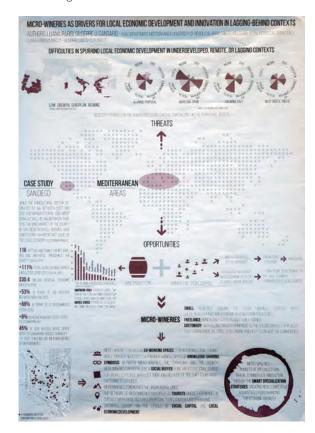
SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Micro-Wineries as Drivers for Local Economic Development and Innovation in lagging-behind contexts

Today, there is increasing awareness of the role that social capital can play in spurring Local Economic Development especially in underdeveloped, remote, or lagging contexts. It encompasses different aspects, such as relationship networks, allowing knowledge exchange and innovation boost, and is associated mainly with craft-based economic activities of small and medium-size, entrusted with the long-term development of the local economy and embedded into local societies. Micro-wineries represent a good example, being small realities that serve especially the local market, acting also as co-working spaces that strengthen local communities. Mediterranean regions have commonly been connected with these sectors; nevertheless, only recently, wine and oenological tourism have been coupled with local development and economic regeneration strategies. This study aims at pushing the body of knowledge in the development of micro-wineries in Southern Italy and, more generally, in lagging-behind contexts of Southern Europe, trying to regenerate the existing realities, creating spots of knowledge-sharing where also tourists can live experiences in contact with local cultures. Micro-wineries can constitute the pockets of specialization where to innervate innovation through the Smart Specialization Strategies framework, that helps creating new competitive advantages for enhancing the economic growth. In order to support the discussion, the San Diego wine cluster will be deepened as a case study, since its wine market recently boomed, challenging the historic worldwide producers and constituting an important slice of the local market. Findings from the research highlight the micro-wineries symbiosis with the territory and the society itself. Positive relations between them and the broad regional innovation strategy emerge as well, showing the snowball effect on the levels of social capital and Local Economic Development in lagging contexts.

Useful lessons are drawn for encouraging policy makers and planners in undertaking actions towards strengthening the potential of micro-wineries and building networks among them.



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