Chapter 12
Sustainable Transformative Wine Tourism: Applications in Experiential Educational Tourism

Introduction: Challenges for Transformative Sustainability

Wine and wine tourism producers are interwoven in a complex, mutually dependent ecosystem. The industries share a dependence on sustainable social, cultural, and natural environments to advance the quality turn of their geographically indicated, place-specific products – wine and tourism experiences. The quality turn marks a shift away from Industrial-Fordist standardization-and-quantity orientation (Murdoch et al. 2000), and increasingly recognizes qualitative differentiation of products as a complex transformation (Parga-Dans and Gonzalez 2017) central to sustainability and tightly tied to sense of place (Fountain et al. 2020). A sustainable future in wine regions requires integrated economic, social, and environmental strategies (UNEP 2005). The process by which change occurs and adaptation takes place is central to the transformation necessary to ensure sustainability. In agricultural areas, identification of vulnerabilities and the adaptive capacities of overlapping industries such as wine production and tourism reveal a need to understand the changing nature of socio-economic resilience as a pathway to sustainability (Brouder 2017).

The complex context of environmental, cultural, and economic change in old world wine regions, such as Chianti in Tuscany, Italy, presents unique challenges. Wine producers promote typical products and traditional methods as markers of excellence to a traveling public eager to taste that typicality and tradition. The confounding question becomes: Can wine tourism that is dependent on tradition and typicality to mark quality adapt to change in ways that ensure transformative sustainability? This chapter presents the vulnerabilities of wine tourism and reviews the literature in transformative sustainable tourism to set the context for a case study of transformative sustainable wine tourism in a small estate in the Chianti wine region in Tuscany, Italy. Transformative sustainability of tourism involves a restructuring in the industry that reduces negative socio-ecological impacts (Fennell and Bowyer 2020) and acts as a catalyst for positive change including personal

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growth, self-awareness, and well-being (Dillette et al. 2018). We present results of autoethnographies of experiential educational tourism along with a series of interviews with wine and wine tourism producers in the region to understand the possibilities of transformative and sustainable change in a traditional wine region.

**Wine Region and Wine Tourism Vulnerabilities: Shocks and Stressors**

Agroecological risks to wine production quality and the place images associated with that quality represent risks to the production of wine tourism. Many wine regions advance sustainability with varying levels of success (Mariani and Vastola 2015; Baird et al. 2018). The relationship between sustainability, wine production, and tourism has shown that exposure (Hira and Bwenge 2011), double exposure (O’Brien and Lichenko 2000), and multiple exposures to risk (Belliveau et al. 2006) are evident in wine and wine tourism regions. Slow change stressors that are gradual and non-linear (Lew 2014; Calgaro et al. 2014) and sudden shocks such as natural disasters (Cradock-Henry and Fountain 2019) pose risks to wine and tourism industries. For wine and tourism industries dependent on Geographical Indicators as a brand (Overton and Heitger 2008; Overton and Murray 2011), and especially for those that have tightly enforced appellation controls (Jones 2010), even greater vulnerabilities are suggested. For these wine industries, increasing capacities for adaptation in new and innovative ways is essential for sustainability (McIntyre, Senese, and Hull 2019).

Wine region sustainability has yielded considerable research (Jones 2010; Hannah et al. 2013; De Orduna and Mira 2010). Wine tourism is one tool used by the wine industry to diversify, increasing resilience against the vagaries of environmental, economic, and social change (Milich 2012; Carmichael and Senese et al. 2012). However, tourism itself is a vulnerable industry (Ritchie 2008; Becken et al. 2014) and the adaptive capacity of tourism in wine regions is questioned (Cradock-Henry and Fountain 2019; Fountain and Cradock-Henry 2020). For disaster preparation and recovery in tourism, pandemics were addressed in the literature when the Avian Flu and SARS pandemics created a flurry of research activity (Kuo et al. 2008). More than a year into the Covid-19 emergency, tourism scholars questioned the industry’s vulnerability and ability to recover (Gossling et al. 2020; Zheng et al. 2020). Paths to sustainable tourism after Covid-19 have been proposed (Chang et al. 2020) as have strategies for recovery and revitalization (Zenker and Kock 2020), however, little specific interest in the vulnerabilities and adaptation potential of wine tourism has emerged with the exception of (Gilinsky 2020, and Wittwer and Anderson 2020). Given what is known about wine region vulnerability and the risks of over reliance on tourism to sustain wine industries, it is imperative to understand transformative sustainable change in the context of unprecedented global emergencies.
Sustainable Wine Tourism and Transformative Experience

Wine tourism appeared in the academic literature in the 1980s and continued to grow, especially in new world wine regions (Gilbert 1992; Dodd 1995). Eventually, attention turned to links between wine tourism and sustainability (Getz and Brown 2006; Carmichael 2005) where research linked wine tourism and sustained competitiveness (Hashimoto and Telfer 2003; Carmichael and Senese 2012). Study of overlapping industries, amenities, and services in wine regions then sought to understand the dynamics of agriculture and tourism services in sustainable ways (Ioannides 1995); and resilience emerged as a conceptual framework with the potential to understand sustainability (Berkes and Ross 2013; Folke 2006). However, there are few examples of the empirical application of resilience to the wine and tourism industries (Mozell and Thach 2014; Duarte Alonso and Bressan 2015). Leading scholars of agriculture (Kleinman et al. 2018) environmental studies (Holling 1973) have made significant contributions to what is now known about resilience and adaptive capacity in rural environments; however, specific sectoral work on wine regions and wine tourism has not as yet fully emerged.

Wine tourism has been shown to educate visitors about many issues, such as food security, food traditions and culture, and health and wellness (Hall and Baird 2014; Hull 2016), yet little attention is paid to the transformative nature of wine tourism. Many forms of tourism are thought to offer transformational potential (Reisinger 2013) for positive change. Not all tourism is seen as inherently transformational (Pritchard and Morgan 2013) and wine tourism in particular has only rarely been discussed as a transmodern tourism niche poised to enrich the idea of hopeful tourism (Senese 2016; Sigala 2020). In instances where reciprocal partnerships for co-learning among hosts and guests are made possible (Pritchard et al. 2011), the potential for transformative change exists. The need for sustainable transformative tourism in food consumption was argued by Fennell and Bowyer (2019) and transformative rural tourism was positioned as a tool for rural development in the midst of the global pandemic (Vidickiene et al. 2020), where the links between transformative tourism and regeneration were also clearly posited (Duxbury et al. 2020). In the context of a post-pandemic world, calls for transformation and regeneration in and through tourism production have been clearly sounded. Here the focus is not on sustaining the industry itself, but on re-imagining tourism as a tool for local well-being, revitalization, and sustainability (Duxbury et al. 2021: p. 4). Where transformative tourism meets the regenerative capacities of agroecological systems, as it does in wine regions, the potentials for moving beyond sustainability toward transformative action are self-evident.
A Case Study of Transformative Sustainable Wine Tourism: The Approach

We present a mixed methods qualitative case study of transformative, sustainable wine tourism from educational tourism experiences at Castello Sonnino International Education Centre in Montespertoli, Tuscany. We synergize autoethnography with student-led deliberative dialogs harvested through focus groups and in-depth interviews with wine and tourism industry experts. The autoethnographies are articulated by the course instructor and students, providing a multi-dimensional experiential dialog that reflects on key concepts of wine industry sustainability featured in the course. Interviews conducted with a variety of wine and tourism industry experts provide insight into sustainable practices and the culture of wine communicated to students as reciprocal transformational change. In-depth qualitative analysis of the data drilled down into the assessment of the sustainable transformations possible along the tourism-to-vineyard and farm-to-market value chain.

Qualitative analysis, and in-depth interviews in particular allow for co-creation of transdisciplinary knowledge, which is particularly important in sustainability research (Mauser et al. 2013). Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with wine and wine tourism industry experts. Nineteen students who participated in the experiential course, living and working at the Castello Sonnino estate between April 29 and May 20, 2018, participated in focus groups at the end of their trip to reflect on their experiences. The autoethnography of experiential educational tourism by the instructor and students followed an approach outlined by Chang (2016: p. 46) that combines cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details of experience and stories that are reflected upon, analyzed, and interpreted within a broad sociocultural context. Additionally, a detailed daily journal kept by the co-investigator is referenced that records impressions of repeated topics, emerging themes, and salient patterns (Chang 2016: p. 131).

Castello Sonnino, a History of Place and the Place of History in Wine Tourism Production

The quality of wine is evaluated by its connection to place and the unchanging geographic attributes that reflect *terroir*. In Italy, the demarcation of wine regions is performed through the DOCG system (Denominazione di Origine Controllato e Garantita, or Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin) that ties quality and authenticity to place. Chianti is a wine produced in Central Italy and a geographic region – home to eight sub-regions of wine. Castello Sonnino, which hosts the case study of this educational tourism experience, is a wine estate located in the smallest and newest Chianti DOCG, Montespertoli, a small municipality located approximately 20 kilometers south of Florence (see Figure 12.1).
Castello Sonnino is a historic estate and a working farm of 150 hectares producing wine, market produce, grain, and olive oil. The Sonnino family has adopted the idea of a “living history to sustain the future” in development of an international education center on the estate for those committed to preserving the environment, culture, and the historical heritage for future generations (Campana 2016: p. 5). Using the rich cultural life and landscape of Chianti, shaped by centuries of agrarian life in the Italian mezzadria system of sharecropping as a setting, the Sonninos have welcomed wine tourists since the 1990s, and experiential education tourists to the estate since 2013. The iconic Tuscan landscape of the mezzadria is composed of large merchant villas surrounded by a scattering of sharecropper case coloniche (farm houses) amidst mixed crop farming and woodland (Senese et al. 2016). The Sonnino case coloniche have been restored and repurposed to provide housing, classroom, and office space for students and professors engaged in experiential educational programs.

When the current owners, Caterina and Alessandro de Renzis Sonnino, took over the property in the mid 1980s, they restored and conserved the 17th century villa, its cellars, and vineyards. As winemaker, Barone Alessandro Sonnino\(^2\) became

\(^2\) Barone Sonnino was unfortunately a victim of Covid-19 and passed away March 3, 2021. Together with their children Virginia and Leone, Baronessa Caterina de Renzis Sonnino continues their work to sustain Castello Sonnino.
a key part of the Montespertoli DOCG’s renaissance. A classicist wine maker, Barone Sonnino emerged as a fashion-bucking conservator of wine tradition complemented by a modernization of international-style reds with new vineyards planted to Petit Verdot, Merlot, Cabernet, and Malbec. The seemingly contrary production of modernized wines with adherence to traditional methods and deeply held belief in *terroir* (Camuto 2016) produced a landscape that continued to attract a growing legion of wine tourists and supported a conviction to sustain that landscape by the Sonnino family.

At this juncture in the history of rural tourism in Tuscany, overtourism, led by mobs of tourists eager to experience the wine and food of the rural countryside, had threatened to erode the iconic landscape and lifestyle that had driven tourism development for decades (Vallone et al. 2020; Randelli and Martellozzo 2019). Overtourism in rural Tuscany produced multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities for wine producers who had come to rely on tourism to support preservation and maintenance of historic estates and wine production more generally. In this context, the Sonninos hoped to preserve the traditional heritage of the estate and continue to produce quality wines while providing travel experiences with the transformative potential to reconnect people with the natural environment as a core objective (Robinson 2021). The Sonnino family developed the idea of the international education center to diversify wine tourism and build resilience that supports wine production with sustainable transformative visitation.

**Educational Tourism**

In Italy, the interplay between wine tourism and transformational educational travel has its roots in the eco-gastronomic movement to focus on fresh, local, fair food and drink (Petrini 2003; Conway and Timms 2010; Miele 2008) from landscapes that are healthy, environmentally sound, and sustainable (Saxena et al. 2007). A similar discourse emerged from tourism communities where demand for experiential forms of travel drove farmers and wine makers outside of their primary industries into the world of hospitality, tourism, and education (Knowd 2006; Sonnino 2004). The synergy of these merging forces resulted in growing demand for transformative educational experiences in regions of wine and food production. Transformative tourism has its roots in Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning thought to answer an intrinsic need to learn and consume in a manner that is fulfilling and highly personalized (Soulard et al. 2021). Wine is so profoundly rooted in its historical, cultural, and environmental origins that the educational opportunities for transformation toward conscientious consumption abound in a transdisciplinary manner.
Like other Canadian universities, the University of British Columbia in the Okanagan (UBCO) encourages students to engage with communities – locally and globally. While university mission statements contain a wealth of good intentions regarding community-based learning, global citizenship, and internationalization, less attention is paid to ensuring these experiences are transformative for the student and the host community. Our autoethnographic reflections are derived from experiences as a UBCO instructor of five international field courses and a student participant on Rural Sustainability: Wine, Food and Tourism in Tuscany held at Castello Sonnino. The learning objectives of the course include student reflection on the lived meaning of sustainability in the overlapping industries of wine and tourism and the methods and means of resilience to vulnerabilities in wine and wine tourism regions.

Results

Results of our qualitative analysis reveal three interwoven themes that demonstrate transformative and sustainable wine tourism and provide a framework for further discussion. The first theme to emerge is the central importance of the local wine and food supply chain. The second emergent theme is the important blend of traditional production methods with a process of modernization. And the final theme reveals the unique and important way that the local supply chains and the traditional and modernizing modes of production are embedded in the experience of the winescape as a public good creating a shared ecological vision.

Transformation Through Supply Chain Sustainability

Short and local supply chains help wineries become more sustainable while creating a transformational, unique experience for tourists. The Slow Food Presidia steered the wine tourism industry in Tuscany toward specialized agricultural products to meet tourist demand for rural experiences that are local and rooted in a traditional lifestyle (Senese et al. 2016). While globalization pushed many wine producers to a ‘downscale strategy’ of homogenized low-cost mass production, the opportunity for ‘upscale strategies’ that focus on exclusive experiences through locally-identified production (Overton and Murray 2011) is an important theme discussed by wine professionals in the study, many of whom noted the historical and cultural importance of short and local supply chains to the wine making and tourism experience and the influence of Robert Parker’s point system in standardizing wine.
Because that’s what they [customers] know when you’re talking about “points.” And really the standardization of wine . . . a lot of the wine you could buy from the US or Canada they’re trying to make it all taste the same.

Industry Interview

American demand impacts wine style-wise, that means very big picture, big structure, intensive colors, so very powerful wine. My taste, what I like is more elegance not more power, so you know we never went very well together with Mr. Parker . . . . They drink points instead of drinking wine.

Industry Interview

In Tuscany, changing market demand resulted in an upscale strategy of importing oak barrels to meet global demand for mass-produced, standardized wines, to develop export markets. Consumer expectations meant importing more oak barrels and changing production methods to make a more French style of wine, often reluctantly.

Industry Interview

Barrels were only added to compete with French culture. Chianti does not use Oak, which is French.

Industry Interview

They’ve only been using French oak barrels since the 90s, as soon as you put Sangiovese in a French oak barrel, does that take away from the terroir?

Industry Interview

Oak barrels standardize taste . . . quality wine must be a true expression of the terroir.

Industry Interview

Conversely, localized downscale strategies like using local chestnut to create wine barrels for the regional dessert wine, Vin Santo, results in a local, exclusive, and unique product for tourists to experience. Vin Santo is made from non-varietal grapes left to dry on racks before being pressed and placed in small barrels to age with a nice golden-brown color created by the local wood (Domizio and Lencioni 2011).

Industry Interview

Oak was not used until the 1990s. Chestnut – a local wood – was used for aging Vinsanto.

Industry Interview

. . . a way to express the terroir properly . . . (if) they found a way of aging wine in a barrel that was made from local materials they found . . . so when you try a wine from there, you can’t get that taste anywhere else on Earth.

Student Focus Group

Short, local supply chains are established through a circular economy for products like table wine sold in bulk at local stores called “Vino Sfuso,” where regular local consumers bring their own containers to fill up on tap. The common vessel used to fill up wine at a Vino Sfuso is the uniquely bulbous shaped, and straw covered Chianti Fiasco that became synonymous with Tuscan wine. Most Tuscan producers had abandoned the Fiasco by the 1970s due to its association with low quality wine (Anderson 2019). Students in this study commonly purchased a Chianti Fiasco as a souvenir and used them to fill up wine at the local Vino Sfuso.

Supply chain sustainability occurs in many ways, including by the introduction of new production methods, for new markets (Bianchi 2011). It can also occur by going back to traditional supply chains, for instance using local (Chestnut) wood
for aging barrels, creating unique, local bottles (Chianti Fiasco), and enabling consumers to bring their own bottle to a Vino Sfuso to establish a relationship and familiarity with local producers. These types of changes can have long-term sustainable benefits for the wine destination, supporting the economic and the socio-cultural and environmental elements of that region (Sigala 2020). Transformational change developed through the supply side of a wine region (Senese 2016) and the symbiotic relationship between the destination and the tourist can be transformational for the tourist (Ateljevic 2020). The educational experiences allowed observation of the circular economy, and industry interviews demonstrate that by moving to a more sustainable local supply chain, there is an opportunity to develop transformational wine tourism through unique, memorable experiences.

Sustainable Production: Modes of Tradition and Modernization

The idea of sustainability in wine landscapes incorporates a dichotomous respect for heritage, traditional methods, and knowledge, while incorporating modernization and technology to meet consumer demand. Students in this case study gained a clear understanding of the importance of place in the production process (terroir) and, hence, the importance of sustainable best practices to produce quality wine and food products and protect local environments. Students learned the scientific process of making wine, and they also learned to appreciate the art and artistic expression of those processes. In this way, they became “cultural creatives,” tourists that travel to find connection, seek meaningful experiences to develop personally and collectively (Ateljevic et al. 2016). To achieve transformational experiences, cultural creatives value what is slow, small, and local – especially food (Ateljevic 2020) and, in this case, wine.

Mechanization and technological advances in agriculture have accelerated landscape change in Tuscany since the 1950s (Randelli et al. 2014). The reintroduction of traditional farming systems with modern techniques in Tuscany, represents a sustainable example of human integration with nature (Gobattoni et al. 2015). With this “old meets new” approach to maintaining and respecting the traditional art of winemaking, wineries incorporate modernization and technology to ensure their operations remain sustainable while also enhancing the experience for the tourist.

Wine appreciation is enhanced by understanding the science and the art that goes into making a bottle of wine. Student experience in Tuscany revealed the notion that many winemakers view themselves as artisans:

I liked how he makes wine to get an artistic expression of who he is. He’s like “you’re drinking my emotion” is a pretty cool line [said by the winemaker]. But to do that he mixes terroirs based on all the different qualities to make one best possible wine.  

Student Focus Group
I think one of the most important things for me was just learning what goes behind a bottle of wine because . . . when you learn the history behind that you learn to like the way it’s changed, the socio-economics behind it, and the culture and the production and everything that goes into one single glass. I think it gives a lot more appreciation for what you’re drinking.

Student Focus Group

I mean I don’t have any idea how to identify the flavors that I’m tasting. So, he just wanted us to experience it, you know, like I think that was really important too.

Student Focus Group

Students also noted that among winemakers, sustainability of wine means respecting tradition and heritage, while also incorporating modernization and technology.

When I think of traditional knowledge . . . they [Tuscan Wineries] really take that and apply it to modern ways of winemaking, but they still try to maintain the integrity of the traditional knowledge as well.

Student Focus Group

While visiting historic winery Castello di Fonterutoli, students observed the winery’s balance between new technologies and traditional methods. For instance, they witnessed an ultra-fast technology that fills and labels a bottle of wine in exactly one second, enabling shipment to overseas markets on the same day as they receive the order.

We use “Just In Time” bottling so we don’t have the expense of inventory.

Industry Interview

The mix of tradition with the mix of Technology . . . . Fast bottling but also using gravity systems . . . using limestone in the ground, finding natural springs, and using the natural environment to their advantage. I felt like that was very very interesting.

Student Focus Group

I found their methods really interesting because they kept very traditional methods and modernized the technology around it . . . like the super-fast bottling and having this system that can move the grape chute around but at the same time using ultra-traditional methods like gravity to crush their grapes.

Student Focus Group

To balance the modern downscale production, Castello di Fonterutoli implements “upscale” strategies that utilize traditional methods to focus on the specificities of place and locally identified production (Overton and Murray 2011). The cellars are built into the landscape so that the natural limestone and underground spring water can help regulate the air and keep the cellar at a proper temperature. The implementation of more sustainable modes of production enable producers to promote these traditional production methods as a marker of excellence to wine tourists seeking a taste of that tradition.

We regulate the cellar naturally with natural water.

Industry Interview

That’s very interesting how they’re using limestone to cool down the water. They are using the underground spring to naturally cool down the cellar . . . . I like how they’re using the environment around them and like whatever they found in the ground was a big advantage.

Student Focus Group
In the vineyard, many wineries use plots of land to experiment with traditional methods to make their process more sustainable. Students visited organic winery Tenuta di Valgiano, where they use traditional biodynamic farming practices to grow different varietals within the same plot and blend them to produce a wine that expresses a unique terroir. Castello Sonnino has also planted biodynamic plots to understand how this practice can be implemented on a larger scale. The biodynamic methods were described to visitors as traditional farming practices used to create a sustainable natural ecosystem within the vineyard that sequesters carbon in the soil, creating an active soil thriving with microorganisms. This reintroductory and modification of traditional farming systems blends with modern techniques to create a sustainable interaction between farmer and nature:

We want to maintain traditional methods through modern technology. Grow natural grains with the vines. Maintain organic even as we grow.  

Industry Interview

They hand-picked everything and hand-separated the grape clusters. I think it was a very sustainable way to modernize by maintaining tradition but not becoming stagnant. 

Student Focus Group

The production method and the interesting techniques that are unique are the things that stood with me . . . like biodynamic farming and winemaking . . . hearing his whole explanation in the old ideology behind that definitely made that story stick with me . . . how to produce the wine and the unique techniques they use, the unique things that they do that make it really real. 

Student Focus Groups

Wine tourism can educate visitors on the importance of traditional methods while simultaneously enabling the discovery and experience of these processes that have transformative potential. Incorporating modern technology, innovation, and methods is essential for sustainability; however, maintaining the traditional art of winemaking can enhance the experience for the tourist, especially the ‘cultural creatives’ looking for meaningful experiences.

The Winescape as a Public Good for Transformational Wine Tourism

The iconic image of Tuscany is that of varied, natural and cultivated landscapes, hillsides with villas perched atop, and small villages surrounded by olive trees and vineyards (Senese, Randelli, and Hull 2016). The experience of a wine region’s natural surroundings plays an important role in the wine tourism experience and the fulfillment and emotional attachment that visitors develop for a region (Charters et al. 2009). Protecting the natural and cultural landscape is an essential component of the wine industry throughout Tuscany (Bianchi 2011) as there is an expectation from visitors of what the landscape, or “winescape” will look like (Carmichael
and Senese 2012). In Tuscany, the landscape is viewed as a commodity, a source of identity, and a public good—so much so that it has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been instituted with very specific laws around new development, renovation, and land use (Randelli and Martellozzo 2018). Students commented on the landscape and wine as a shared public good in Tuscany:

There’s no [acting independently] for my brand . . . it’s less about that and I think more about the story behind it. I guess it is more about the cooperation. I think it’s really cool if one winery is doing something not to make their wine better than everyone else, but they do it because there is a social responsibility between one another. Student Focus Group

For Tuscany . . . the whole landscape is a common good. I thought that was really interesting . . . because people who pass by see this landscape as something everyone can see if they pass by, and so it shouldn’t be up to an individual house . . . even though someone lives there, people who pass by to see this house in that landscape and if he has some modern house, it changes the whole landscape and it seems selfish. Student Focus Group

The winescape is the single most important attribute influencing satisfaction when touring a wine region (Carmichael and Senese 2012), making it essential to preserve and protect this resource. This visual sense of place provides value for both those living in the region as well as those visiting, so it is important to ensure new development contributes and fits into the landscape (Di Gregorio 2017). Recognizing and protecting a unique landscape is also important because it can tie the brands of the region together (Flint and Golicic 2009), the way Tuscan wineries have an association with their landscape. Ecological vision is the way consumers associate specific images with a region (Gobattoni et al. 2015). Preserving this ecological vision of the winescape is paramount to the discovery, consumption, and experience of wine that holds transformative potential (Senese 2016). The association of the physical landscape to the wine itself was expressed in one interview:

Wine is landscape in a bottle. It is the only food product you can package that transcends time and space. Industry Interview

Discussion and Limitations

Moving Forward: A Conceptual Framework for Transformative Sustainability in Wine Tourism

Results of our qualitative analysis reveal three interwoven themes that demonstrate transformative and sustainable wine tourism and provide a framework for further discussion (see Figure 12.2). In this case study and elsewhere, the visual sense of place (di Gregorio 2017) created by a winescape is the single most important attribute influencing visitors in wine regions (Carmichael and Senese 2012). Viewing the
winescape as a public good can protect the shared socio-ecological vision (Gobattoni et al. 2015) required to harness transformational sustainability in wine regions. The development of circular local supply chains also enable wine regions to progress exclusive visitor experiences through localized and geographically-identified production (Overton and Murray 2011). In our cases study, these unique and memorable educational experiences are rooted in a traditional lifestyle embedded in the winescape (Senese et al. 2016) to create transformational change for visitors and the host community. Sustained transformational change in food and wine landscapes, therefore, remains dependent on the interplay of anthropic and natural components (Valentin and Spangenberg 2000). The blend of traditional production methods with modernizing processes enhance visitor experience by presenting the visitor with the opportunity to discover and experience processes that have transformative potential for the wine industry itself. The goal of this research was to understand whether wine tourism can adapt to change in ways that ensure transformational sustainability.

Figure 12.2: Conceptual framework of transformative sustainable wine tourism experiences formed and shaped out of the winescape.
The results have produced three interwoven themes that provide a theoretical framework for how transformative sustainable wine tourism experiences are formed and can be shaped out of the winescape.

Limitations and Future Research

During the course of this research, two areas have emerged as limitations to the scope of our project that could be explored further. First, the focal point for this research was Castello Sonnino, a historic estate in a traditional Chianti wine appellation area in Central Italy. Old world wine regions like Chianti are characterized by long-established and artisanal types of wine production methods (Banks and Overton 2010) that provide the opportunity to emphasize the traditional art of winemaking as a unique experience to visitors. While this research has demonstrated the transformational potential of maintaining the traditional art of winemaking, it is unknown how this experience would be achieved in a new world wine region, which lacks the same tradition and heritage (Elliot and Barth 2014). Future research may want to conduct a comparative analysis within a new world wine region using the same parameters.

Second, this research explored how cultural creatives seek meaningful experiences that can be developed both personally and collectively. The research demonstrated that university students visiting a wine region as educational tourists experience transformational change. However, further research could explore in more detail the personalized impact of this transformational change on individuals through longitudinal analysis among student visitors. Additionally, comparative analysis could be done with different segments of wine tourists, including different age groups and those traveling for non-educational purposes.

Discussion

Wine is among the most salient and defining markers of evolving landscapes, evolving economies and cultures, and is a cornerstone of tourism in Chianti. Using the Chianti case study, we have provided a framework for sustainable and transformative wine tourism showing that the foundational power of a shared, protected cultural and ecological landscape can support changing modes of production and supply chains. The human activities that produce wine mark the important interface between ecology, culture, and human systems, where human agency exists in a constant tension to adapt cultural practices of production and consumption to dynamic ecological and economic systems. Tourism emerges at Castello Sonnino, as it may elsewhere, as a synthesizing force that broadens understanding of the cultural identity, and ecological and economic circumstances of places that produces wine.
Adaptation to changing environments and economies have evolved over millennia among communities of wine and emerges uniquely, in place, and of place by using local traditional knowledge as a non-replicable cultural asset to build unique regional identities. Our results indicate that there is much to be learned about transformative sustainable landscapes, cultures, and economies by traveling to unique communities of the world where wine production is paramount in cultural practice. There is also much to be enjoyed through the consumption of products typical of the cultural experience of wine production. This illuminates wine tourism as a synergy of education, experience, pleasure, and local community that provides for its transformative potential.

Transformative tourism starts with understanding what is important to local communities, and industry, and then seeks to balance these values to make long-term sustainable futures. The iconic Tuscan landscape with its long-shuttered merchant villas surrounded by farm houses amidst mixed crop farming and woodland (Senese et al. 2016) produces a “differentiated countryside” of unique production and consumption spaces (Perkins, Mackay, and Espiner 2015). New economic activities have been incorporated into the winescape to commodify these amenities; however, this requires the protection and conservation of cultural and natural landscapes (Holmes 2012) to ensure the ecological vision is maintained. Wine tourism experiences are formed and shaped out of the winescape, and this case study demonstrated its transformational potential when viewed as a shared public good.

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