

The effects of local context on World Heritage Site management: the Dolomites WHS.

WHS management is inspired by the integrated and participatory approach adopted in well-managed protected areas and implemented in all sectors participating in sustainable development. As the effectiveness of this approach is affected by local context, the Dolomites natural WHS has been chosen to investigate with WHS status and stakeholder engagement in their design, under different institutional and socio-economic conditions. Combining quantitative analysis – classifying WHS and neighbouring mountain municipalities according to their sustainable tourism development – and an online questionnaire sent to the area’s mayors, the research revealed differing perceptions in the WHS municipalities and where tourism-driven socio-economic wellbeing is already evident. In these areas, tourism is expected to grow more in future than in non-WHS and marginal destinations, but as part of a diversified economy. The autonomy and power of stakeholders in decision making is also perceived to be higher here, although participation is still largely induced, as the participatory capacity of some groups is weak. Concerns that sustainable development may limit autonomy and exclude other alternatives suggest that extensive and less regulated tourism development in the Dolomites’ mass destinations is likely to continue.

Keywords: WHS; integrated and participatory management; stakeholder engagement; sustainable tourism; Dolomites.

Introduction

The number of World Heritage Sites (WHSs) has increased dramatically since the World Heritage Convention on the protection of WHSs in 1972 (UNESCO, 1972) and the World Heritage Committee’s strategy on a balanced World Heritage List (WHL) in 1994 (Steiner & Frey, 2011). This increase can be explained by the opportunities connected to the international recognition of the areas’ significance and outstanding value for humanity which range from heritage preservation only – whether already well looked after or at risk – to the socio-economic development achieved by catalyzing place making, marketing and branding through WHS listing (Rebanks Consulting Ltd, 2009). Tourism is assumed to be the driver of a WHS

site's socio-economic development through these levers (Jimura, 2011; Li, Wu, & Cai, 2008; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009).

The portfolio of opportunities envisioned with WHS status is expected to be planned and managed as it would be in any well managed protected area (ICUN, 2008, p. 2-4). This means that integration and stakeholder participation – which are fundamental tenets of the good governance of protected areas – should inspire the effective management of WHSs and their sustainable development (Conradin, Engesser, & Wiesmann, 2014), irrespective of whether or not this development is driven by tourism (Landorf, 2009; Pedersen, 2002). However, achieving local stakeholder support and involvement is difficult in practice (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013; Tosun, 2006) and the relationship between WHS recognition and tourism development is still controversial (Buckley, 2004; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Li et al., 2008; Takamitsu, 2011). Both are impacted by a number of place specific factors (Wiesmann, Liechti, & Rist, 2005) – the prevailing socio-economic conditions at the time of the nomination and the governance system, in particular (Leask & Fyall, 2006; Li et al., 2008; Ryan, Chaozhi, & Zeng, 2011).

This paper assesses the influence that local context has on the integrated and participatory management of WHSs, in line with best practice for the management of protected areas. In particular, it investigates the relationship between stakeholder engagement in designing these futures (Tosun, 2006; Yüksel, Bramwell, & Yüksel, 1999) under different institutional and socio-economic conditions and with WHS status (Jimura, 2011; Kaltenborn, Thomassen, Wold, Linnell, & Skar, 2013).

Due to the crucial role that tourism plays in the socio-economic development of the Dolomites WHS, the research topic is analyzed combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to the case of the Dolomites WHS in Italy. This natural site, lying almost entirely within protected areas of differing natures, is characterized by a complex network of

institutions and a sharp socio-economic divide between prosperous community-based mass destinations and small, remote marginal destinations.

The integrated and participatory management of natural WHSs

UNESCO natural sites may be assumed to be protected areas of exceptional value because almost all fall within the perimeters of protected areas (Boyd & Dallen, 2006), but only a small percentage of them is recognized as being of exceptional value for humanity (IUCN, 2008). This qualification means that a WHS can be managed like a protected area (IUCN, 2008). From a technical-operative view point, this gives a UNESCO property an additional layer of conservation, thus strengthening the protection of its integrity and universal value. From a management point of view, it allows the evolution that the concept of conservation has undergone in the scientific debate on protected areas to be extended to UNESCO sites (Becken & Job, 2014).

This evolution is marked by the transition from management models focused on static preservation to models of innovative and dynamic conservation (Becken & Job, 2014; Moses, 2007; Moses & Weixlbaumer, 2007). The static preservation model – or segregation approach – (Moses & Weixlbaumer, 2007, p. 12) adopts a single sector and single level (local) management style, which implies a clear division between protected and polluted areas and top-down management approaches and tools. In contrast, the integrated and participatory management adopted by the model of innovative and dynamic conservation – or integration approach – allows the border between protected and polluted areas to be crossed, not only in economic (sectoral integration) and geographic-administrative terms (ecosystem approach), but also with regard to management levels (multi-level integration) and the integration of top-down and bottom-up management approaches and tools (participatory approach). Sustainable development, through the combination of preservation with economic development and

employment opportunities and prosperity for local communities, is the management goal of this integrated and participatory approach.

The integrated and participatory management plan is mandatory (UNESCO, 2015, Artt. 108-118); it covers the process of WHS listing and the entire period of the site's protection; is applicable to all the sectors participating in the site development, tourism included (Landorf, 2009), and to the areas adjacent to the WHS.

Stakeholder engagement in WHS management

Stakeholder participation in planning processes and the empowering of local populations are crucial to the successful futures of WHSs, both as places to live and as tourist destinations (Jamal & Watt, 2011; Kaltenborn et al., 2013; Yüksel et al., 1999). However, success depends on the forms of stakeholder participation engaged in the process (Tosun, 2006). Active and direct participation, in which the local stakeholders have full managerial responsibility and authority in decision making, is an ideal type (spontaneous form). The commonest type is top-down, passive and indirect and participation usually ranges from a coercive form, in which the needs and desires of powerful interest groups are primary, to induced forms in which community participation is restricted to consultation and/or participation for material gain (Simpson, 2001). Efforts to encourage deeper and more active participation are more likely to be made at the local governance level, where the scope and nature of sectoral interdependence and stakeholder interactions are scaled down (Kaltenborn et al., 2013). However, capacity building is necessary to encourage dialogue, partnerships and multi-stakeholder processes and to root sustainable development in a sense of place, culture and identity (Moscardo, 2008).

Failures to engage and empower local stakeholders – at even the general consultative level – can exclude many from the potential benefits of WHS recognition and reduce the effectiveness of sustainable development initiatives (Simpson, 2001; Tourtellot, 2006). Perceptions of exclusion can generate negative reactions in local stakeholders – or antagonistic

attitudes towards the (tourism) development envisioned by governments or other lead institutions (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). Under-engagement may also result from stakeholder concern that WHS nomination could limit local stakeholders' freedom to carry out future private initiatives (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko., 2009; Magi & Nzama, 2009).

Sustainable tourism in WHSs

Tourism is assumed to be the main catalyst of a WHS site's socio-economic development, through the marketing and branding of its universal value (Jimura, 2011; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009; Su & Lin, 2014; Yu-Wen & Hui-Lin, 2014). However, the relationship between WHS recognition and tourism is still controversial because the designation has both positive and negative implications for tourism development and its sustainability (Hall & Piggin, 2002; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Li et al., 2008; Takamitsu, 2011).

The pros include diverse economic benefits, in particular the enhancing of the symbolic value, visibility and image of the site, both internationally and nationally (Bianchi, 2002; Smith, 2002); income generation and job creation; infrastructure and service development and the revitalization/maintenance of traditional production methods and cultural traditions (Leask & Fyall, 2006). However, to what extent sites actually benefit from an increase in international tourism and a heightened visitor profile is not necessarily clear (Cellini, 2011; Shackley, 2006).

Quite apart from the issue of growth, tourism places additional pressures both on fragile physical and natural environments, and on local populations. Environmental impacts include the pollution of soil, water and air, erosion and threats to natural heritage (flora and fauna); social impacts relate to traffic, noise and congestion, often associated with antagonistic or negative attitudes on the part of local people towards visitors (Conradin et al., 2014). In general, the nature and intensity of the impact of tourism development depends on local context, in particular on the ways in which local tourism was being managed at the time of the

WHS nomination. The Weaver model (2000, 2012) is a qualitative framework which can be used to analyze the sustainability of different tourism development types (mass, niche) at different stages of a destination's lifecycle (Butler 1980); these types may be connected to different forms of stakeholder participation and diverse development paths – growth and regulation-driven or a combination of both.

The Dolomites WHS

The Dolomites natural WHS is a complex institutional and socio-economic protected area of outstanding value set in the North Eastern Italian Alps. It received its WHS designation in June 2009, in recognition of its superlative natural beauty and outstanding universal geological value (Gianolla, Panizza, Micheletti, & Viola, 2008). This serial property of nine non-contiguous mountain areas covers a sparsely populated area of around 230,000 ha, almost all protected at the European, Italian and local level (Figure 1). It straddles three regions, five provinces (Trento, Bolzano, Belluno, Udine and Pordenone), more than 100 municipalities and includes many territorial organizations, tourism-related and not. The provinces have different institutional, legal and administrative systems – Trento and Bolzano have a special status under Italian law, which allows them greater autonomy – and linguistic, social and economic peculiarities.

Figure 1. The Dolomites WHS

The complexity of the property is managed by the Dolomites Foundation (<http://www.fondazionedolomitiunesco.org>), an *ad hoc* coordinating body – in which the five provinces and a panel of experts participate – established to harmonize the policies and actions of local institutions through an integrated and participatory approach based on functional networks and participatory logic and tools. Each province is responsible for specific activities (functions) – socio-economic development, tourism, mobility, promotion, landscape and

geological heritage, etc – carried out for the benefit of all the provinces involved, regardless of administrative boundaries. The Board of Supporters advises on the Foundation’s activities and programs and is composed of local administrators and other management bodies which are only represented indirectly in the Foundation through the provinces.

In 2016, seven years after the designation of the property, the Dolomite Foundation will present its General Management Strategy and the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism to UNESCO. Due to the preeminent role of the tourism economy in the development of the Dolomite territories, a sector specific strategy has been adopted (Elmi & Perlik, 2014). In fact, the mountain regions in which the Dolomites WHS lies show a sharp socio-economic divide connected to the coexistence of different tourism development types (Weaver, 2000). A number of community-type destinations (Murphy, 1985) have a high general level of economic development and wellbeing driven by a world-class (mass) tourism industry; natural resources and associated sports – skiing, climbing, hiking and trekking – are the most important tourist attractions. In contrast, tourism is still only in its early stages in a number of small, remote and marginal settlements whose primary industries, upon which local people have long been dependent – forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry – are in decline. Sustainability must be part of the future development – both tourism related and not – of all these areas (Rebanks Consulting Ltd., 2009) as it is crucial to the intrinsic socio-economic vitality of the Alpine regions, and a requirement for the Dolomites’ WHS listing. In mass destinations reaching consensus and enforcing decisions around sustainability is needed both to maintain the integrity of the property and to guarantee long-term development conditions; most territorial administrations have already introduced a range of environmental regulatory tools for this purpose. In emerging minor/marginal Dolomite destinations, sustainable tourism is a model coherent with the fragile natural landscape and an opportunity to catalyze local development

and integrate primary industries, thus promoting wellbeing and diminishing the demographic, social, and economic threats that these areas face.

Study method

The complexity of the Dolomites WHS has required that clear boundaries be defined within the case study design (Yin, 2003) in order to investigate the influence that institutional and socio-economic contexts has on the integrated and participative management of this site. In fact, decisions are made at three different levels (Foundation, provincial, municipal) and concern areas which are both within and adjacent to the Dolomites WHS, have different tourism development models (Weaver, 2000) and are at different lifecycle stages (Butler, 1980). The research focused on the local governance level (municipality), analyzing whether and how the inclusion of a municipality in the WHS property and its tourism development model (socio-economic context) affect local people's imagined futures with WHS status, their perceptions of possible stakeholder engagement in designing these futures, and how the latter might affect the former. The assumption is that in small mountain municipalities, like those in the Dolomites (ISTAT, 2014), people's socio-economic wellbeing will be directly impacted by WHS status—and the knowledge of local needs and resources will give them an incentive to participate in decision making processes related to the possible futures envisioned with WHS status (Rebanks Consulting Ltd., 2009).

The study method is divided into two phases. The first aims at defining the tourism-driven socio-economic development in municipalities within and around the WHS by quantitatively applying the Weaver model (2000) to ascertain the sustainability of different tourism development types. The second phase uses data from an online questionnaire to investigate local mayors' imagined futures with WHS status, and how they envision stakeholder engagement in the design of these futures. (Figure 2)

Quantitative analysis. Tourist development types in the Dolomites

The area of investigation includes 307 municipalities within the five Dolomite provinces, about 100 of which belong to the WHS and 200 of which are mountain municipalities (> 600 m a.s.l.), some border on the WHS, others do not (Figure 3). These municipalities have an average population of around 1,900 people and 94% of them have less (an average of 1,400) than 5,000 inhabitants – the Italian National Institute of Statistics-ISTAT threshold for small municipalities; the area includes only 18 medium-size (average pop. 9,500) municipalities. As well as allowing us to compare homogeneous municipalities within and around the WHS, the inclusion of mountain municipalities also guarantees the effective application of the analysis tool. (Fig.3)

The Weaver model (2000), which identifies four tourism ideal-types by combining tourist intensity and regulation, is quantitatively applied to identify the Dolomite municipalities as either sustainable or unsustainable, mass or niche, destinations.

The variables used to measure tourist intensity and regulation in municipalities were selected by combining criteria of place significance and homogeneity with availability and quality of data. These constraints led to the exclusion of many of the variables/indicators often used in studies on sustainable tourism (e.g. McCool & Stankey, 2004). Table 1 provides details of the variables, sources and indicators calculated for each Weaver model dimension. The data were collected from secondary census or sample surveys, from national, regional or provincial statistics offices or from reliable sources on environmental regulation issues. Tourist intensity and second home data refer to 2010/2011, the most up-to-date available interprovincial surveys; the most recent tourist regulation data are from 2012.

Municipalities have been positioned within the Weaver matrix by using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Rencher, 1998), which is particularly suitable when variables are highly correlated, as in this case study. The most significant PCA combines five indicators and explains 55.5% of the data variability. The first principal component (x-axis) is a proxy of the

tourism intensity dimension, the second (y-axis) of the tourist regulation. The matching between the Cartesian plane and the Weaver model was established by setting the thresholds that discriminate between high and low levels of tourist intensity and regulation in correspondence with the median value of each principal component.

Table 1. Tourist intensity and regulation. Variables, sources and indicators

Tourist intensity		
Variables	Sources	Indicators
Tourist flows (Arrivals and overnights)	Regional and Provincial Institutes of Statistics (Trento and Bolzano)	Average length of stay; Tourist rate (overnights per inhabitant); Tourist density (overnights per km ²); Bed occupancy rate
Accommodation capacity (Bed places)	ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics. <i>Accommodation capacity survey 2011</i>	Accommodation rate (beds per 10,000 inhabitants); Accommodation density (beds per km ²)
Tourism businesses (Enterprises and establishments)	ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics. <i>Population Census 2011</i>	Tourism businesses / Total businesses
Tourism Employment (Employees)	<i>ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics. Population Census 2011</i>	Tourism specialization
Regulation		
Protected areas	ARPA – Regional Environmental Protection Agency APPA– Provincial Environmental Protection Agency	Percentage of protected areas
Environmental certifications	ISPRA – Environmental Protection and Research Institute	EMAS and Ecolabel certifications per inhabitant
Differentiated waste collection	ISPRA – Environmental Protection and Research Institute	Differentiated waste collection / Urban waste
Second homes	ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics. <i>Population Census 2011</i>	Second homes / Population; Second homes / Total homes

According to the model, mass tourism destinations are sustainable (SMT) when the impact of large-scale tourism is highly regulated and kept within the carrying capacity threshold; it is unsustainable (UMT) when insufficiently regulated. Niche tourism destinations are unsustainable (Circumstantial Alternative Tourism – CAT) when the growth of

economically sustainable small-scale tourism is not regulated or supported; in sustainable niche destinations (Deliberate Alternative Tourism – DAT) increasing small-scale tourism and high regulation foster both economic and environmental balance.

An online questionnaire was addressed to the mayors of the municipalities: it is assumed that in a small mountain municipality the mayor's perception of and expectations about WHS status will be a reasonable proxy for those of the population of which he/she is the elected representative and legitimate spokesperson. Only later, in 2015, were meetings organized by the Foundation to promote wider private and public stakeholder participation in the definition of the WHS General Strategy (all functional networks) and the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism.

The questionnaire includes 24 closed-ended questions, either single replies or a two-point agreement/disagreement scale. It was created using the software LimeSurvey, tested with 15 mayors, and then sent out in April/May 2013 as an e-mail link, with an explanation of the purpose of the study. Questions were divided into four parts. Their design combined and adapted content from previous studies which, however, only investigated the issues singly: the mayoral profile (province, age, gender, education, work sector); the economy of the municipality (diversified, tourism-driven, tourism seasonality); the significance of UNESCO recognition (Rebanks Consulting Ltd., 2009); tourism and UNESCO recognition (Kaltenborn et al., 2013; Jimura, 2011; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013); local stakeholder involvement in WHS (tourism) development (Tosun, 2006).

Main findings

The empirical analysis revealed how the tourism-driven socio-economic development of the Dolomites and the UNESCO recognition affects both the (tourism) development paths imagined with WHS status (within and around the site), and also the forms of stakeholder participation.

The current situation regarding sustainable tourism in the Dolomites

The classification of the municipalities in the study area into the ideal-types of the Weaver model appears consistent with the diversity of tourism development types in the Dolomites (Table 2).

Table 2. Sustainable tourism in the Dolomites

Level of sustainability	of Ideal types	WHS municipalities	Neighboring municipalities	mountain	Total
High	DAT	21.0	13.5		16.1
	SMT	53.0	24.0		33.9
Low	CAT	4.0	49.5		33.9
	UMT	22.0	13.0		16.1
Total		100.0	100.0		100.0

Almost two thirds of WHS municipalities were shown to be highly sustainable; they are mostly mass destinations in which tourism is already developed (53%) and, to a lesser extent, niche destinations in which tourism is still underdeveloped (21%). There are, however, some cases in which the integrity of the WHS is not intact. 22% of the WHS municipalities – discovered to be unsustainable mass destinations – were already heavily environmentally impacted, but included in the WHS in order to meet the selection criteria for universal geological value. The other unsustainable destinations are WHS municipalities adjacent to internationally well-known Dolomite destinations, whose development began during the tourism boom of the 1970s, largely driven by their proximity to urban areas. This proximity has meant that private accommodation and second homes were (and still are) a preferred form of accommodation.

In contrast with the WHS municipalities, over 60% of the neighboring mountain municipalities proved to have low sustainability levels: half are economically unsustainable niche destinations (50%) in which tourism development is in its early stages and lacks the drivers needed to promote place attractiveness, accommodation capacity and supporting services; 13% are unsustainable mass destinations whose original development was based on

nearby demand markets. There are also, however, a considerable number of sustainable mass (24%) and niche (14%) destinations.

The situations within the valleys mirror those of the municipalities in which they are located. The most famous Dolomite valleys are generally sustainable mass tourism destinations – e.g. Ampezzano, the Val Badia, the Val di Sole, the Val Rendena and the Val di Fassa – due to the intensity of the tourism development and the range of regulatory tools introduced by the territorial administrations. However, there are municipalities in some of the valleys – Fiemme, Giudicarie and Badia in particular – which can still be broadly classified as sustainable niche destinations.

The development paths imagined with WHS recognition

All the surveyed mayors consider WHS status to be an opportunity for their municipality (Table 3), in particular a catalyst for socio-economic development and the improvement of residents' wellbeing (60%) and an opportunity for heritage and landscape conservation (35%) – considered at risk (24%) or still intact (11%); place marketing and branding under the UNESCO label is undervalued (6%). Socio-economic development scores above average in WHS municipalities and in mass destinations; heritage conservation scores above average in municipalities outside the WHS, where few environmental protection restrictions are in place, and in marginal/minor destinations with a strong sense of place protection.

Table 3. Imagined futures with WHS status. Percentage values

Issues investigated	Total	WHS	Non WHS	Marginal/ Minor (CAT/DAT)	Mass (SMT/ UMT)
1. Possible use of WHS status					
Heritage and landscape conservation – intact	10.7	6.6	21.7	16.7	8.3
Heritage and landscape conservation – at risk	23.8	21.3	30.4	29.2	21.7
Place branding and marketing	6.0	4.9	8.7	4.2	6.7
Economic development and wellbeing	59.5	67.2	39.1	50.0	63.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2. Future role of tourism					
No change of present role	17.6	13.1	29.2	12.5	19.7
Main economic activity	9.4	11.5	4.2	4.2	11.5

Important but ancillary	28.2	26.2	33.3	45.8	21.3
Important as other activities	44.7	49.2	33.3	37.5	47.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
3. Tourism development type					
Any type as long as suitable for a natural WHS	30.0	30.2	29.4	28.6	30.6
Based on local tradition, culture and identity	38.6	35.8	47.1	38.1	38.8
Based on nature and landscape	30.0	32.1	23.5	33.3	28.6
Based on mass tourism flows	1.4	1.9	0.0	0.0	2.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Tourism is expected to be the sector that will benefit most from the WHS status (82% of the surveyed mayors), however local socio-economic development will be better supported by a diversified economy than by an economy specialized in tourism. WHS municipalities and mass destinations score above average in perceiving that tourism will be their main economic activity (12% versus an average of 9%), or will be as important as other local activities (49% an average of 45%). By contrast, non-WHS municipalities and minor/marginal destination believe that tourism will grow but continue to be ancillary.

Irrespective of the municipality's WHS status or tourism development type, almost all the respondents who believe that tourism will somehow benefit from WHS listing expect its development to follow a sustainable model (98.5%), coherent with the management goals of the Dolomite Foundation's WHS General Strategy and the Strategy for Sustainable tourism. This preference is strengthened by the fact that one third of the respondents considered the model more important than the type of resources/products used in its promotion. Most municipalities want to embrace the valorization of traditions and folklore to pursue sustainable tourism, rather than just relying on the site's natural beauty.

Despite their positive attitudes to WHS status, a few mayors – more in WHS municipalities and mass destinations than in other municipalities – manifested concerns that the Dolomite Foundation's strategies will benefit Dolomite provinces unequally; that environmental protection measures will restrict local autonomy, limiting the choices they can

make about development models. They also sense a top-down approach to sustainable development in the WHS.

Stakeholder engagement in local (tourism) development

The Dolomite Foundation has adopted a top-down approach in the first stages of WHS management strategy formulation, initially only giving the municipalities and other stakeholders an advisory role, allowing them to comment on the results from the state of sustainable tourism study – one of the site’s functional networks. In spite of public stakeholder consultations organized in spring 2013 to bring local institutions up to date on this study most (48%) mayors did not even know that that such a study had been done, nor were they aware of the strategy guidelines developed from it (41%). Neighboring municipalities were shown to know even less than WHS municipalities about both the study and its implication for WHS management.

Both the WHS and neighboring municipalities largely agreed that the provinces – although founding members of the Dolomite Foundation – should not have the leading role in strategy formulation (25%). The municipalities want to be decision makers (Figure 4), in consultation with other stakeholders: first, the Destination Management Organizations (either regional, provincial or local) (87%) – considered to be institutionally legitimate and competent in tourism management, second, residents (74%), and third, the province (58%). In WHS municipalities and mass destinations local stakeholders are perceived to have greater autonomy and power in decision making than they are in WHS municipalities and minor/marginal destinations, which score above average in perceiving that the province, either alone, or in consultation with municipalities, should have a leading role in decision making.

Table 4. Nature and level of community engagement

Issues investigated	Total	WHS	Non WHS	Marginal/ Minor (CAT/DAT)	Mass (SMT/ UMT)
1. Leading role in tourism decisions					

The province	24.7	23.0	29.2	33.3	21.3
Municipality in consultation with province	57.6	57.4	58.3	66.7	54.1
Municipality in consultation with DMOs	87.1	86.9	87.5	87.5	86.9
Municipality in consultation with residents	74.1	72.1	79.2	75.0	73.8
2. Expected stakeholder participation					
Direct participation	30.6	32.8	25.0	29.2	31.1
Consultation on decisions	76.5	80.3	66.7	75.0	77.0
Being informed about decisions	80.0	85.2	66.7	83.3	78.7
3. Tools to involve stakeholders					
Training	83.5	85.2	79.2	79.2	85.2
Local survey	47.1	55.7	25.0	37.5	50.8
Referendum	12.9	14.8	8.3	8.3	14.8
Incentive to invest in tourism	80.0	80.3	79.2	75.0	82.0
Internet platform	82.4	86.9	70.8	75.0	85.2
4. Obstacles to involve stakeholders					
Lack of interest	47.1	47.5	45.8	45.8	47.5
Lack of business culture in tourism	61.2	62.3	58.3	75.0	55.7
Lack of skills in local stakeholders	65.9	68.9	58.3	70.8	63.9
Lack of a critical mass of firms/entrepreneurs	57.6	60.7	50.0	70.8	52.5
Lack of private financial resources	54.1	55.7	50.0	62.5	50.8
Lack of public incentives/credit	75.3	78.7	66.7	70.8	77.0
Public administration limiting participation	17.6	16.4	20.8	25.0	14.8
Interest groups limiting participation	18.8	24.6	4.2	16.7	19.7
Time consuming to involve local stakeholders	34.1	34.4	33.3	33.3	34.4
Lack of skills in local institutions	23.5	27.9	12.5	16.7	26.2

Perceptions of future stakeholder participation confirms these insights. The mayors generally expected stakeholders to participate indirectly rather than directly (31%) in decision making, and to be informed of (80%), and/or consulted on (77%), decisions taken by the municipality. However, direct participation, consultation and information on decisions scores above average in WHS municipalities and mass destinations. The main obstacles to stakeholder participation were considered to be the fact that some groups did not have the necessary skills to participate meaningfully in decision making, and the lack of (public and private) incentives for entrepreneurship in tourism. Minor and marginal destinations are weaker with regard to both these issues. Mayors agreed that training and education on issues crucial to local development, the development and use of Internet platforms, and incentives to invest in tourism activities would all be likely to increase local stakeholder involvement.

Discussion

The Dolomites natural WHS case study provides significant insights into how UNESCO designation and current tourism-driven socio-economic wellbeing in and around the WHS – the institutional and socio-economic contexts under examination – shape imagining of futures with WHS status and of stakeholder engagement in the design of those futures.

The sustainability of current socio-economic development is higher within the WHS, in areas where the protected areas were sufficiently intact to have been included in the UNESCO property and protection measures now ensure that environmental integrity is maintained. By contrast, unsustainability is higher in both marginal and mass destinations, the former coping with traditional sectors in decline or tourism only just beginning to develop (economic and social unsustainability), the latter facing ecological challenges due to the pressure that tourism places on the fragile mountain environment and on local populations (environmental unsustainability). Tourism – as part of a diversified economy – is considered the sector most likely to foster the socio-economic development envisioned with WHS status. However, municipalities within the WHS and mass destinations expect the role of the tourism economy to be more prominent. The concerns manifested by some of the mayors about sustainable tourism models being so restrictive that they exclude other alternatives may be interpreted as a (cultural) past path dependence on both more extensive and less regulated tourism development types (mass tourism), and/or a reluctance to give up the considerable autonomy in decision making that local stakeholders previously expected, and enjoyed, in planning and driving development. Our results also suggest that public institutions consider sustainable development models to entail limitations or ethical imperatives, rather than long term opportunities to add and gain value to and from the travel and tourism experience.

UNESCO recognition and tourism-driven socio-economic development also affect the extents to which stakeholders participate in designing the future with WHS status at different decision making levels. At the inter-provincial (the whole site) and provincial levels a

combination of coercive and induced participation seems to have shaped the first stages of the WHS management formulation. The Dolomite Foundation and the five founding provinces had a leading role in the process, restricting stakeholder participation to the consultation of local public institutions, with stakeholder meetings attended mainly by WHS mayors. At the local level there seems to be more room for multi-stakeholder decision making involving both public and private actors and DMOs. However, most stakeholder participation is expected to be indirect, involving information and consultation only; many economic and social obstacles need to be overcome in order to empower communities to participate effectively, in particular within marginal destinations, where these obstacles are greatest. WHS municipalities and mass destinations are shown to have achieved greater autonomy and power in decision making, both in terms of induced and direct participation, presumably empowered by both UNESCO recognition and the general level of tourism-driven socio-economic wellbeing.

The relationship between the issues at hand – stakeholder engagement in designing the future (tourism) development envisioned with WHS status under UNESCO recognition, and the current tourism-driven socio-economic development – is revealed by a Principal Component Analysis carried out on a selection of questionnaire responses. A direct link emerges from the data structure between WHS recognition and the futures envisioned with WHS status. Municipalities in the WHS are more closely associated with a future entailing local socio-economic development in which sustainable tourism is either expected to play a crucial role, or to become as important as other sectors currently are. In contrast, neighboring mountain municipalities are more associated with a future entailing heritage conservation, with sustainable tourism playing an ancillary role. No direct or clear link is shown between current forms of tourism development and the way the mayors perceived future development.

Finally, no direct links between WHS status and/or current tourism development and forms of stakeholder participation emerge from the data structure. It is interesting to note that

this dimension is unipolar and characterized by the expectation that tourism decision making processes should involve municipalities as active decision makers, consulting both the province and the DMOs on the one hand and private-public stakeholders and the community on the other.

Conclusion

The Dolomites WHS is a complex natural site lying almost entirely within protected areas of different types and designated as UNESCO property after the integration of the latter's operational management guidelines with the core tenets of sustainable development. For these reasons, the integrated and participatory approach adopted by protected area management is implemented in the Dolomites WHS management through the functional networks' managerial rationale and participatory logic and tools. The assignation of specific functions to the founding members of the Dolomite Foundation, for which they are responsible throughout the whole area, is intended to promote sectoral integration in and around the site. The creation of the Board of Supporters and the organization of public meetings and events is intended to integrate top-down and bottom-up management approaches and to encourage stakeholders to participate in decision making at various levels. The effective management of the site is challenged by its institutional complexity and the sharp tourism-driven socio-economic divide between the Dolomites' mass and small, remote and marginal destinations.

By building on the connections between the theoretical debates on the conservation and management of protected areas and WHSs, this paper provides new insights into the influence that institutional and socio-economic contexts – UNESCO recognition and current tourism development – have on the integrated and participative management of WHSs, focusing on the critical relationship between the future (tourism) development envisioned with WHS status and stakeholder engagement in defining it. The originality of this research lies in bridging the narrow perspectives of studies which have usually analyzed these topics in isolation and using

qualitative methods, limiting themselves to analysis of the situation within WHSs only, and at the whole site level. This study, by contrast and following the integrated and participatory approach, examines these issues – and the relationship between them – at the lowest administrative and governance level within the WHS *and* neighboring municipalities, combining qualitative *and* quantitative approaches. The quantitative application of the Weaver model – which is its first and original application – distinguished the different forms of tourism development in these municipalities; the online questionnaire, addressed to mayors who administer municipalities experimenting with different development models, shed some light on the opportunities perceived to be connected to WHS recognition, the role of tourism as a driver of these opportunities and local stakeholder involvement in defining future (tourism) development. In small mountain municipalities, these elected representatives may be assumed to be legitimate spokespersons for their communities. This was demonstrated both by the referendum on the merging of small municipalities like those in the Dolomites, and by the wide resident participation in this bottom-up decision making process.

The insights gained from the application of this methodology to the study area showed that UNESCO recognition and the current tourism development of these municipalities shape the relationship between imagined futures with WHS status and stakeholder engagement in their design. Sustainable tourism is commonly one of the paths envisioned with WHS recognition and WHS management entails forms of induced participation at both inter-provincial and provincial levels, although a participatory culture has emerged at the local level. However, in the municipalities where WHS recognition has occurred and where tourism already provides a high level of socio-economic wellbeing, the tourism economy is expected to grow more – although it may or may not drive future development. These same municipalities perceive themselves to have greater autonomy and power in decision making, both in relation to the province and in terms of stakeholder engagement. However, stakeholders are usually

expected to be informed and consulted rather than to participate directly in decision making; in mass destinations cableway operators and hotel owners are the interest groups with most power and influence: they expect to, and do, participate actively in decision making. The institutional and socio-economic context being dealt with in this study, also affects the model of development that has been chosen, and not only tourism development *per se*. Although tourism development is currently more sustainable in the WHS municipalities, and all the municipalities expect tourism to follow a sustainable model, some of the concerns manifested about the possibility that sustainable (tourism) models may limit local autonomy and exclude other alternatives suggest that extensive and less regulated tourism development is still expected to play a role in future development.

The overall results of this study provide insights into managerial aspects which could increase the effectiveness of the integrated and participative management of the Dolomites as a WHS. A first set of considerations regards the territorial and sectoral integration of WHS management, which is directly connected to the institutional and socio-economic contexts. Each province has to both implement the WHS General Strategy and the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in the part of the WHS under its jurisdiction and also fulfill specific functions throughout the whole WHS, in accordance with the managerial logic of the functional network – all this in addition to the normal administration of the province as a whole. These multi-sectoral functions, sustainable tourism included, and their integration, are crucial to all the Dolomite areas – in, around and outside the WHS area. The Dolomites share not only the same aesthetic, geological, cultural and anthropological importance and intrinsic fragility – as the story of their WHS candidature originally extended to all the Dolomites shows – but also the same attitude to making tourism – or expecting it to be – a driver or an important sector of local development. Greater territorial collaboration is still needed, both to bridge the administrative boundaries of the property and to overcome the traditional tourist

monoculture of mass destinations; such collaboration would facilitate the exploitation of existing synergies, among both territories and sectors, irrespective of their WHS status. The study reveals that the tourism development types in the Dolomites are jeopardized and non-WHS municipalities are more marginal and less economically sustainable than the WHS and mass destination areas, requiring more guidance from public institutions. In addition, there are concerns about disparities between Dolomite territories – within and between provinces, within the WHS, and between WHS and non-WHS municipalities. The Italian national debate on the reorganization of administrative levels with the elimination of the provinces and the redistribution of their functions both to the upper and lower administrative levels – regional institutions and municipalities – will produce new challenges for the WHS management, and further disparities, as the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano will retain their current constitutional status.

A second set of considerations concerns stakeholder engagement in WHS management. Our study results support the theoretical insights that even in developed countries most participation is induced (Tosun, 2006), although different governance levels and stakeholder groups shape participation in accordance with their own particular interests. The room detected at the local level for deeper and more active stakeholder participation means, from a theoretical perspective, that there is space to establish a multilevel and interactive governance system (Kooiman et al., 2008), by combining a top-down approach – driven by the political-institutional power – with a bottom-up perspective – based on equitable local stakeholder interactions and inclusion in decision making. The obstacles to stakeholder participation that the empirical analysis has revealed – knowledge, competences, resources and socio-economic networks in tourism related businesses still either non-existent or insufficient in local communities – require that local institutions create the economic (e.g. incentives) and social conditions (e.g. Leader projects which foster responsibility and inclusion) that will allow for

stakeholder empowerment and engagement in decision making. Education, training and social capital are strategic levers as participatory engagement tools, as is the establishment of local committees, discussion forums, stakeholder dialogue and the involvement of young people (e.g. schools) in projects concerning the future. Bolzano and Trento, which are the provinces at the forefront of integrated and participative processes of sustainable development, had and have a leading role. A participatory approach allows these provinces to share best practices with their neighbors, thus enabling experimentation with, and the creation of, a joint standard of sustainability in WHS management.

Limitations and future research

The study results are revealing but exploratory; many shortcomings were encountered and need to be overcome. A quantitative analysis requires the availability and accessibility of a homogenous and up-to-date range of secondary/primary data on tourism intensity and regulation, derived from reliable surveys and sources at the inter-provincial level; the widening of the set of Weaver model explanatory variables; the development of qualitative analysis to understand the specific determinants of Dolomite tourism development types at the municipal level. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the integrated and participatory management of the Dolomites WHS ideally needs to include in the qualitative analysis: a variety of interest groups, including from areas not contiguous with the site – this phase only examined the perspectives of mayors from the WHS and neighboring municipalities – and a greater variety of tools for, and approaches to, information collection. Further research would also benefit from a wider agree/disagree scale, open-ended questions, in depth interviews, focus groups involving experts/representative stakeholders, etc. This would allow local-specific and stakeholder-specific issues to emerge in discussions of the integrated and participatory management of the WHS, in particular the imagined futures with WHS status and the forms of participation necessary to realize these futures.

Figure 1. The Dolomites WHS

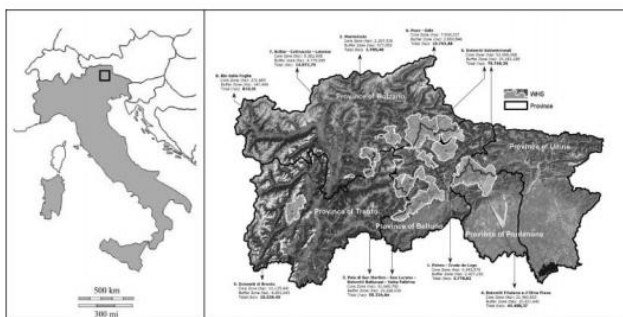


Figure 1. The Dolomites WHS.

Figure 2 . Empirical analyses and outcomes.

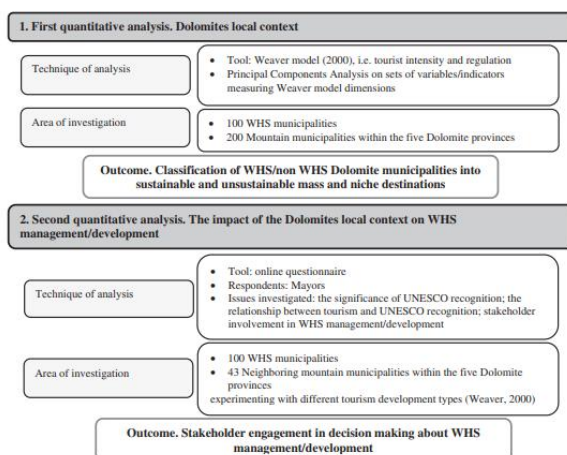


Figure 2. Empirical analyses and outcomes.

Figure 3 The area of investigation

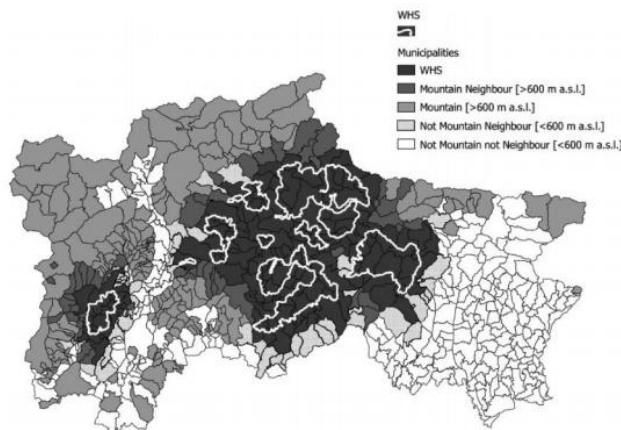


Figure 3. The area of investigation.

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