



Management of Tourism Impacts on Landscapes: a Multidimensional Analysis for a just Policy Making

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Introduction

Tourism reshapes territories and landscapes unevenly: it concentrates pressure in high-visibility cores while leaving structural dependence and unrealised opportunity in peripheral areas. Aggregate, destination-wide figures systematically conceal these differences, and just, effective policy cannot be designed on what it cannot see.

This PhD builds a multidimensional, multi-scalar reading of tourism impacts in the Province of Bergamo (Italy), a gateway destination pairing a UNESCO-recognised core with prealpine valleys.

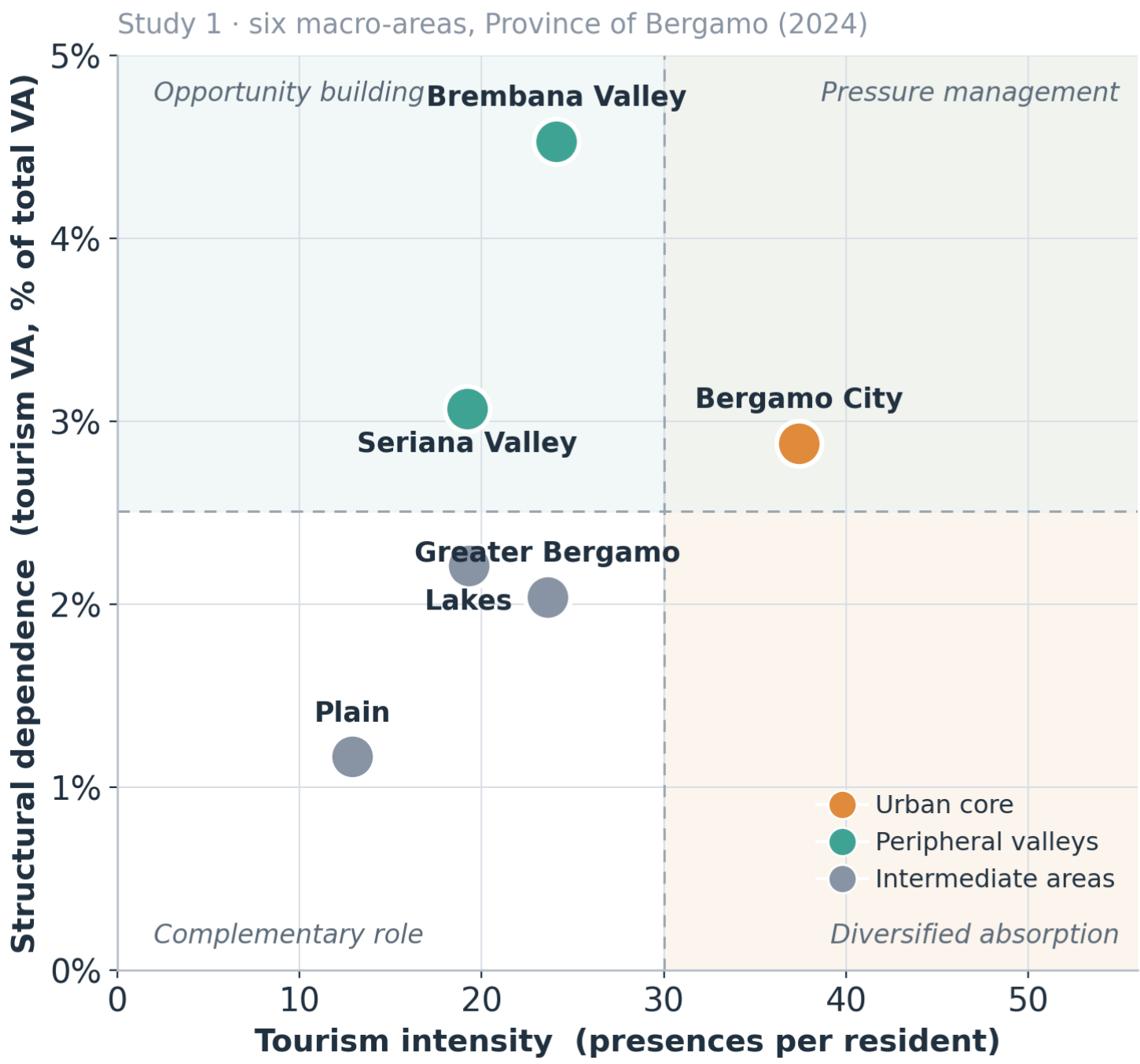
Joint supervision with Sorbonne University (Institute of Geography); scholarship co-funded by Excellera (data-intelligence) and VisitBergamo (DMC), in collaboration with the PhD programme in Landscape Studies for Global and Local Challenges.

Objectives

- Measure tourism's economic impact at granular, sub-provincial scale (Study 1)
- Explain how visitor flows convert into local value, and how merchants differ (Study 2)
- Read the tourist-commercial experience of heritage "hyper-places" (Study 3, ongoing)

Common thread: granularity, spatial and social, as the precondition for place-based, just policy-making.

Intensity ≠ dependence



Study 1 · Economic impacts of tourism

Core-periphery differences in tourism economic dependence

Background & aim

Tourism impact assessment usually reports destination-wide figures. Uneven development theory holds that sub-territories integrate into the tourism economy through qualitatively distinct channels, a differentiation aggregate accounting conceals (Harvey, 1973; Massey, 1995; Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013). Input-output analysis remains the standard, communicable tool for tourism impact (Fletcher, 1989; Dwyer et al., 2004).

Aim: can territorially granular impact estimates support spatially differentiated, place-based governance?

Methods

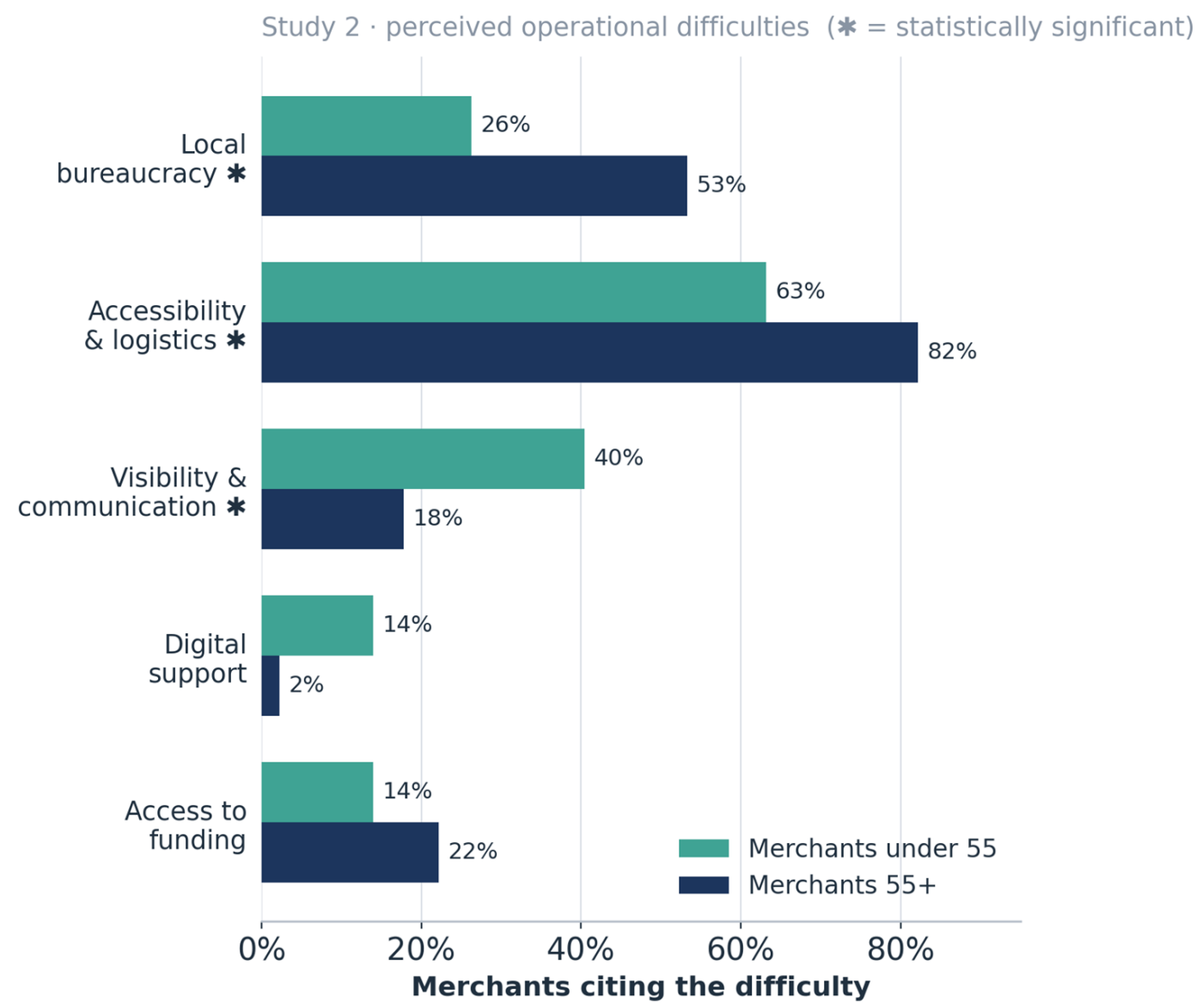
Regionalised input-output model (Flegg Location Quotient) over six policy-defined macro-areas. Multi-form presence, overnight, same-day (mobile positioning data; Raun et al., 2016) and second-home use (Hall & Müller, 2004). Co-designed with VisitBergamo and the Chamber of Commerce of Bergamo.

Key results

- €799.1m tourism value added = 2.51% of provincial VA and 3.71% of employment
- Same-day visitors generate 51% of tourism value, more than overnight stays (41%); second homes add 8%
- Intensity ≠ dependence: Bergamo city has the highest intensity (37.4 presences/resident) but moderate dependence (2.88%); Brembana Valley the highest dependence (4.53%) at lower intensity
- Sectoral inversion: Accommodation & F&B leads the core (45.2%); second-home real estate leads the valleys (up to 39.6%)

Core and periphery integrate into tourism through qualitatively distinct channels, not merely "more or less" tourism.

Age-differentiated demand



Study 2 · Governance of urban commerce

Digital readiness, merchant segmentation & value conversion

Background & aim

Historic retail cores have been eroded by e-commerce and extra-urban retail (Wrigley & Dolega, 2011). The urban commerce district is theorised as a multi-sided territorial platform (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014) steered through collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008), where spatial frictions and resource discontinuity constrain the conversion of visitor flows into local value (McIntyre & Srinivasan, 2017).

Aim: how does a mature district generate and convert value, and does merchant age moderate digital demand?

Methods

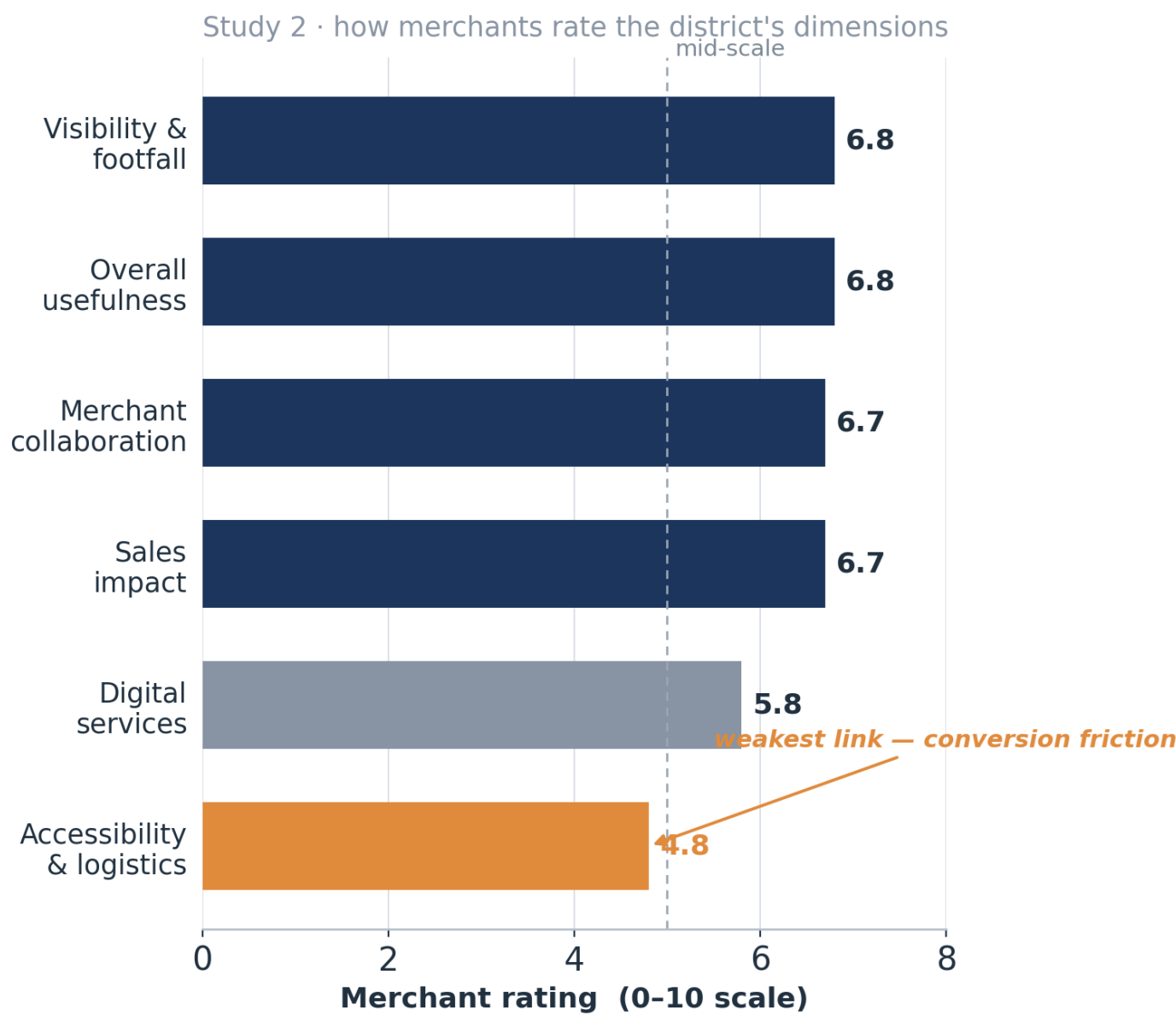
Urban commerce district read as a multi-sided platform; mixed-method single case, 12 stakeholder interviews + merchant survey (n = 103).

Key results

- Value creation ≠ value conversion: accessibility is the weakest link, 72% of merchants cite access/parking/logistics as the main operational difficulty
- Digital-service evaluation is age-neutral, but perceived difficulties are age-differentiated
- Older merchants (55+) cite bureaucracy (53% vs 26%) and accessibility (82% vs 63%)
- Younger merchants cite visibility & communication gaps (40% vs 18%), latent demand, not dissatisfaction

Governance must be segmented by age; reducing friction, not multiplying isolated initiatives, converts visitor attention into local spending.

Value creation ≠ value conversion

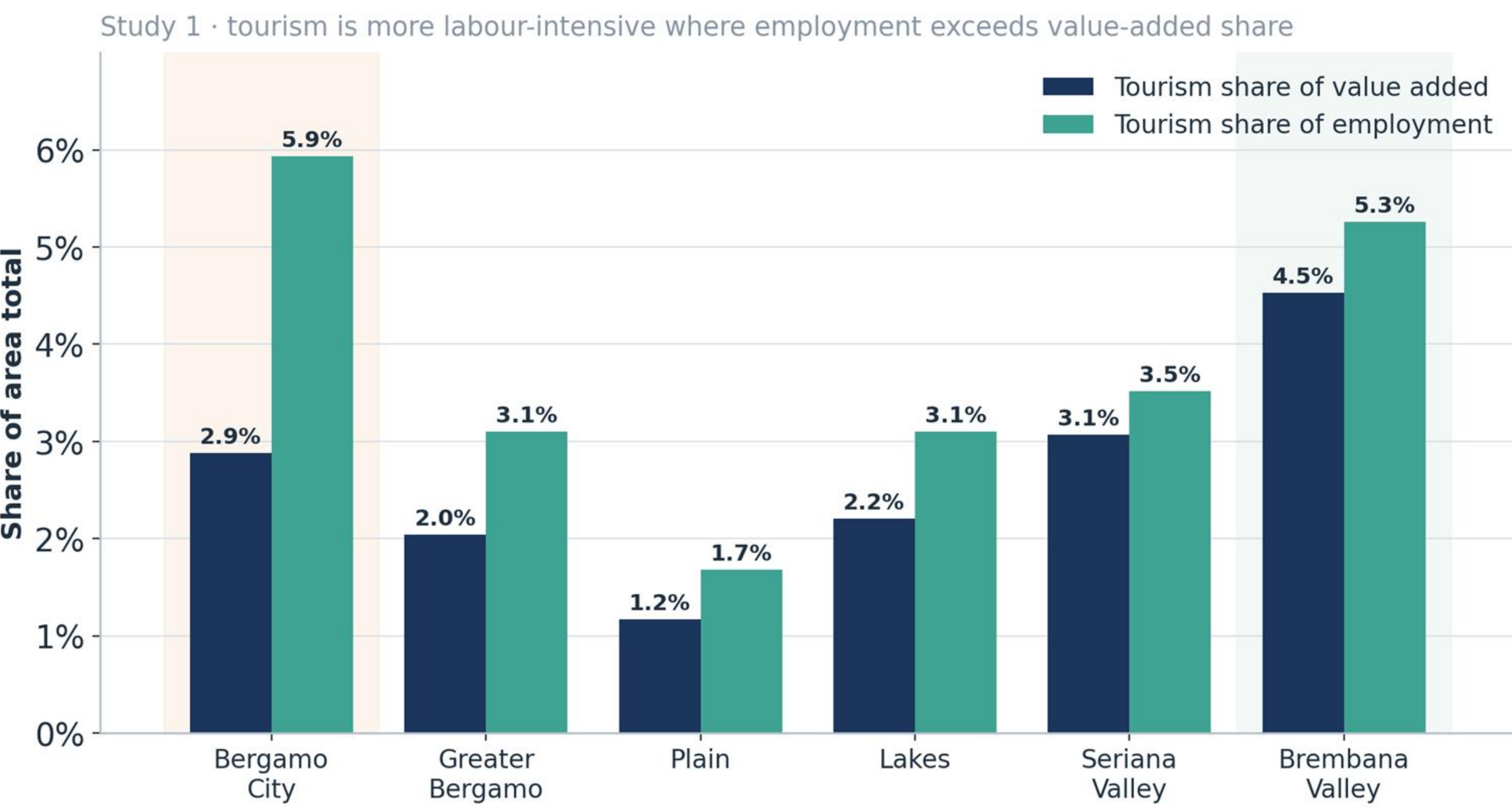


Study 3 · Accessibility & hyper-places

Trans-scalar analysis of intermodal accessibility in Città Alta (Bergamo) and Montmartre (Paris), read as hyper-places where culture, tourism, retail and mobility overlap. Research question: how do tourist mobility routes and commercial landscapes shape perceived authenticity, satisfaction and willingness to return?

Method (in progress): transects → participant observation → commercial inventory → Google-Maps frequency proxy → visitor survey (Prolific).

Tourism as jobs vs as value



Discussion & Conclusions

Read together, the three studies show that tourism's impact on territory and landscape is not a single, uniform phenomenon but a qualitatively differentiated one, unfolding along two intersecting axes. Spatially, the same tourism system produces divergent configurations across the core-periphery gradient: a high-visibility urban core where the challenge is managing pressure and legitimacy, and prealpine peripheries where moderate flows translate into disproportionate structural dependence and greater exposure to demand shocks. Socially, impact is equally uneven within a single place: merchant segments differ in the constraints they perceive and the support they demand, while the tourist experience of heritage "hyper-places" is shaped by mobility routes, commercial landscapes and perceived authenticity. Aggregate, destination-wide indicators flatten this variation, and policies calibrated on them risk misdiagnosing the problem.

The unifying contribution is therefore methodological as much as empirical: granularity, measuring where, for whom and through which channels value, pressure and dependence arise, is the precondition for just, place-based policy-making. Only when these distinct modes of integration are made legible can governance be genuinely differentiated: pressure management in the core, value retention and diversification in the dependent periphery, and friction reduction segmented by merchant profile.

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