

Is sustainable tourism a goal that came true? The Italian experience of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park

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ABSTRACT

According to previous research, in several countries, the achievement of the objectives for tourism development and the better functioning of protected areas is affected by bad governance activities. This paper provides a framework based on the combination between the Viable Systems Approach (vSa) and the actor engagement theory for improving the managerial effectiveness of protected areas.

Exploring the case of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park, a well-known tourism destination in Southern Italy, we gave empirical evidence of the risks that can occur when the governing body of protected areas does not adopt a systems-based management approach, and therefore cannot handle the complexity of the territory, generate socio-economic benefits for local populations, resolve conflicts with local actors, or advance sustainable tourism goals.

Findings suggest that the governing body should adopt specific strategies to engage local actors in decision-making and idea-generation processes. Such strategies could help to integrate resources within the system, co-create value and handle conflicts when the goals are not mutually aligned. Hence, actor engagement is necessary for achieving conditions of systemic consonance and resonance.

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry produces many social benefits. More specifically, tourism creates employment opportunities (Fawaz et al., 2014), contributes to the growth of local and regional economies by improving both the living standards of resident households and the incomes of local firms (Cárdenas-García et al., 2015; Incera and Fernández, 2015), and represents “a tool for poverty alleviation” (Scheyvens and Hughes, 2019: 1061) especially in developing countries (Wondirad and Ewnetu, 2019).

Nowadays tourism is the biggest industry globally (Danish and Wang, 2018). In particular, according to the World Tourism Organization and Organization of American States (2018: 14), “data indicates that the sector contributes to more than 10 % of global gross domestic product (GDP) and provides for one in ten jobs in the world”.

If on the one hand the tourism industry stimulates economic growth, on the other hand there is a strongly symbiotic relationship between tourism development and land use (Heslinga et al., 2017). Mao et al. (2014), for instance, have reported that tourism development is closely

related to significant land-usage changes such as environmental degradation, water pollution, and a loss of biological diversity. The tourism industry also has an environmental impact related to energy waste, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, and the overconsumption of natural resources such as water (Danish and Wang, 2018). Furthermore, tourism can also have negative effects on local customs and traditions (Jones and Wynn, 2019).

In the light of these considerations, it follows that the implementation of sustainable practices in the tourism sector is paramount if we want to breathe life into our Planet and enhance the overall well-being of the host communities.

The concept of a sustainable economic model was launched by the United Nations in 1987 with its publication of “Our Common Future”, better known as the “Brundtland Report”. According to this publication, sustainability is outlined as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. (WCED, 1987: 144). This definition, which is the one most frequently cited, encompasses the idea that sustainable development is based on two complementary goals: (1) to

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ensure people's wellbeing by increasing their quality of life rather than only economic growth; (2) to live and work in accordance with the fact that environmental resources are finite (Ciegis et al., 2009).

Despite sustainability being a trend topic for researchers, as well as for entrepreneurs and policymakers, the tourism sector continues to be a slow adopter of sustainability practices (Butler, 2015; Mihalic, 2016; Moyle et al., 2018). In particular, tourism development in protected areas represents a global concern due to the high level of difficulty involved in managing the use of the land (Morea, 2019).

In general, as highlighted by Morea (2019), management plans are the main instruments used to preserve natural areas, cultural heritage sites, and improve the quality of life of the local population. The application of these plans, however, is not always easy. The level of difficulty in managing protected areas is dependent on many factors related to land use protection, climate changes and the degree of pollution, social-environmental conflicts, and disputes involving economic interests. Therefore, the governing body of protected areas should adopt a management approach based on a systemic view of the territory (Saviano et al., 2018) "to establish relationships of harmony (consonance) with the relevant entities in that context" (Barile et al., 2014: 6).

Against this backdrop, the aim of this research is twofold. The first aim is to provide a framework, based on the combination between the Viable Systems Approach (vSa) (Barile, 2008, 2009; Barile and Saviano, 2011; Barile et al., 2012, 2014; Golinelli, 2010) and the actor engagement theory (Brodie et al., 2019; Storbacka et al., 2016), for the interpretation and management of protected areas. The second aim is to use the case of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park, a well-known tourism destination in Southern Italy, to give empirical evidence of the risks that can occur when the governing body of protected areas does not adopt a systems-based management approach, and therefore cannot handle the complexity of the territory, generate socio-economic benefits for local populations, resolve conflicts with local actors, or advance sustainable tourism goals.

To evaluate the management effectiveness of this protected area, a questionnaire encompassing specific sustainability indicators was administered to local tourism entrepreneurs. Furthermore, we analyzed secondary data such as documents published by the Governance of the Park to make a diagnostic analysis and contribute to the identification of a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

In line with the research objectives, this study first illustrates the theoretical background. Then, the case study, the methodological issues, and the research results are introduced. Finally, the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future research are discussed.

1.1. Tourism and protected areas: effective management approaches

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1994: 7), a protected area is an "area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means".

Generally, the primary management objective of protected areas is to guarantee the sustainable use of the natural ecosystem and the maintenance of the cultural/traditional attributes of the territory. In light of this consideration, some scholars (e.g., Robalino, 2007; Anthon et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Robinson and Lokina, 2011) have hypothesized that policies are primarily focused on land use protection so less attention is given to the economic benefits for the local community. In truth, empirical studies have demonstrated that protected areas represent an efficient mechanism for combining sustainable land use with socio-economic development (Robalino and Villalobos-Fiatt, 2015; Yergeau et al., 2017; Yergeau, 2020). In the specific, protected areas, in order to achieve their economic goals, can rely on three possible types of industries: tourism, agriculture, and pastoralism (Saviano et al., 2018). However, as highlighted by Dudley (2008: 16), in the case of a National Park the economic development is mostly supported through recreation

and tourism "that can contribute to local and national economies and in particular to local communities".

While the emergence of tourism in protected areas can represent an opportunity for socio-economic development especially in poorer countries (Wondirad and Ewnetu, 2019), connecting land use and preservation poses particular challenges due to the fact that the interests of the local actors are different and do not always embrace sustainability issues (Islam et al., 2018). Therefore, the role of the governance of protected areas is to encourage both tourists and local actors to adopt sustainability-oriented performances.

As some studies show (Eklund et al., 2011; Islam et al., 2018; Saviano and Montella, 2017; Zafarullah and Huque, 2001), in several countries, the achievement of objectives for tourism development and the better functioning of protected areas is affected by bad governance activities.

Conceptually, governance relates to "the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say" (Graham et al., 2003: 2).

IUCN (2008) distinguishes four different types of governance of protected areas: (1) governance by government (at federal/state/sub-national or municipal level); (2) shared governance, that is, various actors sit on a management body with decision-making authority and responsibility; (3) private governance (e.g., individual landowners, cooperatives, and NGOs); and (4) governance by indigenous peoples and local communities.

Management effectiveness is strictly correlated to the type of governance of protected areas (Lockwood, 2010). For instance, more participatory and inclusive models of management are preferred to traditional top-down forms of governance in order to reduce conflict between local actors and government (Plummer and Fennell, 2009). Good governance also depends on the specific approach adopted to managing the territory and its complexity. As confirmed by different studies (Barile et al., 2014; Iandolo et al., 2019; Saviano et al., 2018; Simone et al., 2018), the vSa can provide useful support to the governing body of a specific protected area.

1.2. Protected areas from a vSa and actor engagement theory perspective

To overcome the limits of the traditional analytical-reductionist model in the study of business and management issues, the vSa approach advances an holistic view to understand complex phenomena rather than focusing on the individual parts (Barile, 2008, 2009; Barile and Saviano, 2011; Barile et al., 2012, 2014; Golinelli, 2010). According to this approach, which bases its conceptual architecture on the Viable Systems Model of Stafford Beer (1984), a specific protected area is a viable system. This means that a territory from the perspective of the governing body is a structure, that is, a set of entities and specific relationships that can exist between the entities, directed towards the goals of survival within a specific context of reference.

In order to preserve viability conditions the governing body should be capable of achieving and maintaining an acceptable degree of consonance and resonance between the entities of the system (Golinelli, 2010). Consonance can be identified as "a condition of compatibility and/or complementarity between interacting entities." Conversely, resonance "is related to pre-existent conditions of consonance and is what emerges from the interaction between consonant entities" (Barile et al., 2014: 688). In other terms, "resonance can be defined as harmonious systemic interaction, while consonance is structural and relational" (Dominici, 2015: 90). In a viable system such as a protected area, the decision-making component of the governing body has to understand the environment, identify the intrinsic peculiarity of the territory for advancing socio-economic development, set specific sustainability goals, and design a service system for satisfying the needs and wants of different actors such as local community members and tourists from other regions and countries. At the operational level, the management of the governance has to create plans, allocate resources

effectively for the implementation of the decided goals, coordinate the interactions/relationships between the different units of the system, such as natural entities and socio-economic actors, and adopt strategies to establish consonance and resonance conditions.

Internal conflicts among different systemic actors can compromise the harmonious interactions within a specific system, hence the vSa can be integrated with the actor engagement theory to better understand why specific engagement strategies adopted by the governing body play a key role in affecting the viability of the protected areas.

The engagement concept was initially used in marketing literature to explore the dyadic relationship between customers/consumers and firms or brands. Specifically, customer engagement was defined as “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships” and conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011: 260).

Recently, attention has been focused on actor engagement rather than customer engagement, that is, on a more versatile idea of actor (Brodie et al., 2019). In these terms, the actor can be a citizen (Bowden et al., 2016), a patient in healthcare (Hardyman et al., 2015), a business partner (Jaakkola and Aarikka-Stenroos, 2019), an employer (Kumar and Pansari, 2016), and even a nonhuman entity such as a technological device or machine (Storbacka et al., 2016).

Furthermore, according to Brodie et al. (2019), the engagement construct should be investigated from a network perspective, that is, how different actors interact and engage with each other in specific systems in order to integrate resources and co-create value for the improvement of mutual well-being.

Actor engagement disposition is affected by internal factors (e.g., psychological or physiological if the actor is a human being) and external factors such as the institutions that characterize the system in which the actor is embedded (Alexander et al., 2018; Storbacka et al., 2016; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Theoretically, institutions are the “rules of the game”, formal and informal rules and norms upon which social, political and economic organizations are based, namely, the players of the game (North, 1990: 4–5; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). The actors' engagement in terms of interfacing and exchanging occurs within shared institutional logics (Storbacka et al., 2016). However, institutions are not given but are shaped by engaged actors who in turn can change or destroy them over the course of time (Brodie et al., 2019).

Based on the above, the actor-generated institutions, such as the governing body of a protected area, create the conceptual, physical and temporal context that determines the actors' engagement, and facilitate and orchestrate the interactions between different internal actors, as well as actors that are outside the borders of the system, namely, the territory declared as a protected area. The actor's disposition to engage represents a prerequisite for resource integration activities with other actors. Hence, actor engagement is a micro-foundation for value co-creation in specific multiple actor systems (Storbacka et al., 2016) and a necessary condition for a systemic harmony among actors (resonance).

In order to coordinate the interconnection between different actors, the governance of a protected area should adopt a specific engagement platform, that is, a virtual (ICT enabled) and/or physical environment in which the actors engage with each other to integrate resources (Frow et al., 2015; Storbacka, Storbacka et al., 2016). The platform is an intermediation structure between different entities both human and nonhuman (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016) designed to actualize a wide variety of outcomes such as citizen consultation and participation in decision making at the local level (e.g., Cho et al., 2020; Falco and Kleinhans, 2018), as well as product innovation and idea generation (e.g., Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016).

1.3. Sustainability indicators for the tourism development in protected areas

According to the vSa, governance is both a part of a specific system and an observer (Golinelli, 2010). Therefore, the governing body of protected areas need to control and monitor the interactions between the components of its system in order to collect information on the alignment between its expectations and actual performance regarding the harmonious coexistence of tourism development and conservation. Specific indicators and an analysis of the actors' perception towards the protected area can be used to investigate sustainable development.

In accordance with the sustainability definition proposed in the “Brundtland Report”, literature on sustainable tourism has focused on three interconnected dimensions of sustainability encompassing economic, social (or socio-cultural), and environmental factors or goals (Purvis et al., 2019). Economic factors imply that the tourism development should not compromise the quality of the environment. Moreover, the economic benefits from tourism should remain within the local economy and be fairly distributed throughout the community. Environmental factors take into consideration the fact that natural resources are finite. Therefore, biodiversity and ecosystem services must be preserved and protected for future generations. Social factors are concerned with the well-being of local people, respect for social identity, and community culture. In addition, the massive flow of tourists should not affect the community residents' capability to control their own lives, and maintain their social cohesion and group pride.

In addition to the above-mentioned traditional dimensions of sustainable tourism development, Choi and Sirakaya (2006) highlighted two additional dimensions; political and technological. Sustainable development is a concept that regards the political sphere. The achievement of the sustainable development goals is heavily dependent on the society's political system and power distribution (Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Hall, 2011; Lockwood, 2010). For instance, the market approach, that is, a sort of “neoliberalism's laissez faire approach to tourism management”, is a path that does not lead to sustainability in the long term. Cases of over-tourism (e.g., Machu Picchu, Majorca, Barcelona, and Venice) reveal that regulatory mechanisms introduced by the state governance are fundamental to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the destination (Boluk et al., 2019: p. 857). Technological factors are those concerning the introduction and adoption of technology that is environmentally friendly, such as less polluting vehicles and appliances that can help reduce energy consumption. Furthermore, information and communication systems (i.e., the internet, e-commerce websites, and social media) permit the exchange of information among different actors, offer wider market access, and support the management of protected areas. All the dimensions of sustainability discussed herein are closely linked to each other and are strictly necessary for the development of sustainable tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2006). According to the WTO (2004: p. 8), “indicators are measures of the existence or severity of current issues, signals of upcoming situations or problems, measures of risk and potential need for action, and means to identify and measure the results of our actions”. Indicators can have different forms of measurement. It is possible to adopt quantitative measurements (e.g., number of tourists visiting a region in a given period; volume of waste generated in a given period expressed in tons; benchmark or data expressed in percentage), and qualitative/normative measurements (category indices; normative indicators; nominal indicators, for example labels such as “Blue Flag”; and opinion-based indicators, such as the level of the local residents' satisfaction relative to tourism issues). As highlighted by Asmelash and Kumar (2019), the adoption of indicators for sustainable tourism is still in its infancy. For example, the number of indicators to be used remains obscure (Cernat and Gourdon, 2012). WTO (2004) suggested that 12–24 indicators are accepted to be optimal, while Sors (2001) stated that 20–50 indicators are quite enough. The main sustainability indicators utilized in this research to evaluate the management effectiveness of the Cilento and

Vallo di Diano National Park are illustrated in Table 1.

2. Case study

2.1. Study area

The Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park is a well-known tourist venue located in the Province of Salerno, Campania region, southern Italy. Established on December 6, 1991, it is the second largest park in Italy. Covering an area of 1,810.48 km² (699.03 sq mi), the national park's territory comprehends 80 municipalities and stretches from the Tyrrhenian coast to the foot of the Apennines in Campania and Basilicata, and it includes the peaks of the Alburni Mountains, Cervati and Gelbison and the coastal butresses of Mt. Bulgheria and Mt. Stella (see Fig. 1).

The peculiarity of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park is given by the width and the heterogeneity of the territory it covers. Consequently, the ecological features of the territory are also extremely heterogeneous: environments that have remained almost unchanged alternate with areas that on the contrary have been strongly modified by the presence of urban centres and densely populated valleys.

The floristic composition of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National

Park is made up of various species of spontaneous autochthonous plants. Among them are some endemic species, such as *Primula palinuri* (Di Novella et al., 2013), the National Park's symbol.

Thanks to the heterogeneous environment that characterizes the territory, the fauna of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park is strongly diversified. Several species of birds, animals and fish populate the coastal and mountain areas, rivers and streams.

Besides its flora and fauna biodiversity, the National Park is also an outstanding cultural landscape. The UNESCO declared it a World Heritage of Humanity in 1998 due to the presence of archaeological sites that testify traces of human settlements dating back to prehistoric times. Examples of antiquities are the remains of the Greek cities of Paestum and Velia (called the Great Attractor); the monumental complex of the ancient monastery 'Certosa di Padula'; and many sites of great archaeological and artistic importance, such as the Lucanian settlements of Moio della Civitella, Rocca gloriosa and Caselle in Pittari. The vast area also contains seaside landscapes (Punta Licosa, Palinuro, and Punta degli Infreschi) as well as inland landscapes, such as the Bulgheria Mountains.

Together with Soria in Spain, Koroni in Greece and Chefchaouen in Morocco, the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park belongs to the sites of the so-called Mediterranean Diet, inscribed in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list since November 2010. The park is also part of the European network of the UNESCO Geoparks. This is a prestigious list for territories that comprehend in their boundaries a certain number of geological sites of particular importance in terms of their scientific quality, rarity, aesthetic appeal or educational value.

Table 1
Sustainability indicators.

Dimension	Indicators	Key studies
Economic	Low profit margin	World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Rio and Nunes, 2012; Farinha et al., 2019)
	Affordable price	
	Varieties of tourism products and services	
	Lack of tourism products differentiations	
	Quantity of job opportunities in tourism sector	
Environmental	Environmental conservation	World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Rio and Nunes, 2012; Farinha et al., 2019; Asmelash and Kumar, 2019)
	Landscape conservation	
	Water conservation	
	Absence of unhealthy levels of air pollution	
	Absence of marine pollution	
	Absence of noise pollution	
	Cleanliness of tourist sites	
	Trash collection and recycling pickup services	
	Traffic congestion	
	Energy use	
Social	Personal safety	World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Rio and Nunes, 2012; Farinha et al., 2019)
	Conservation of cultural heritage	
	Preservation of the place identity	
	Workers hard to find	
	Quality of job opportunities in tourism sector	
	Cooperation among local firms	
	Skills and competences of the tourism operators	
	Public Sector Efficiency (i.e. transportation, healthcare)	
	Political, economic and social actors with the competency to change the territory	
	Collaboration between tourism firms, institutions and local residents	
Political	Support from the European Union, regional and provincial governments	Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Asmelash and Kumar, 2019
	EU funding for environmental, nature conservation, and cultural projects	
	Scarce use of technology	
Technological	Scarce use of technology	Choi and Sirakaya, 2006

Source: Authors' elaboration.

2.2. Protective measures

The Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park benefits from three different levels of protection: national, regional and local.

On the national level, the site is covered by the Italian Legislative Decree No. 42 of 2004 "Code for the Cultural Heritage and Landscape". According to this Decree, which ensures the protection of the natural and panoramic beauty, the archaeological sites and several individual buildings in the area, all interventions require the approval of the relevant national heritage organizations (municipalities and Superintendence for Architectonic Heritage and Landscape, a peripheral office of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities).

The Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park is also protected by the Law No. 394 of 1991 and the Presidential decree (DPR) of February 6, 1995. Stringent safeguarding measures have been introduced to preserve both the natural environment and the heritage buildings. For example, territorial development must receive prior acceptance by the governing body of the Park and must be formally checked by the Superintendence for Architectonic Heritage and Landscape.

The territory of the park is under the "PTP – Piano Territoriale Paesistico" (Territorial Plan for Landscape) of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. The archaeological sites of Paestum and Velia, and the Certosa di Padula are State property. They are protected by the Legislative Decree No. 42 of 2004. The Paestum archaeological site is protected for a distance of 1Km from its walls by the Special Law No. 220 of 1957. Velia is protected by the Regional Law of February 8, 2005, No. 5 through the constitution of a landscape-environmental area around this ancient town.

2.3. The management system of the Park

The Park management comes under the responsibility of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park Authority, that is, the governing body. This is a public body, with a full-time President and professional staff. A governing council supervises its operations. The council is composed of representatives of national, regional, and local institutions and authorities, and a management group consisting of senior staff, consultants, and other specialists.

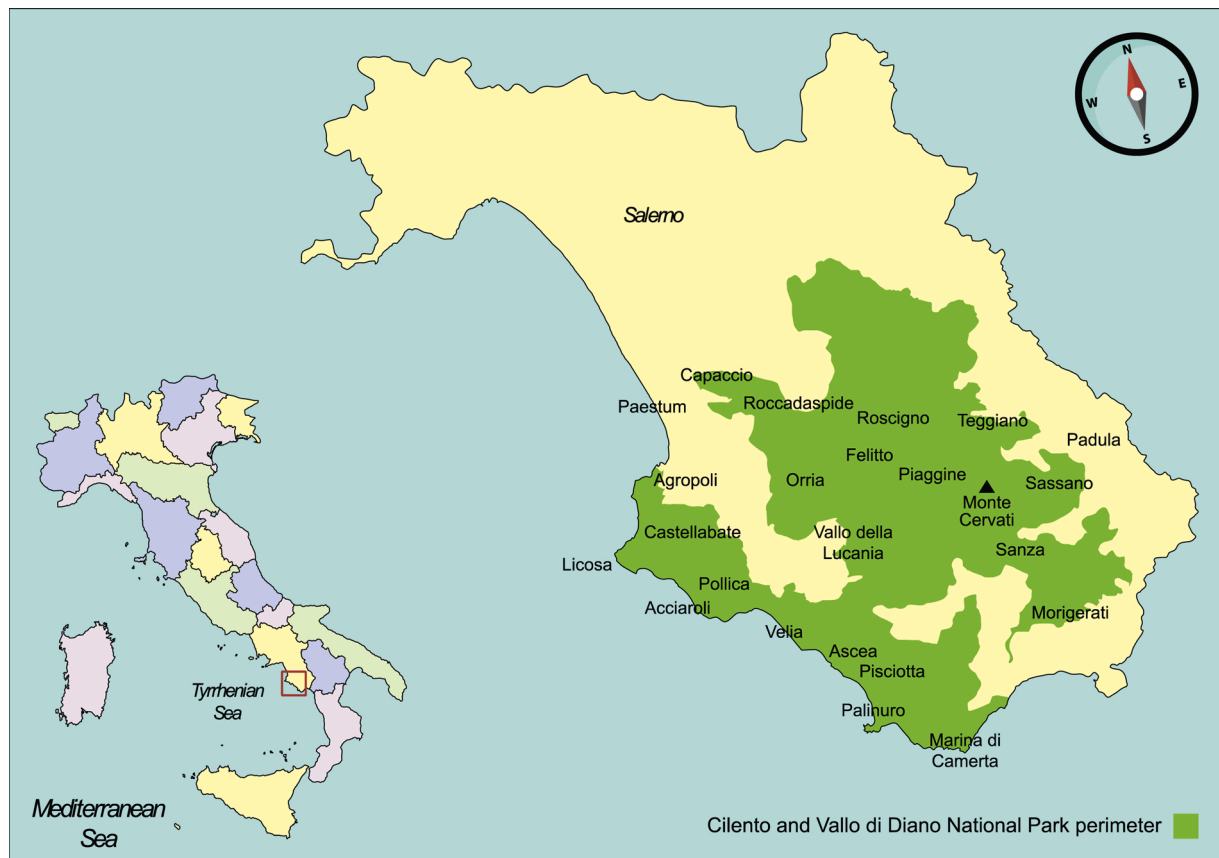


Fig. 1. Location map of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park. Source: Authors' elaboration.

The Park is under the aegis of the Ministry of the Environment. Its authorization is required for all activities within the Park that may have an impact on its quality and status. The governing body of the Park also collaborates with the authorities of the municipalities inside the perimeter of the protected area. Each of the municipalities has to produce a District Plan. However, the Park Institution has the power to override the municipalities' decisions concerning urban planning matters.

The governing body of the protected area has adopted an organizational structure based on three departments, each operating as a centre with directive responsibilities: the Administrative Department, the Department for Territorial Protection and Development, and the Department for Promotion and Environmental Enhancement.

The Park Master Plan is the main managerial document. It is a three-year planning instrument, approved by the President of the Region, to preserve and protect the natural and environmental values of the Park, as well as its cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Park Master Plan is a tool for the organization of sustainable development goals.

Every year the governing body produces a "Performance Analysis Report" to communicate to the external actors or stakeholders (e.g., citizens, organizations, and political institutions) the performance and the results achieved within the previous year by the three above-mentioned Departments of the park.

Local communities resident in or near the World Heritage property and/or buffer zone have no input in decisions relating to the management. This form of disempowerment constitutes a limitation, because the governance of the protected area could lose consensus and mutual understanding (Islam et al., 2018).

3. Methods

This study discusses the case of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park through the lens of a theoretical framework that combines the vSa and the actor engagement theory.

According to Gummesson (2017), case studies can be used in various ways in business and management disciplines for studying the complexity of the 'real' world. For example, cases can deal with the efficiency of an organization, the behaviour of financial markets, the success or failure of a manager, a single consumer or a community of consumers and citizens.

Case studies have received many definitions, but in the specific, as highlighted by Yin (2017), this empirical inquiry is appropriate when exploring a specific phenomenon within its context and thus develops a deep understanding of how it relates to its context through an all-encompassing method that includes the logic of the case study project, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis.

3.1. Data collection and analysis

We used different sources to collect the data. Firstly, we examined secondary data, that is, material retrieved from the web, such as administrative documents concerning the process of constitution of the Park, the Park Master Plan document, and the "Performance Analysis Report" for the year 2018 published by the governing body in June 2019, which also contains a SWOT analysis of the tourism industry in Cilento and Vallo di Diano. Secondly, we collected primary data using a questionnaire. In particular, in order to explore the managerial effectiveness of the governing body of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park we administered a paper survey to local tourism and hospitality

entrepreneurs. Exploring the perception of the local actors of a protected area is paramount for understanding their evaluation of the managerial processes (Nastran, 2015). Furthermore, knowing their point of view can help to solve the current problems and plan more effective and successful strategies to satisfy the actors' expectations and needs.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section was designed to collect the main demographic information of the specific tourism and hospitality firm (i.e., type of firm, age of the owner/interviewee). The second section concerned the situation analysis of the protected area. Specifically, it aimed to find out, from the point of view of the local entrepreneurs, the main threats, opportunities, weakness and strengths. Each component of the SWOT analysis was evaluated using multiple-choice items, which were adapted from the extant literature, as illustrated in Table 1. This section also included a scaled question (1–5) concerning the satisfaction of local entrepreneurs with specific services provided by the territory in which they work. The third section was aimed at registering the local entrepreneurs' perception of future actions to improve the sustainability of the protected area. The answer to each question is given on a scale from 1 to 5 ("Not important", "Slightly important", "Moderately important", and "Very important").

To collect the data we used a convenience sampling of tourism and hospitality firms. The data collection process was conducted in the period April–September, 2019. We collected 200 valid questionnaires. The main demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Focusing on data analysis procedure, we followed a multi-step sequence and adopted a coding technique based both on the the vSa model and the actor engagement theory. Firstly, in order to understand how the governing body develops a strategic plan to reach its sustainability goals, we analyzed secondary data, such as administrative documents or the "Performance Analysis Report" published by the governing body. In this phase we adopted a qualitative approach through the use of a content analysis. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is a technique that helps researchers to make replicable and acceptable inferences about the meaning of texts. Hence, content analysis can enhance the understanding of a specific phenomenon. Secondly, we summarized and described the questionnaire data by using

Table 2
Demographic information of the respondents.

Demographic information	Frequency	Percent
Interviewee's role inside the firm		
Owner	116	58
Family member/assistant	16	8
Business partner/manager	24	12
Employee	44	22
Interviewee's age		
25 or less	19	10
26–35	66	33
36–45	45	23
46–55	45	23
over 55	25	13
Interviewee's education		
Less than a High school diploma	17	9
High School diploma	85	43
University degree	69	35
Master's degree	28	14
Type of tourism industry		
Food and beverage services	35	16
Hospitality	48	21
Agritourism	28	13
Non-hotel accommodation	58	26
Travel agency	16	7
Tour operator	5	2
Tourism guiding services	7	3
Tourist consortium	1	0,5
Transportation	4	2
Tourism promotion organization	11	5

Source: Authors' elaboration.

descriptive statistics. In this phase, we developed a SWOT analysis to illustrate the main strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats perceived by the local tourism entrepreneurs concerning the sustainability of the protected area. Thirdly, we compared the analysis of secondary data with the results of the survey in order to understand differences and similarities between the point of view of the governing body that manages the Park and the local tourism entrepreneurs as regards sustainability issues.

4. Results

From the content analysis of secondary data, such as the Performance Analysis Report, we were able to delineate a performance tree that summarizes the main strategic objectives pursued by each Department of the governing body of the protected area (see Fig. 2). Specific issues regarding the concept of sustainable tourism development were not found among the main objectives. The governing body focuses on the continuous improvement of the quality of management performance competencies, the protection of their cultural heritage and biodiversity, the promotion of local landscapes, as well as traditions and the "Mediterranean Diet", but there are no initiatives or research on sustainable tourism development. Nevertheless, if we look at the SWOT analysis conducted by the governing body on tourism, and presented inside the "Performance Analysis Report" for the year 2018 (see Table 3), one of the perceived threats was the anthropic pressure on the main tourism attractors (e.g., the Greek Temple of Paestum) and coastal areas. This means that, in order to preserve the territory, the development of strategies to activate and promote sustainable tourism are paramount. In the perspective of the governing body, sustainable tourism is seen as a possibility, as something that has not yet been planned concretely, rather than constituting their main objective.

Focusing on the results of the survey administered to local entrepreneurs operating in the tourism sector, we found out that Cilento and Vallo di Diano is perceived by respondents as a seaside destination (40 %) rather than a naturalistic destination (11 %), this explains the anthropic pressure on the coastal areas identified in Table 3. Furthermore, local entrepreneurs are not totally satisfied with many services provided by the municipality in which they operate (see Fig. 3). Specifically, respondents highlighted the lack of efficiency in the public sector (e.g., transport and healthcare). On the other hand, they are satisfied with the quality of the air, the low level of marine pollution and noise pollution, the cleanliness of tourist sites, and the trash collection and recycling pickup services.

The second section of the survey was also aimed at understanding the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the tourist destination of Cilento and Vallo di Diano from the point of view of the local tourist entrepreneurs. As depicted in Table 4, the main strengths identified by respondents are the ecological and natural resources of the area, the possibility for tourists to taste traditional foods and beverages, and the presence of heritage sites and museums.

The main weakness identified by local tourist entrepreneurs are the inability to promote and communicate the primary attractions of the protected area to a vast audience, both national and international. The tourist promotion policy, in fact, is mostly implemented at a regional level.

Speaking of the opportunities that local actors can exploit to improve the tourism offer and increase the economic performance of the sector, respondents highlighted in particular the creation of cultural events to enhance the image of the territory. Furthermore, another opportunity is represented by the increasing demand for naturalistic tourism, and experiences related to food, sport, and wellness.

The threats that have been recognized by respondents are the lack of collaboration between the different tourist entrepreneurs operating in the area of Cilento and Vallo di Diano. The non-existence of networks of tourism firms, either formally or informally, is a limitation. Many studies show that networks can help entrepreneurs to share skills, resources

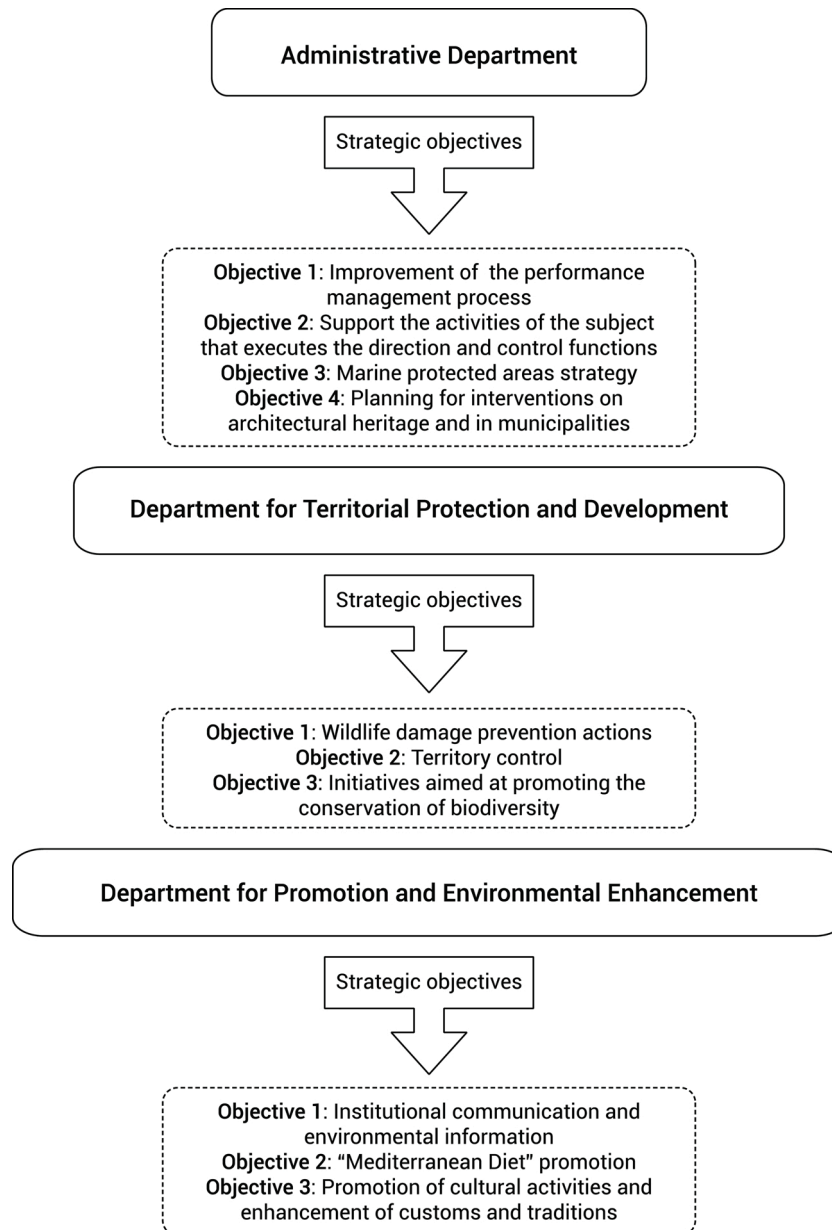


Fig. 2. Performance tree.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

such as information, and create new business opportunities (Lans et al., 2015; Besser and Miller, 2011). Lack of managerial competencies and a very limited attitude towards innovation constitute other forms of threats because they affect business performance. From the point of view of local entrepreneurs, bureaucracy is also a potential threat. Tourist entrepreneurs, in fact, must respect numerous regulations imposed by the governing body of the protected area especially with regard to urban planning.

The third section of the survey aimed to collect the local entrepreneurs' perception of future actions to improve the sustainability of the protected area and the relevant actions for the development of the territory. As illustrated in Fig. 4, "Preserve the place identity", "Promote environmental stewardship", "Improvement of solid waste management", and "Promote the consumption of zero kilometer products" are the main actions perceived by respondents as fundamental to the improvement of sustainability practices.

As illustrated in Fig. 5, respondents perceived "Support from the European Union, regional and provincial governments" as a relevant

factor in developing the territory. The financial support of such public institutions should give the governing body of the Park, the municipalities and the local entrepreneurs the opportunity to consider new strategic areas for improving community welfare, tourism infrastructures, and local measures of sustainability. Furthermore, from the respondents' point of view, the collaboration between tourism firms, political institutions and local residents, the creation of a business network of Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the tourism sector, as well as the capability to develop a long-term strategic orientation were considered paramount for the improvement of the territory.

5. Discussion

As we can see from the analysis of the documents published by the governing body, the management of the Cilento and Vallo Di Diano National Park presents a good level of performance for services concerning the management of the park, the safeguarding of the natural

Table 3
SWOT Analysis of the tourism industry in the Cilento and Vallo di Diano area developed by the governing body.

Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presence of cultural areas, heritage attractions, and natural landscapes - Events which promote local culture and traditions - Presence of uncontaminated natural areas and richly variegated flora and fauna - Availability of outdoor sports and recreational facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of professionalism in local tourism industries - Prevalence of the seaside product in the tourist offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business or employment opportunities in the agro-tourism and rural tourism sectors - Geotourism development - Enogastronomic tourism development - EU tourism policy and actions to enhance sustainable tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anthropic pressure on the main tourism attractor and coastal areas

Source: Performance Analysis Report, 2018.

resources for future generations, and the conservation of the archaeological sites. On the contrary, less attention is given to the implementation of sustainable tourism practices, that is, strategies capable of balancing resources for conservation and the growth of tourism revenues. The main indicators for environmental quality, as emerged from the questionnaire, are considered to be average or good, but the low profit margin of the local tourism industry represents a weakness (see Table 5).

Analyzing the case of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park through the lens of the vSa allowed us to identify how the systemic components (e.g., firms, political institutions, citizens and non-profit organizations) of this protected area are disconnected with each other. Specifically, our findings show lack of cooperation and coordination among the different political, economic, and social actors. Furthermore, the absence of a tourism network capable of integrating different resources and capabilities is another serious obstacle to the sustainable

development of the territory.

To ensure the viability of the protected area, the governing body should have a systemic vision that takes into account the complex relationships between environment preservation and the socio-economic well-being of local individuals and communities. Hence, the sustainable development of a protected area depends on the capacity of the governing body to understand the expectations of the different actors and reduce conflicts, particularly those associated with the discontent of the inhabitants of the inner areas of the Park. In reality, because of the lack of job opportunities several municipalities are becoming ghost towns.

Collaboration, local community empowerment, and the actors' engagement in decision-making or idea generation processes could help to handle conflicts and find better solutions for the management of the territory. In these terms, empowerment is a strategic way to trigger and drive the actors' engagement in issues concerning sustainable land management and the viability of protected areas. Therefore, from our point of view, empowerment and engagement are necessary for achieving conditions of systemic consonance and resonance.

To provide a context for the on-going processes of collaboration, resource integration and value co-creation between different actors (both inside and outside the territorial borders) the governing body of the protected area should adopt an "engagement platform" (Storbacka et al., 2016). By creating this kind of physical or virtual system, which works as an intermediary for connections (Storbacka et al., 2016) between the supra-system (i.e., Ordinator Subject and operative structure) and the subsystem (i.e., different local political, social and economic actors) the governing body can involve individuals with common interests and integrate different types of knowledge when making decisions about how to enhance sustainable development.

Another aspect that denotes lack of managerial effectiveness regards the incapacity of the governing body of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park to promote sustainable values. As highlighted by Saviano et al. (2018), a protected area represents a cultural way to promote sustainability. This means that the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park should become a symbol of environmental, social, and economic sustainability for both local socio-economic actors and subjects that arrive from the outside. In these terms, the governing body should adopt specific educational programs to engage different actors in

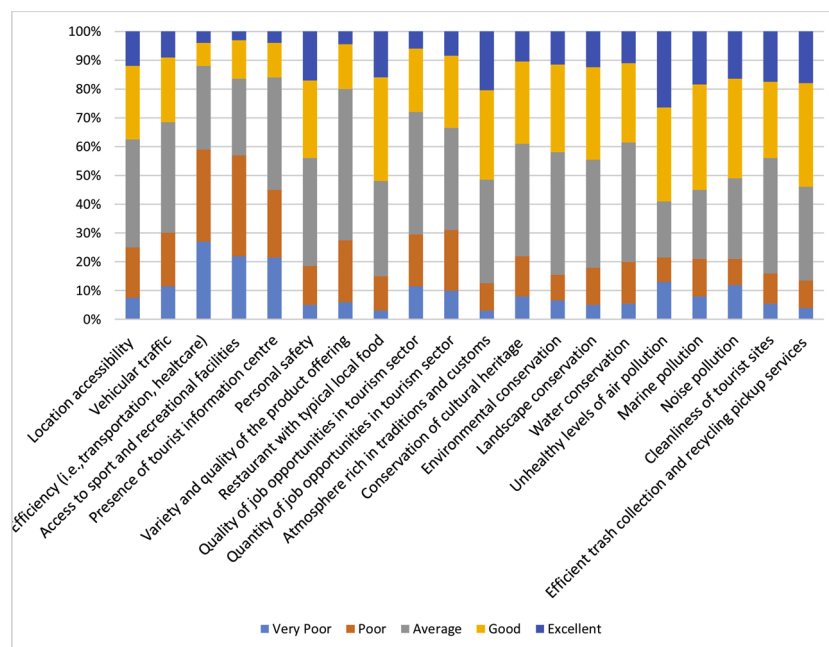


Fig. 3. Tourist entrepreneurs' satisfaction with municipal services.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 4
SWOT Analysis of the tourism industry in the Cilento and Vallo di Diano area developed on the basis of the perception of local entrepreneurs.

Strengths	Weight	Weakness	Weight
The quality of tourism destinations	5 %	Tourism promotion at the regional level	14 %
The uniqueness of tourism destinations	5 %	Limited tourism promotion	19 %
Varieties of tourism products and services	9 %	Low awareness of tourist attractions in Centola	2 %
Affordable price	7 %	A small variety of tourism products and services	2 %
Favorable geographical location	9 %	Lack of cooperation among local firms	19 %
Traditional foods and beverages	20 %	Lack of tourism products differentiations	6 %
Ecological and natural resources	24 %	Pulverization of markets	3 %
Heritage and Museums	13 %	Scarcity in product innovation	12 %
Cultural events	4 %	Limited use of technology	9 %
		Low profit margin	5 %
		Difficulty in finding workers	6 %
Opportunities	Weight	Threats	Weight
Policy attention to tourism sector	12 %	Bureaucracy	13 %
Rediscovery of Italian culture	10 %	National and International Competition	5 %
Favorable geographic disposition	10 %	Digital skills gap	9 %
Increased demand for naturalistic tourism	14 %	The firm size	3 %
Cultural events for promoting the image of the territory	15 %	Generational change	4 %
Improvement of sea mobility	8 %	Limited attitude towards innovation	14 %
Advantages of ICT	1 %	Scarcity in managerial competence	15 %
The growth of eServices	4 %	Lack of competent manpower	7 %
Presence of Tourism & Hospitality Schools	2 %	Lack of collaboration between companies	20 %
Growth in demand for gastronomy, sport, and wellness tourism packages	12 %	Absence of an effective assistance network	6 %
EU funding for environmental, nature conservation, and cultural projects	10 %		

Source: Authors' elaboration.

pro-environmental behaviour and develop communication strategies (i.e., events, and advertising campaigns) to allow individuals to understand how environmental problems can be avoided.

According to the [Performance Analysis Report \(2018\)](#) published by the governing body of the Park, farm products and rural settlements represent business opportunities. The presence within the protected area of such resources should not be underestimated, because they can favour

ecotourism development, namely, a new niche form of tourism that fully satisfies the mission of protected areas because it is capable of balancing local business activities and environmental integrity. In fact, [The International Ecotourism Society \(2015\)](#) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”.

6. Conclusions

This paper explores the complex mechanism that upholds the management of a protected area. The main peculiarity of this type of territory is to be found in the implementation of managerial strategies that are capable of combining land sustainability with the use of space and resources for economic purposes. Therefore, the governing body of a protected area should negotiate with local actors to reduce the conflicts relating to their needs, wants or obligations, as well as with the external actors, such as the regional or national political institutions, who establish the laws for the governance of the protected areas and decide on the distribution of public funds for environmental protection and socio-economic development.

As highlighted by [Saviano et al. \(2018\)](#), the management of a protected area cannot adopt the traditional analytical-reductionist model used to interpret reality and solve problems. Territory is a complex system, the elements that define its structure are connected with one another. Dysfunctional relationships between two or more parts (e.g., individuals and environment) can determine systemic diseases that, if not put right in time, could compromise the viability of the territorial system.

According to previous studies ([Barile, 2008, 2009](#); [Barile and Saviano, 2011](#); [Barile et al., 2012, 2014](#); [Golinelli, 2010](#)), vSa offers a more appropriate schema for investigating social organizations and managing their complexity. This study contributes to the current literature on protected area management by integrating the vSa with the actor engagement conceptualization. The case of the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park teaches us that the absence of collaboration between the various social, economic and political actors is the main cause of conflict and discontent within the territory. Hence, the governing body of the protected area should adopt specific strategies to engage them all around shared beliefs and common objectives.

The main managerial implications of our work consist in addressing why and how a specific protected area is not well managed. The case analysis reveals that the main causes that obstruct the managerial effectiveness is the lack of coordination between the three different Departments (i.e., the Administrative Department, the Department for Territorial Protection and Development, and the Department for Promotion and Environmental Enhancement) of the operative area, and the lack of management plans for the achievement of both conservation and livelihood benefits. This means that management effectiveness depends on how well the different components of the supra-system interact with

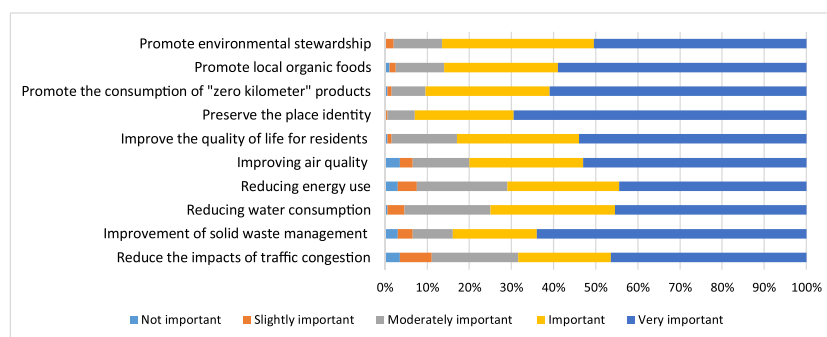


Fig. 4. Improvement actions.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

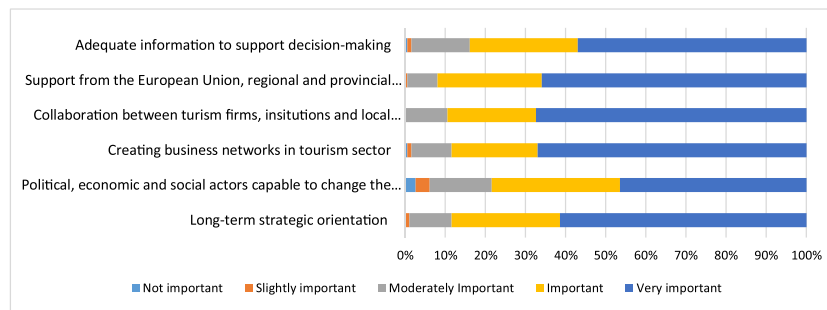


Fig. 5. Relevant actions for the development of the territory. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 5
Tourism entrepreneurs' evaluation of sustainability indicators.

Dimension	Indicators	Evaluation
Economic	Low profit margin	Weakness
	Affordable price	Strength
	Varieties of tourism products and services	Strength
	Lack of tourism products differentiations	Weakness
	Quantity of job opportunities in tourism sector	Average
	Environmental conservation	Average
Environmental	Landscape conservation	Average
	Water conservation	Average
	Absence of unhealthy levels of air pollution	Good
	Absence of marine pollution	Good
	Absence of noise pollution	Good
	Cleanliness of tourist sites	Average
Social	Trash collection and recycling pickup services	Good
	Traffic congestion	Average
	Energy use	Needs to be improved
	Personal safety	Average
	Conservation of cultural heritage	Average
	Preservation of the place identity	Strength
Political	Workers hard to find	Weakness
	Quality of job opportunities in tourism sector	Average
	Cooperation among local firms	Weakness
	Skills and competencies of the tourism operators	Weakness
	Public Sector Efficiency (i.e. transport, healthcare)	Poor
	Political, economic and social actors capable of changing the territory	Needs to be improved
Technological	Collaboration between tourism firms, institutions and local residents	Needs to be improved
	Support from the EU, regional and provincial governments	Needs to be improved
	EU funding for environmental, nature conservation, and cultural projects	Needs to be improved
Very little use of technology	Weakness	

Source: Authors' elaboration.

each other and co-create value with the different actors that characterize the subsystem such as local entrepreneurs, citizens, local political institutions, non-profit organizations, and tourists. For instance, the Department for Territorial Protection and Development and the Department for Promotion and Environmental Enhancement should interact with each other and implement coordinated actions aimed at strengthening economic and social objectives through the promotion of tourism, cultural and recreational services that are compatible with natural resources, as well as the local traditions and archaeological heritage. To sum up, the territory itself should become a cultural model for promoting sustainability regionally, nationally and globally.

The main limitation of this study regards the generalizability of the findings because we focused only on a single case, namely, the Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park. Future research can adopt a multiple case study approach in order to give robustness to our suggestion on the

management of a protected area through a theoretical framework that combines the vSa and the actor engagement theory.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Mario D'Arco: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Visualization. **Letizia Lo Presti:** Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing. **Vittoria Marino:** Supervision, Writing - review & editing. **Giulio Maggiore:** Supervision, Writing - review & editing.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2020.105198>.

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