourism flows towards each area are, a careful refocusing of the tourism facilities should be carried out upon the moment of writing a strategic tourism plan for the area concerned. It is the full awareness about the characteristics of the “own” area the key for understanding what is feasible and what is not. For example, basing on the descriptive statistics provided in this

paper, future works could be aimed to understand what the maximum carrying capacities – per year – of all the municipalities forming the Inner Areas are, in regard to the potential basins deriving from the neighboring provinces in which UNESCO sites generate plenty of visitors over the year. In a country like Italy where the number and the density of World Heritage Sites denote maximum levels if compared to all other countries worldwide, it would be unreasonable to not take into account the areas in which the WHSs are located in as a possible source of visitors for those “Learning Tourism Destinations”<sup>71</sup> branded by peripherality, marginalization and depopulation processes.

Since the plan documents of a lot of Pilot Areas mention the cultural heritage<sup>72</sup> as a crucial step for developing strategies of a “slow tourism”<sup>73</sup>, it cannot be discussed if not by considering the neighboring influence of already mature destination from the heritage perspective, such as those with WHS endowments, for the reasons regarding the tourism destination life cycle discussed above.

Another relevant issue about a likely merging between Inner Areas and World Heritage Destinations concerns the primary role of local governments: in order to think about partnerships, cooperation programs, joint measures and all it was discussed by UNESCO committees in regards to the role of local communities in tourism planning and development, it is needed an inter-governmental structure which could guarantee benefits for both, by meaning decongestion for mature destinations and tourism (re)population for peripheral destinations.

This kind of analysis exhibits the above-mentioned limitations and it cannot be, of course, fully satisfactory and exhaustive for understanding what the trajectories to be undertaken for rebalancing cultural heritage flows in Italian peripheral destinations are, but it opens the door to a wider reflection about this matter.

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<sup>71</sup> Schianetz *et al.* 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Regione Abruzzo SNAI 2016; Regione Sardegna SNAI 2016.

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Appendix

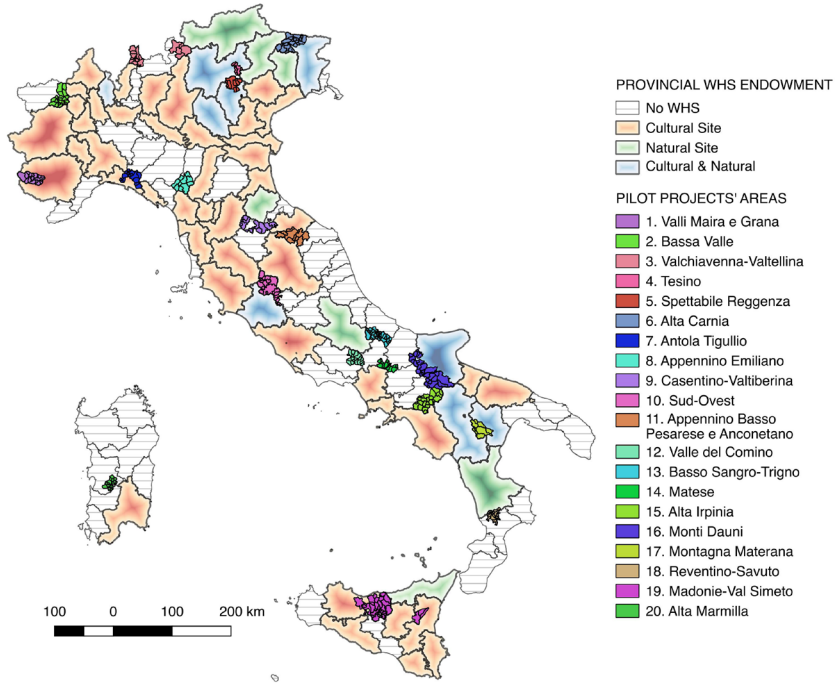


Fig. 1. Provincial WHS endowment and Pilot Project Areas by municipalities (Source: own elaboration on SNAI plan documents and UNESCO Italy data)

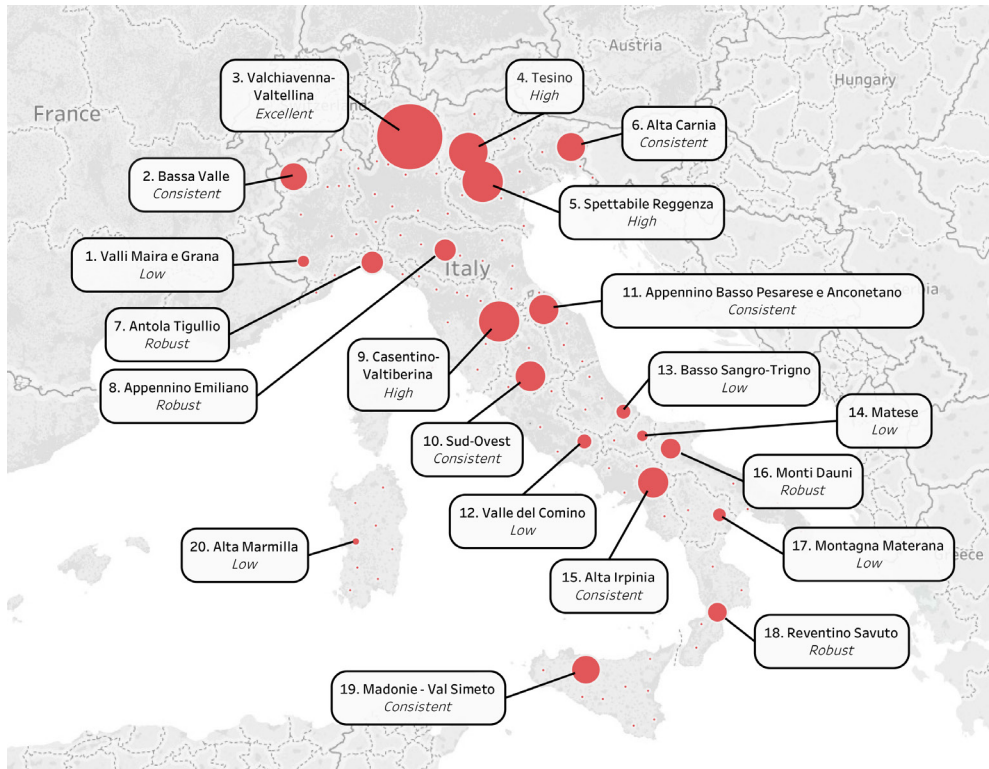


Fig. 2. Potential tourism gravitational basins for Pilot Project Areas and convergence level (Source: own elaboration on SNAI plan documents and ISTAT data, 2005-2016)

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