

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Alagna Valsesia is a rural alpine municipality in the North of Piedmont (Italy), located in Alta Valsesia Natural Park, together with Mount Rosa, the second-highest peak of the Alps. The area has been a tourist destination since the end of the XIX century, thanks to its landscape, nature, outdoor activities i.e. skiing in winter and hiking in summer. Local traditions enhanced still today are related to the Walser population, who have started living in the Mount Rosa valleys since the XIII century.

The aim of the “Alagna Walser Green Paradise” research project is to gather useful data, in cooperation with local stakeholders, for sustainable development and responsible tourism plans. The project started in February 2021 and lasts for two years.

The five pillars of the research are “Cultural Heritage & Creativity”, “Environmental Sustainability”, “Digitalization”, “Accessibility” and “Quality of Life”. The “Cultural Heritage & Creativity” examines in depth the themes related to food and wine production, architecture, landscape and culture of Alagna Valsesia. The “Environmental Sustainability” analyzes the relationship between human activities and the environment. “Digitalization” explore the theme of the smart village whilst the “Accessibility” discuss the topic of people with special needs (motorial, sensorial, dietary, etc. difficulties) or specific targets (families with children, elderly people, etc.).

The “Quality of Life” (QoL) would measures the competitiveness of mountain destinations. There are numerous models for measuring the quality of life at an international and national level but none are applicable to the mountain territory. The aim of this pillar is to develop a model that identifies some of the most significant QoL aspects for a mountain municipality, as Alagna Valsesia is. A model that could be replicable in similar alpine destinations. Quantitative measures, together with qualitative ones - related to happiness and well-being, were considered and discussed with local stakeholders. The application in Alagna Valsesia allows the team to understand the state of the art and identify the sector(s) in which it is most important and urgent to act.

The direct involvement of local stakeholders (public institutions, companies, associations, tourist operators, tourist, residents) is essential in each of the above-mentioned pillars. The research team pursues a bottom-up approach, in order to share objectives and collect stakeholders’ point of view about opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses.