

## HERITAGE, VINEYARD AND TOURISM: SPECIFIC RESOURCES TO INNOVATE THE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

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In recent decades, rural areas have undergone a process of intense social and economic restructuring, brought about by the rise of globalisation. Among other aspects, globalisation has led to: a greater opening up of the markets; a clear weakening of the ability of nation states to independently plan and develop their agricultural policies; a new intensification of production in an attempt to be more competitive; and to large multinational corporations gaining greater control over the distribution of basic foodstuffs. In response to these developments, which have significant environmental and social implications, various solutions have arisen based on dynamics of innovation and territorial development integrated on a local or sub-regional scale that draw on natural, scenic and cultural values to form differentiation strategies. In this article, we will discuss the incorporation of cultural heritage (agricultural) and wine tourism into processes of innovation and construction of social capital, under the hypothesis that they are essential and specific resources for strengthening territorial governance and the socio-economic fabric of one of the main cooperative networks in the rural world; namely, agricultural activity. Ultimately, this is a logical response to the concerns of today's post-industrial society which is showing a growing interest in cultural and environmental protection.

We believe that Castilla-La Mancha (Spain) is the ideal territory for analysing the significance of this type of dynamics, as the region (NUT 2) with the largest surface area of vineyards in Europe. According to the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, this Autonomous Community had 437,072 hectares of vineyards in 2012, which accounts for 46.1% of all vineyards in Spain, 13% in the European Union and 6% of the total surface area of vineyards on a global scale. Over the past twenty years, there have been some big changes in its operating model, both due to the effects of the market regulation policies proposed

by the EU and the emergence of new non-productive dynamics associated with quality, the extensification of production and the revaluation of agricultural heritage, which has traditionally been undervalued in standardised production models.

Thinking of agricultural heritage as a new type of cultural asset, which needs to be protected and managed, leads us therefore to the valuation and integration of its elements (both tangible and intangible) seen as resources that can be used in development strategies, as is starting to happen in Castilla-La Mancha. With regard to *tangible heritage*, we could first distinguish between *moveable property* relating to the equipment and tools used to grow the vines and to store and produce the wine; the elements relating to transport such as the different types of carriages and draft animals; the documents and bibliographical items that demonstrate the link between winemaking and literature, highlighting travel literature; and *real estate*, which includes both buildings (individual elements) and the natural landscape (shared elements). With regard to *intangible heritage*, we would highlight *language*, focusing on the specific terms associated with wine culture, without forgetting the collection of more popular refrains; the *beliefs, rituals and festive events*; the *knowledge, skills and traditions that are unique to vine cultivation*, above all those relating to the harvest and its rituals; and the *artisan crafts* of ironwork for creating utensils and tools, and wicker and straw work for making baskets and mats. Very importantly, we would also include *tradition gastronomy* in which wine plays a key role in accompanying all the most typical dishes.

All these elements reveal the potential of the heritage of vine cultivation in Castilla-La Mancha when considered as a resource, as a whole and as the individual elements mentioned above, which needs to be protected and is able to sustain a quality tourism product that is starting to gain increasing relevance in multiple areas (wine tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism). As in other parts of Europe, the revaluation of agricultural heritage is, therefore, a further indicator of how leisure, cultural and scenic values in rural areas are currently being reinterpreted around the key concept of authenticity. The value given to some of the resources mentioned above has facilitated development in this region, as in others, in the form of a specific type of tourism, wine tourism or *oenotourism*, which is also known as *enotourism*, by linking the growing demand for cultural tourism and the strategies for promotion and economic diversification of vineyards. In socio-cultural terms, it becomes a new educational resource for creating awareness with links to the environment, expertise, tradition and rural values. In economic terms, it addresses a segment of tourism motivated by an appreciation of wine and of local traditions in the areas where it is produced, which is often accompanied by other tourism offers.

In Castilla-La Mancha, various initiatives have been launched, but with rather mixed results due to the problems arising in recent years linked to the crisis. In this new climate, investment and funding is limited and regional and local governments have less options for supporting cooperative networks built around wine culture, which basically consist of public and private promotion of certain routes or itineraries. Wine and wine tourism have also become connection points for local and regional partnerships. These partnerships have provided a space for collective learning about the opportunities and limitations of the territory, in terms of its development and restructuring, giving rise to initiatives that could be excellent models to follow.

Some of the best initiatives include the certified route *Caminos del Vino de La Mancha* [La Mancha wine trails], which forms part of the Wine Routes promoted by ACEVIN (Spanish association of wine-producing towns and cities), which is presided over by the town of Alcázar de San Juan and brings together seven towns in the La Mancha region (Alcázar de San Juan, Campo de Criptana, Pedro Muñoz, San Clemente, Socuéllamos, Tomelloso and Villarrobledo), currently in the process of reactivation. The *Divinum Vitae* Club, a private organisation which organised activities at the 31 vineyards that were members of the club and of the Association of Wine Tourism of Castilla-La Mancha, is also of particular note. In turn, numerous vineyards run their own individual initiatives and visits. Ultimately, and according to the latest report from the Institution of Tourism Promotion, wine tourism is perfectly positioned for some significant growth in coming years and, together with gastronomy, is set to become the perfect accompaniment to a broader, high-quality tourism offer. In this case, wine and gastronomy could, as is happening in other regions, together with culture, become the main reason for visiting a region and not necessarily a secondary (or complementary) attraction. These are all thematic and territorial projects that have been spearheaded by autonomous and local governments, interested in revitalising the area by using these specific resources and the dynamism of the most significant stakeholders: wine makers and tourism companies.

Medium-sized towns have also begun to revalue this type of activity as a means of territorial innovation, in an effort to overcome structural weaknesses and to improve regional integration. As a result, partnerships have been formed at various levels and around various themes. These projects have drawn on innovation and territorial social capital to launch projects designed to offer a better quality of life for local people, alongside a greater ability to attract visitors on a global level based on local values. This is the case in Alcázar de San Juan, a town in the centre of the region which had 31,269 inhabitants in 2015. This town has launched several local development projects linked to its wine-growing tradition, under the framework of a *town project* with strong political and institutional leadership which addresses the multiple realities of a medium-sized town: economic promotion, social welfare, environmental protection, innovation and learning, and citizen participation.

The link between Alcázar de San Juan and wine culture goes back to its foundation as Villa in the 13th century; however, the mid-19th century marked a turning point for the town when it became the centre for exporting wines from La Mancha on the Madrid-Alicante railway, which was also the driving force behind its industrialisation. This agro-industrial tradition was gradually lost over the second half of the 20th century, as the road network flourished and trucks became the most common mode of transport for exporting wines.

The heritage and wine-culture tourism strategy in Alcázar de San Juan emerged with the first local development initiatives during the 1987-1991 government. It was consolidated from 2005 onwards, coinciding with the 400th anniversary of the publication of the first part of Don Quixote of La Mancha; an event which brought together all the specific resources in the region to form an integrated tourism product. There are several stages to this journey: firstly, the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge among the political and technical bodies; secondly, planning the actions and organisation of

the various agents, including the financing of the project; thirdly, public investment for the rehabilitation of heritage resources; and fourthly, management and operation of the tourism product with permanent revision in order to guarantee attraction and quality. The entire project is organised on two levels: one local level run by the town council and one regional level, coordinating with other towns in the area and the autonomous government of Castilla-La Mancha. In summary, a work plan that has improved, broadened and strengthened the town's ability to become an inland tourism destination where wine and local heritage are an essential part of the territory.

The case of this town, Alcázar de San Juan, is a good example for showing the capacities required to build territorial social capital, using wine as a connection point between public bodies, private agents and the general public. A new model of governance is essential to achieve this, especially considering the current financial difficulties, convinced as we are that the success of cultural and heritage-based tourism, linked to leisure and gastronomy activities, gives a glimpse of some form of future, even if it is based in just a small part on winemakers in the region.