Tourism policy, political management of the territory, urban and environmental development for an integrated and competitive model of vocational and sustainable tourism

Policy recommendations

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PREFACE

In the development of the "final recommendations" to this project, we thought it useful to link the theoretical reflection to the actual case of Rimini's experience.

In our opinion, it is not a matter of excess of narcissism, nor of autoreferentiality.

During the long (over 160 years) and not always consistent history of Rimini's tourist industry there have been mistakes and hesitations, steps forward and sudden steps back: the present transition phase, where we have to lead a whole tourist system from the *simple model* of mass tourism to the *complex model* of multiculturality tourism, is, to some extent, the evident demonstration of this difficulty.

Notwithstanding, Rimini showed, during the years, a surprising adaptability to the different "evolutions" of tourist consumption models by supporting their development and, often, even by prefiguring them. This way, Rimini ended by gaining credit also as a **laboratory** of the tourist industry, at least at a national level.

Therefore, it is not by chance that exactly in Rimini - during the '70s / '80s of the past century – the first groups of "vocational tourism" appeared. They practically represented a privileged observation point from which we extrapolated generalizable "behaviour models" and on which we carried on real "practical experimentations" necessary to confirm or contradict the conceptual models we were developing in the meantime and whose usefulness was fully confirmed during this work.

From a practical point of view, we expressed this "dialectic" through two descriptive programmes interwoven with each other (recognizable because their colours are inverted) where general considerations meet step by step the evolution of the "Rimini case".

PHASE 1: SURVEY ON TERRITORY'S RESOURCES AND "VOCATIONS"

The first phase of a "work" addressed to the new vocational tourisms is, necessarily, "introspective" and refers to **the analysis of territory's vocations,** i.e. of the (present or potential) **resources** of a territory which can be a real attraction for these publics.

After a long period in which even the tourist industry tried to think in *marketing oriented* terms, this attention to "resources" (i.e. to the *tourist product* which is the *content* of our offer) can appear as a kind of return to the past. We think, instead, it represents a clear step forward, because this "exercise" forces us to pass from a substantial "ratification" marketing to an **anticipation marketing,** where the survey work ties up with the planning work so as to "objectualize" desires, dreams, and the needs of more or less wide groups of consumers to auto-represent themselves.

To that purpose, in fact, it is necessary to keep in mind that in the last few years the concept of *tourist resource* deeply changed and progressively moved from the "function of use" of a certain good to the "meaning" that good can express. This transfer created a significant improvement in contexts and situations we can to some extent include within the (potential) tourist resources and, as a consequence, a proportional improvement in the "actors" able to perform on this stage.

In the methodological introductions, we underlined that in the present phase, a tourist "attraction" can be obtained, in practice, from any territory's *asset* (since it can count on the reasonable chance to meet the interest of a certain public) or it can be even "artificially" realized in places with no tradition and no traditional tourist *appeal* (such as in the case of "theme parks" or the well known Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao)

Within the dimension of vocational tourism, a tourist "resource" can be identified not only in places with particular attractions (historical, artistic, of the landscape, architectural, etc.) but also in those territory's products which are the expression of its typicalness, in certain aspects and representative forms of history and tradition, in some particular "abilities" (represented by institutions, organized groups or individual talents) which, as time went by, ended with tying up with the territory's imagine itself and, in general, in all those elements which contribute to define "character" and "identity" of our destination and which we think we can effectively "spend" on the tourist market.

This extension of the – in theory unlimited - tourist offer, from one hand confirmed the demand increase (which during these years, notwithstanding international crises, "civilization conflicts" and economic recession, continued to develop in a gradual but constant pace till it made tourism the first world industry in terms of turnover), but from the other hand, it significantly "thickened" the competitive scenario and intensified the competition amongst the different territories. Moreover, this scenario is likely to furtherly thicken in a short time. As a matter of fact, in the "old" Europe alone there are dozens of thousand of territorial districts which – except some rare cases – indistinctly have some history, some culture, some good cuisine, some *bien vivre* and some beautiful landscape: all elements which, with some wisdom, can be turned into "travel experiences".

This is the reason why the mere "availability" of a certain tourist resource eventually ended with revealing as a necessary but no longer sufficient condition to properly compete within this market, which, on the contrary, requires a greater and greater effort on "**how**" this resource is "manufactured" (and we do not obviously speak about a superficial *make-up,* but of the wisdom necessary to develop a "content" able to meet the requirements of a more and more demanding customer) and **"how"** this resource gets in touch with its reference public, gains credit in their eyes and differs from the other resources. This public, in turn, gradually "sloughed its skin" passing from an idea of holidays as opportunity of fun to a tourist action which is a means of defining its own individual and social identity.

At this point the second part (or what we should more correctly call "part 1bis") of our work begins. In fact, after a first general phase of exploration of territory's "vocations" – i.e. territory's potential tourist resources – and before posing ourselves more complex issues such as the "correlation" of many tourist segments or the definition of the territorial mark – we should ask ourselves which amongst these "resources" represent a more interesting destination for our "vocational" tourist.

Coming back to the previous "postulate", we should make sure that:

> **the resource or identity aspect is a distinctive characteristic of that territory, i.e. something which makes it significantly different from the others**. We should not forget, in fact, that tourist industry is the only industry where the

consumer "goes" to the product and not the contrary, and that doing this, the consumer has an imposed limited possibility to chose amongst a series of wider and wider opportunities. This is the reason why that "competitive factor" (*distinctive marketing position*) is a possibility within the consumer goods marketing, while it is a necessity in the tourist marketing by now;

➢ **the "resource" is in itself the expression of a "universe of values" or allows us to represent it through value representation models.** For example, a "small village" is meaningful from a tourist viewpoint if it represents a "lifestyle" which combines together old knowledge to the respect of natural and anthropic environment, to the promotion of traditions and traditional products, to a "relaxed" attitude towards the rhythms of life, etc. This way, our "small village" goes beyond its "functional" dimension made up of houses, palaces, gardens, workshops and becomes instead the **archetype,** i.e. the expression of a kind of "lost paradise", of a place of memory which many tourists aspire to identify with;

➢ **this "universe of values" corresponds to a precise reference target**, i.e. a group of tourists-consumers who share those values, identify with them and are willing to "act in a tourist way" so as to take possession of the relevant experience, which is indicative, in other words, of an emerging or already consolidated "sensibility area";

➢ this resource is expressed in a "narrative form", that is to say it becomes **a narration of the territory.** Independently from the "physical" structure of our resource (i.e. a "punctual" resource such as a village or a festival, a linear and consistent "route" such as a "wine road", a hybrid structure such as an ecomunseum or a group of scattered situations linked to each other), we have to keep in mind that vocational tourist is first of all interested in acquiring an "experience" which the territory is able to offer him in form of **complete cultural system.** If our "small village" is meaningful since it is an expression of a certain "lifestyle", we have to make each element of our "representation" as much consistent as possible with our thesis and each element of this "industry" linked to the others so as to be an experience;

➢ the resource is easily **usable** and that this usability is linked to all infrastructure and services of a tourist resort. However enthusiastic we can be for the new tourist demand/offer models, we do not have to run the risk of overlooking what until today

represented the essence of the tourist industry and which today is, in any case, its pre-requisite (i.e. its necessary, although no longer sufficient, condition): the fact that a tourist system exists when one or more people decide to move from a place to another in order to use a "resource" which a destination place can offer them.

PHASE 2: TOURIST EVENTS AS A MEANS OF STRATEGIC MARKETING

"Ceremonial" (or, if preferred, "cultural", "communication", etc.) events are playing a more and more central and strategic role in focusing and developing the new vocational tourisms, thanks to their *communicative complexity* and *functional multiplicity* in a class of its own.

The ceremonial event, as a matter of fact, can be considered, in most cases, a real **tourist resource,** i.e. a "structure" able to determine more or less significant tourist flows (depending on the importance of the event and on the size of the reference target), with the meaning we gave to this term in the preceding paragraphs. This "resource" can join a pre-existing territory's vocation (and doing so, it can "signals" it, publicize it or even make it "usable" for the first time) or can even contribute to "create" a new vocation, i.e. a new aspect of that territory's identity.

If the case of the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao is known as "founding" structure of a territory's artistic and cultural vocation which till that moment had had a prevalent industrial character, the case of the literary festival of Hayon-Way, which determined the development of a "book" tourism in a place with no particular tradition in that sense, is (almost) equally known.

From this point of view, the "ceremonial event" can be considered – from a territorial viewpoint, but not only – as a **product of its own,** i.e. a product with an own and autonomous "industrial logic". In other words, the organization of an event is an "enterprise" able to make profits or losses and it is not by chance that we speak about an "industry of events" as an industry with an own specificity within the *entertainment* economy.

Although it has a temporary character (the distinctive characteristic of the event with respect to any other tourist offer structure is given exactly by its "exceptionality", by the fact that it takes place in a finished – and in most cases – extremely limited space/temporal dimension) **the ceremonial event takes the form of a kind of hyper-place**, of an ephemeral destination, but which can face and deeply change the permanent destination.

On this point, there is no need to go by very famous examples - such as the 1992 Barcelona's Olympic Games -to identify cases in which the carrying out of an event caused substantial changes in a destination's urban structure and tourist infrastructure. We can make other examples as good as the previous ones: a number of apparently less sensational "cases" (such as that of the Theatres Festival of Santarcangelo) where the repetition of an "ephemeral" event during the years contributed to the recovery, from a tourist viewpoint, of spaces and areas of the town which were disused or simply sub-used.

However, within the "vocational tourism" dimension, the ceremonial event is no longer a mere means of *incoming* but also, if not mainly, a "belonging rite" and a communication object which exactly in this context sees its characteristics exalted.

As a **belonging rite,** the event presents itself as an interpersonal relations system whose meaning is fully understood and applied only in a particular community scope.

In other words, the event becomes a **narrative and mythopoetic communication means,** able to prefigure a "universe of values" and to reflect it on the "objects" which it gets in touch with (in particular, if the relevant object is a defined place or territory).
The *New York City Marathon* is not a mere athletics competition: it is a way to "relate" a town, to exalt its characteristics and to emphasize its more peculiar and unexpected aspects through the "epic" of the athletic action and of the extended effort.
This way, the event becomes a fundamental means of strategic marketing able to characterize an industrial mark or a territory in terms of values (through a "transfer of sense" or the exaltation of a pre-existing "character").

Moreover, it is an **auto-segmenting means of communication**, i.e. able to attract the attention of its reference target almost without "dispersions" and therefore to multiply the value of the investment incurred, also thanks to its implicit ability to "talk" to the means of communication and to provide them with a "content" in exchange for "exposition" (an exposition which inevitably ends with reflecting also on the destination).
The event, which is a very particular communication object, determines a kind of **metalanguage** which expresses itself through metaphor and myth. Beyond its factual identity, the event recalls a known symbolic landscape in relation to which it proposes

itself as *archetype.* The event as such can put into direct relation apparently immeasurable "systems" (e.g. a community of people, a territory, a medium, an industrial mark, a production industry), thus also promoting those co-marketing transactions which are often indispensable to support the initiatives promoted by the territory for involving these new tourist niches.

The insisted attention we put on the ceremonial event, however, does not have to make us think of the existence of an exclusive relationship between this and the construction of the tourist experience.

As shown by the daily practice, a tourist "experience" can be realized, as a matter of fact, in many other ways. It can be construed starting from places which already have certain "experiential" characteristics or whose usability (for example, let us think about new-generation scientific museums) is organized so as to be particularly fascinating for the visitor. It can be realized by leading the tourist to "share" the daily practice, traditions and lifestyles of local people or of particular communities of people, such as in the case of ethnographic tourism or spiritual tourism. It can be generated by "plunging" the tourist in the most savage nature, with a minimum number of apparent "filters" and "protections", such as in the case of exploration and adventure tourism and so on (in a never-ending list).

Therefore, the interest for the "system of events" is mainly justified by the multiple role they can play, i.e. by the possibility they offer to be spent in "strategic" terms in different contexts: as **identification means** of a particular territory's vocation, as **advertising means** able to communicate the "tourist experience" which the territory can offer better than any other traditional media, as **tourist product or tourist product component**, as **catalyst** and **means of connection** between different "industrial" subjects, as **hyper-place** and means of movement of the urban scene and more.

THE ANALYSIS OF TOURIST EVENTS FROM A TERRITORIAL POINT OF VIEW

From this research we can obtain: a general model to define the relationship amongst events, new "vocational" tourisms and territory (which can also be used to identify the "impact" caused by the realization of a certain event at an economic, urban, communicative level, etc.). A model to "evaluate" the single events and a series of procedural indications on the criteria of preventive analysis and evaluation of projects and proposals which are normally presented to the local authority.

Analysis model of general events

(1) EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EVENT

(1.1.1.1.1)
TEMPORARY
a. integration / non-integration
in relation to the urban structure
b. appropriate / inappropriate quality of infrastructures
c. additional costs for the community

(1.1.1.1.1)
PHYSICAL-ENVIRONMENTAL CORRELATIONS

(1.1.1.1.2)
PERMANENT

a. construction of new infrastructures/property speculation
b. development of environmental quality and promotion of historical-artistic heritage
c. permanent damage to the environment

(1.1.1)
FUNCTIONAL CORRELATIONS

(1.1.1.2.1)
TEMPORARY
a. tourist flows generated by the event
b. implementation of existing tourist infrastructure ("thematic" and/or generalist) / removal of tourist resources from the existing infrastructure
c. creation of temporary employment;
development of local skills
d. price increase; economic speculation
e. development of non-desired "secondary" activities

(1.1.1.2)

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL CORRELATIONS

(1.1.1.2.2) PERMANENT
a. possibility of a tourist "return" in the medium-long run
b. attraction of new direct investments
c. implementation or creation of a "thematic" industry
d. creation of permanent employment

(1.1) TERRITORIAL CORRELATIONS

(1.1.2.1) EMPHASIS ON THE TERRITORY'S CHARACTERISTICS

(1.1.2) IDENTIFICATION WITH THE TERRITORY

(1.1.2.2) SEMANTIC CONTIGUITY

(a) VALUE OF THE EVENT

(1) EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EVENT

(1.2.1) PRIMARY

(1.2) PENETRATION OF THE TARGET

(1.2.2.1.1) RESIDENT

(1.2.2.1) CITY USER

(1.2.2.1.2) OTHER TOURISTS

(1.2.2) SECONDARY

(1.2.2.2) EXTERNAL PUBLICS

(a) VALUE OF THE EVENT

(2.1) SEGMENT-TERRITORY CORRESPONDENCE
(2.1.1) STRATEGIC CORRESPONDENCE
(2.1.2) HISTORICAL CORRESPONDENCE

(2) "VALUE" OF THE TARGET

(2.2.1) QUANTITATIVE and QUALITATIVE DIMENSION OF THE SEGMENT

(2.2) "ABSOLUTE" VALUE OF THE SEGMENT

(2.2.2) PERSPECTIVAL EVALUATION OF THE TREND

PHASE 3: THE CARTOGRAPHY OF THE NEW TOURISMS

These events, however, do not only reveal new "operating modalities", but also brand-new value references.

This means, however, that sport is no longer the expression of a sole model of values (focused on values such as competitive spirit, competition and challenge), but it becomes, instead, a kind of "universal language" able to express innumerable shades and, amongst the other things, to "tell" a territory better than many other codified languages (also because it has a perfect synergy with some of them, such as, for example, that of image narration).

Thus, the need to investigate the knowledge of these new "universes of values" and to come to a kind of map of them arises in the local authority. One of the first macro-areas to be investigated refers just to the "tourisms of the body", i.e. that group of consumption segments which come from fitness, wellness, sports dance and sport in general.

The survey reveals a "repertory" of more than three thousand sports which, to some extent, created "federations" or, in any case, "associations" at a national and international level. This is a very wide and for the most part unknown universe, which in practice represents every possible "meaning" of the repertory of symbols filling the contemporary collective imagination.

PHASE 4: COMPLEXITY MANAGEMENT (*VISION* AND TERRITORIAL MARK)

The development of vocational tourist "niches" inevitably turns, at a territorial level, into a **progressive division of the offer system**.

From one hand, in fact, territories are spurred to "follow" these new markets by presenting more and more characterized and characterizing offers, from the other hand, they have (most of all regarding the most "mature" tourist realities and/or those nearest to a "metropolitan" model of tourist offer) to make "vocations" even very different from each other, if not different "levels" of consumption (generalist, experiential, tribal) live together.

Coming back to the example of Rimini, it is generally known the case of the so called *bike-hotels* (i.e. hotels especially addressed to the target of cycle-amateur tourism) which propose a highly specialist offer in low-season periods, while during summer months they try to recover the relationship with the traditional "bathing" tourism.

This "division" introduces an element of **management complexity** which has no equals in the ancient and recent history of tourist industry. This complexity is likely to characterize the present phase of most part of industrial systems, but which, in the case of tourist industry, is still more evident thanks to two qualities which differentiate this particular industry from the others:

the fact that in the tourist industry the consumer "goes" to the product and not vice versa and that, as a consequence, different levels and modalities of consumption are exercised in the same physical space, i.e. in a context with a relative "ductility" and adaptation capability;

the fact that the "territorial tourist product" is not generated by one subject, but by a plurality of operators (public and private) who take part, on the basis of a more or less common intent, to the realization of the offer system.

Now, there is no doubt that the development of a multi-cultural tourism inevitably ends with introducing elements of fragmentation and of potential "conflict" amongst operators who become bearers of different interests and that this conflict can be solved (or even transformed into positive "energy") only by introducing means of "*second-level governance*" (i.e. capable to allow the recomposition of a unitary picture at a superior level) both in the definition of the strategic choices of territory policy (what is normally defined as territorial *vision*) and at a level of *territorial mark.*

The **vision** of a territory is the means which makes a series of actions necessary to define a proper market "positioning" of a territory and the "regeneration" of the product itself, coherent.

Consequently, the "*vision*" is not a passive indicator, a mere means of confirmation, but it is, instead, a directional means which develops in the long run in order to orient and make coherent the choices relative to infrastructures, communication and "governance" of the territory.

This means applies in relation to a "perceivable" future, i.e. a future sufficiently distant to allow a real "regeneration" of the product, but also sufficiently near to make this transformation verifiable and measurable.

This indicator can not turn into the trivialization of what exists (i.e. a kind of common denominator good for all use and interpretation) but rather into a <u>common multiple</u> able to express a characterizing market positioning correspondent to that need for "uniqueness" which is today one of the most evident requests of tourist consumption.

As a consequence, the vision can not be considered as a mere transcription of a "typicalness" or of a single "vocation". It rather indicates – in a dynamic sense – all vocation and typicalness which define a territory's identity.

It is, therefore, an inclusive means which develops through the contribution of all territorial *stakeholders* and which inevitably starts from the "history" of the territory and from the promotion of the existing "resources". It is not, however, a means which "satisfies everybody", nor a moment of division of territory's "remains". On the contrary, it is the means through which the territory defines its own long-run targets and, at the same time, its criteria of coherence and compatibility (and, thus, of inclusion and exclusion) of the single offer/demand segments in relation to the territory-system.

However, the "multiplication" of the tourist segments within one territory – also in the case that some of these segments succeed in progressively gaining credit within their reference context – **leads to a multiplication of the "identities" through which that territory is generally recognized.**

The resulting situation causes a radical transformation in our attitude towards the **territorial mark,** i.e. that means of "positioning" we use for connoting the territory in

relation with the reference markets and for "identifying" all the values expressed by the **vision**.

In a so re-formulated context, the "territorial mark" becomes a **multilevel** structure, i.e. it becomes the result of the marks expressed by the single territory's vocations. To make a comparison with consumer goods marketing, it is a bit as if, within an "umbrella-mark" (in this case represented by the territory) many "specification marks" (represented by the single "vocations" which that territory can express) developed.

There is no doubt that – from this point of view – the development of a proper dialectic between umbrella-mark and specification mark is absolutely vital for the tourist development of the territory itself. Each "specification mark", as a matter of fact, must be an opportunity of enrichment (and not of denial or contradiction) of a "territorial mark" with an own well-defined and recognizable identity.

DESTINATION

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Territorial Mark

experiential sub-system 1 (ex. art/culture) = specification mark	experiential sub-system 2 (ex. traditions/memory) = specification mark	experiential sub-system 3 (ex. nature/wellness) = specification mark

CONCLUSIONS: HORIZONTAL NETWORKS AND PRODUCTION-CONSUMPTION DISTRICTS

The theme of "complexity", however, - determined by the twist and overlapping between "market niches", consumption levels, segments of the offer system and even different components of the local production system (such as the agricultural or the craft component) – can not be solved only at the level of the "territorial mark", but it has to find effective models of coexistence and synergy at every level, starting from the praxes which occur day by day on a territorial level.

In other words, "complexity" is not to be considered a mere problem to be solved, but rather an opportunity, a strategic resource capable to bring new sap to our tourist system and to open new market horizons.

These "synergies", within the vocational tourism dimension, can realize on a **horizontal level** when they create a "virtuous" interrelation amongst different consumption segments and on a **vertical level** when they refer to the integration between production components and consumption segments existing on the territory.

Horizontal synergies are those which, ultimately, oppose themselves to the risk of fragmentation which is implied in every process of division of tourist systems and which often tends to create an "entropy" phenomenon which many resorts tend to turn into anxiety and agitation. There is always someone who "invented" something new, there is always a "new" market segment which seems to be slipping from our hands and it is difficult to resist the temptation to go in all directions, to ride every market prospect even if this prevents us from focusing on our strengths, on those qualities which make us "unique" and, more important, which consumers feel as such.

It is also true that every vocational "niche" tends almost to instinctively withdraw into itself and to give rise to specialist "circuits" reserved to publics of "initiates". But the local authority has to intervene exactly here, with a wide-ranging "vision" of the territorial development and a new ability to "rule" complex phenomena.

The risk of "ghettoization" and "entropization" of the tourist systems is followed by a correct **differentiation** of these, i.e. the capability to realize "narrations" of the territory

able to involve also the "non-initiated" and, maybe, to link together different offer segments so as to create hybrid and completely original offer systems (what, in the consumer good marketing, is called *cross-fertilization*).

Vertical synergies are, instead, those which occur when some territory's production components meet certain aspects of tourist consumption and fix with them virtuous interrelations not only in terms of outlet markets but also as opportunity of growth and mutual stimulation.

The reason for this is that the development of the "content" of the tourist offer determines a progressive concurrence of the moments of production, communication and consumption. For example, the tourist promotion of a territory with an "oenological" vocation greatly benefits from the possibility to use the product-wine as a *testimonial* of the territory and the product, in turn, can not but benefit from having behind it a "quality" territory which "certifies" its essential characteristics and makes them immediately visible. This line of reasoning is valid for the food-and-wine sector or for the typical products sector, but also for all those sectors (such as, for example, design or fashion) where the "mark" of the product can be bijectively traced back to the territorial "mark".

In this perspective, we should start to imagine tourist territories not only as "separate" industrial systems, but also as real "showcases" (absolutely the most qualified) of those productions which are the "culture of a territory" and define its "mark".