In addition to its celebrated wine, Chianti’s fame is rooted in its cultural heritage, particularly its villages, castles, and villas. This work deals instead with the countryside: the life blood from which all the rest springs.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the region was in deep crisis. The countryside was depopulated, many large estates were for sale, and the international markets had rejected its wine.

Only a few decades have passed, and the wines of Chianti are once more appreciated throughout the world. The region attracts tourists, for its oenological offerings, but also for its culture and beautiful landscape. Unemployment is a thing of the past. Everything seems to be going well. However, the reality is actually more complicated. The dark period of the 1960s and 1970s left a series of problems. Many vineyards, which were re-planted with financial support from the European Union, will eventually have to be replaced, because they were badly sited and have caused severe erosion. Secondly, in many parts of Chianti where landscapes are dominated by terraced olive groves, incomes are extremely low, therefore cultivation has often been abandoned and the terraces and drystone walls are collapsing. Furthermore, the demand for housing in the vicinity of Florence and Siena has escalated, which has resulted in soaring property prices and an upsurge of speculative building.

Until now, the territory of Chianti has been transformed without any planning strategy and with no common policies. Consequently, public administrators and agricultural entrepreneurs are often in conflict. The challenge facing the Chianti area is how to unite the many local interest groups under one political umbrella. This chapter attempts to illustrate several decisive points regarding this particular challenge.