

The Vineyard Project

Engaging young people in grape harvesting practices as a way to experience and narrate transformation, temporality and care

Andrea Barbieri, Eleonora Rossero

The vineyard becoming a therapeutic landscape, enabling place for young people

The project

The Vineyard Project is a pilot aimed at engaging young people expressing different forms of mental ill-health in local practices of hand-harvesting grape. Dimensions of **caregiving**, **temporality**, and **transformation** are the cornerstones of this project, particularly relevant for people experiencing low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, and lack of motivation. In the vineyard – a land loaded with symbolic meanings, collective memories and traditions – the iteration of old farming and harvesting practices reproduces the past while that at the same time makes becoming possible, ensuring temporal continuity, presence, and identity.

By working together with vine growers, participants can be included in the **special relationship** they establish with their vineyards, care for the living plants and their products, and become part of the transformative process of winemaking.

The initiative is hosted in the renowned wine-producing area of Langhe (N-W Italy), which shows lower rates of at-risk drinking also due to the protective role played by the **cultural dimension of winemaking craft**.

Multidisciplinary research team

Psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists.



1. Immersion

- Existential encounter with the place
- Multisensorial experience
- Manual, tactile activity
- Care relationship with the vines and other living beings
- Becoming part of a transformative process

2. Narration

- Individual narrative interviews on the immersion in the vineyard
- Stimulating reflexivity and introspection
- Bear witness of a lived experience
- Communicate to other young people via anonymous recorded interviews (audio tracks)
- Feeling listened to

3. Connection

- Students listening to the recordings of the interviews
- Listening to the mindscape *versus* Seeing the aesthetic landscape
- Drawing wine labels using imagination and empathy (Arts students) *or* Writing an essay about care (Biomed students)
- Haptic immersion by drawing/writing

4. Circulation

- Exhibition of students' wine labels in a public event
- Narrating the creative process
- Sharing stories and project findings with the community
- Recounting wine as a cultural product
- Replicability of the project

Participants & Methods

In the vineyard

10-12 people (age: 18-25)
Transdiagnostic definition of distress
Recruitment: CAMHS, AMHS, community services for adolescents

In schools

60 students (age 16-18)
Arts high school
Biomedical high school

Methods

- Clinical assessment
- Participant observation
- Narrative interviews
- Training and support (lab on mental health with students)

Essential References

Alarcon, M. et al. (2020). Caring for vineyards: Transforming farmer-vine relations and practices in viticulture French farms. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 80, 160-170.

Beccaria, F. et al. (2016). The more you know, the better you drink: The new drinking culture in Italian wine production areas. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 23:4, 293-301.

Bell, S.L. et al. (2018). From therapeutic landscapes to healthy spaces, places and practices: A scoping review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 196, 123-130.

Duff, C. (2012). Exploring the role of 'enabling places' in promoting recovery from mental illness: A qualitative test of a relational model. *Health & Place*, 18(6), 1388-1395.

Gastaldo, D., et al. (2004). Therapeutic landscapes of the mind: Theorizing some intersections between health geography, health promotion and immigration studies. *Critical Public Health*, 14(2), 157-176.

Krzywoszynska, A. (2016). What farmers know: experiential knowledge and care in vine growing. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 56(2), 289-310.

Marques, B. et al. (2021). Therapeutic Landscapes: A Natural Weaving of Culture, Health and Land. In Mustafa E. (Ed.), *Landscape Architecture*, Intech Open 1-20.

Rossero, E. & Barbieri, A. (2022). **Biodynamic Viticulture, or The Effectiveness of Symbols.** *Gastronomica. The Journal for Food Studies*, 22 (2): 59-63.



Dr. Andrea Barbieri - Psychiatrist
Mental Health Department, Cuneo (Italy)

✉ andrea.barbieri@aslcn1.it



Eleonora Rossero - Sociologist
Eclectica+, Torino (Italy)

✉ rossero@eclecticapiu.it



IIS GOVONE
LICEO ARTISTICO
LICEO CLASSICO
ALBA

CERETTO



I PAESAGGI
VITIVINICOLI DI
LANGHE ROERO
MONFERRATO



Acknowledgments

Società cooperativa sociale Proposta 80,
Veruschka Verista photographer

Patronage

Paesaggi Vitivinicoli di Langhe-Roero e
Monferrato (UNESCO), Comune di Alba