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The territories of tourism: a reflection about the experience of the Tourist Districts (Local Tourism Systems) in Sicily

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Resumen: La distrito turístico es un importante instrumento para la gobernanza territorial del turismo regional. El distrito es un tipo de sistema local que se caracteriza por su multidimensionalidad, así como la contigüidad espacial de los operadores que pertenecen a ella. El territorio es un espacio transformado por las interacciones sociales y las relaciones de producción: por lo tanto es la referencia indispensable para medir el impacto del turismo. Por tanto, un enfoque ascendente en el proceso de identificación de los distritos es vital. Es deseable administrar correctamente este proceso una puntuación saldo de su tarjeta enfoque. Este estudio es un análisis preliminar derivado de la experiencia directa de los distritos turísticos de Sicilia, de reciente formación.

Palabras clave: Distrito, Territorio, Sistema de Turismo local, clasificación espacial, Sicilia

Los territorios del turismo: una reflexión sobre la experiencia de los distritos turísticos (sistemas turísticos locales) en Sicilia

Abstract: The tourist district is an important tool for territorial governance of regional tourism. The district is a type of Local System which is characterized by its multidimensionality, as well as the spatial contiguity of traders who belong to it. The territory is a space transformed by social interactions and relations of production: it is therefore the indispensable reference for measuring the impact of tourism. A bottom up approach in the process of identification of the districts is therefore vital. A Balance Score Card-approach is desirable to correctly manage this process. This study is a preliminary analysis derived from direct experience of the Sicilian tourist districts, recently formed.

Keywords: District, Territory, Local Tourism System, Spatial classification, Sicily

1. Preliminary issues

The relevance of Tourism spatiality is the main perspective of this article: the concept of space we are applying in this issue, is the set of relationships and connections that define a local area.

Therefore we prefer to use the term “territory”. With this term we intend the leadership of the interactions in a geographical location, that can

also be applied to tourist destination. A very important topic, common to many disciplines, e.g. Planning, is to consider a destination as a “subject”: it is at the basis of both the concepts of “Local Tourist System” and “District”. Spatial homogeneity is not the only condition for the existence of a “district”, in fact it is the result of history and the outcome of the institutional process. (Fazio and Notarstefano, 2012a).

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Precisely, it is the network of connections between productive and non-productive, economic and non-economic systems, which determines a specific geographical area (District). It can also have different features in relation to the variety of the territorial ambitions. We can define the Tourist District as a Local System, specialized in a cluster of tourist activities, held together by a tourism development project, anchored in a spatial context (Dallari, 2002). Since this definition, we deduce the following characteristics:

- System: it is a set of integrated activities spatially linked, with the maximum involvement of many actors.
- Localism: it expresses the specific character of the travel and accommodation system of a specific geographic context, which is "enriched" by a large range of attractions (especially Cultural Heritage)
- Tourist Supply: in order to satisfy the overall tourism demand, it states the different parts of a single tourist product, in which we can distinguish three main features such as goods, services and attractors (economic, natural, social and cultural)

The Italian literature on Tourist Districts refers to regional or sub-regional geographical contexts (Dallari, 2002; Antonioli Corigliano, 1999; Rullani & Vicari, 2001, Lazzeretti & Capone, 2004), while specialist international studies on tourism, focus their attention on limited urban areas and their neighbourhoods, which are defined Tourist Districts. For example, Pearce (1998) analyzes the city of Paris and examines the different structural characteristics of the tourist districts in the French Capital. The contribution focused mainly on different urban nuclei which can also be heterogeneous. Other authors instead, analyse the "recreational business district" (Stansfield & Richert, 1970) or "tourism business district" (Getz, 1993) of Niagara Falls. In all these cases, the structure of connections is considered a strategic factor of the system, not respecting the geographical area of the District.

The aim of this short article is to highlight the importance of a new and integrated approach to the study of the impact of tourism, considering its final destination as a Local System or a District (Notarstefano & Volo, 2012a).

2. Tourism and Territory: impacts' studies

Recently, some important signals have emerged from the tourist demand, such as

the increase in volume and intensity of the international flows (UNWTO, 2010) and the growth of domestic tourist mobility, same-day visitors flows and residential tourism (Frechting, 2009, Manente, 2009). Furthermore, the "commoditization" (Augè, 2007) of the tourist experience generates, among the economic agents and the policy makers, the widespread belief that any local tourist area (actual or "potential" destination) can somehow compete in the global marketplace and some of them are exploiting their characteristics of "marginality" and singularity (Mignon, 2010). This reflects the growing awareness gained by researchers, in the analysis of globalization, that competition should be played out mainly in absolute terms rather than in relative terms and in this perspective, specific local factors can increasingly become elements of synthesis and evaluation for the creation and realization (both economic and productive) of physical plant, infrastructure or similar resources present in a geographic area (Camagni, 2007).

Tourism resources belong to the common heritage of mankind and the communities of the territories have particular rights and obligations and show an high consideration for them.

Perhaps more than other mobility phenomena, such as the transitions in labour supply or the production processes of relocation of labour demand, tourism is the social phenomenon that identifies the nature of territorial development as an evolution of a "trade-off frontier", where the equilibrium between activation and conservation of local resources and amenities, plays out. The idea of territory used in this report, lays back from the idea of a mere geographic container and joins the concept of an agglomeration of dense relational networks, where interactions of different nature are generated. The interest in territorial scale allows also the neutralization of the established division between positive impacts (usually economic) and negative impact (typically social and environmental), proposed in literature (Liu, Sheldon & Var., 1987). Many attempts have been undertaken to integrate different approaches to tourism impacts (Duffield, 1982; Frechting, 2011; Gormsen 1997; Johnson & Moore, 1993; Mbaiwa, 2003).

The work of Lindberg & Johnson (1997) and Alavalapati & Abramowicz (2000) can be cited as examples. But above all, we must remember the areas of study and the numerous attempts to build and apply more sophisticated models and accounting tools such as the social accounting matrices and the satellite accounts. Therefore, the attention of local public policies on tourism

is growing, within the sphere of awareness of the territory key role.

The concept of territory as defined here, offers the opportunity to change the perspective in the evaluation of peculiar and specific abilities to sustain tourism development (Candela & Figini, 2005). Therefore, a new paradigm is needed, in order to penetrate and elucidate the impact between various economic and non – economic activities, and several changes and “tensions” implied in this new way of considering the “tourism-relevant territory”. If successfully developed, it can improve our awareness of the “spheres of tourism activity” and how to better harvest the opportunities to reap the optimal benefit of all stakeholders as well as to be more neutral and positive towards the environment, contributing in this way to the sustainability, too .

3. The experience of the Tourist Districts (Local Tourism Systems) in Sicily.

The tourist districts in Sicily were established under a regional law of 2005 and the “institutional push” was decisive, on the one hand, to recognize the dynamics emerging from the territory, on the other hand, to identify a spatial selection, which is very useful especially for public policy.

The regional administration tried to recognize two different types of “Districts”: the territorial and the “thematic” districts. This second one marks a major acquisition of the Act, arising from the importance of protection and the economic value given to the “Cultural Heritage” and the Natural Capital of the island (Fig. 1). The experience has just started and has been provided to monitor a study that also includes the creation of a “Monitoring System”, that will be particularly useful for the assessment of the impact (Notarstefano, 2012; Notarstefano & Volo, 2012b).

Each district is the result of a partnership between public and private sectors: it is based on a “development plan” that all parties recognize as a priority and the basic idea of the same district originates from the specific characteristics of the territory. Although the process has been driven “high”, it is possible to recognize a match between the original territorial attitudes (“vocations”) and of the planning outcome (Fazio & Notarstefano, 2012b).

Territory imposes itself as a real “protagonist”, i.e. a dynamic subjectivity, that is the result of (strategic) interaction and long- term “vision”.

A single kind of effects (or impacts) cannot be evaluated and the current models and the measurement framework must be overcome. We believe that we need a new framework, and following this direction we are beginning to explore the use of a well-known method: the Balance Scorecard Analysis (Vila, Costa & Rovira, 2010; Notarstefano & Volo, 2012a, 2012b).

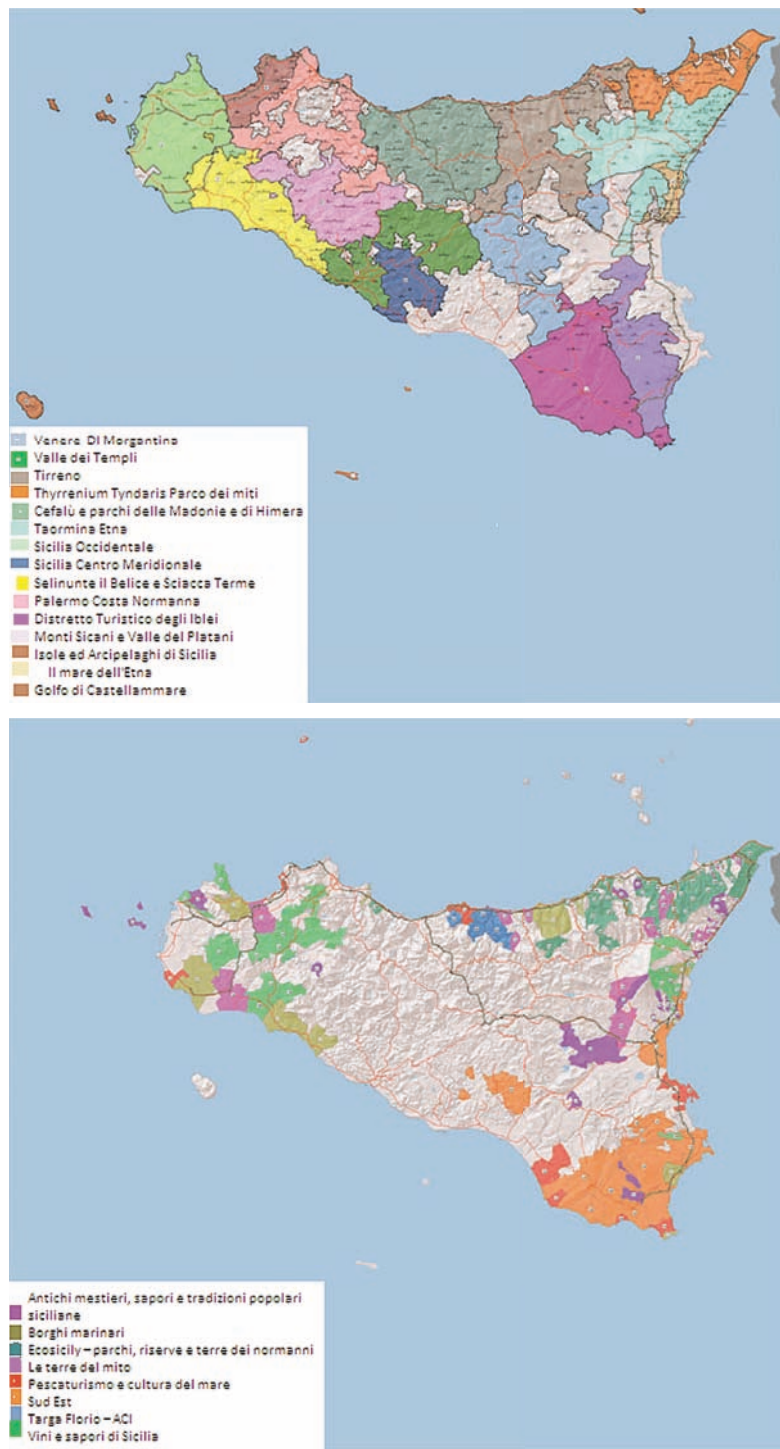
The Balanced Scorecard is a strategic analytic tool of management derivation, that aims to provide a Strategic Measurement System (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). With the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), enterprise or organizational performance is not limited to purely economic and financial indicators, but rather analysed through a “dashboard” of four, broad but balanced performance categories: (1) economic and financial indicators, (2) the customer perspective, (3) the internal processes perspective, and (4) training and growth . The idea is that if each stakeholder is held accountable to making contributions, and stakeholders are measured on their contribution to all the areas that lead the long- term vitality, sustainability and profitability of the territory, they will shape their behaviour to the necessities for such a wide range and long – term performance. We remark that, balancing the criteria by which stakeholders and their units are measured and evaluated, effectively they drive their behaviour in order to balance their efforts in favour of the long term benefit of the overall destination, and therefore indirectly, of their own long term benefit.

Table 1. Tourist Districts of Sicilian Region

Territorial	Thematic
<i>Selinunte il Belice e Sciacca Terme</i>	<i>Ancient crafts, tastes and traditions of Sicily</i>
<i>Sicilia Occidentale</i>	
<i>Distretto Turistico degli Iblei</i>	<i>Wines and flavors of Sicily</i>
<i>Il mare dell'Etna</i>	
<i>Golfo di Castellammare</i>	<i>The land of myth</i>
<i>Palermo Costa Normanna</i>	<i>Sailors villages</i>
<i>Valle dei Templi</i>	<i>Fishing tourism and maritime culture</i>
<i>Tirreno Nebrodi</i>	<i>Southeast</i>
<i>Thyrronium Tyndaris Parco dei miti</i>	<i>Ecosicily – parks, reserves and</i>
<i>Venere di Morgantina *</i>	<i>Normans lands</i>
<i>Taormina Etna*</i>	<i>Targa Florio – ACI *</i>
<i>Isole ed Arcipelaghi di Sicilia*</i>	
<i>Monti Sicani e Valle del Platani *</i>	
<i>Cefalù e parchi delle Madonie e di Himera *</i>	
<i>Sicilia Centro Meridionale*</i>	

* Notwithstanding

Figure 1. The Sicilian Tourist Districts (first wave, 2012)



Source: Fazio and Notarstefano (2012a).

4. Final Remarks

The increase of international mobility and tourism is generating an increasing pressure on territories. Better tools are required, for the impact assessment. Our research program aims to define a new approach to measure the impact and it has at the basis of its case study the experience of the “tourist districts” in Sicily. It develops a scheme that includes the complexity and the interactions between different dimensions, in a perspective that privileges the territorial subjectivity (Ioppolo, Saija & Salomone, 2012). The goal is to find a practical way in the factors that determine the “success” of a specific destination through a process of involvement, participation and adequate training (and information) of the actors. In this perspective, the impact measure is designed as a tool to manage the entire territorial process, using data and information to support the decisions.

The monitoring system is crucial, but we remark an overturn : objective and subjective information, qualitative and quantitative data and a multidimensional approach, that is probably more appropriate in view of public policy (Hall, 2008).

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