



**Contribution from
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STATEMENT FOR THE CONFERENCE on "CULTURAL TOURISM"
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The influence of the Public Administration in the evolution of Cultural Tourism

An image is usually connected to each country, an image which involves different factors such as cultural, environment, landscape and so on... However in each country the tourist politics is determined and influenced by the public administration, starting from the care of the reception in an area. When we speak about "reception", we refer in fact to a series of actions aimed to offer to the tourist the opportunity to spend his/her stay in an area at the best, to make him/her become pleasantly familiar with the hosting environment as well as to promote his/her contacts with the local inhabitants. The politics of the valorisation of the existent attractions, aimed to an adequate conservation of the cultural inheritance, as well as to make it easily enjoyable by the tourists, is also involved in these actions.

In this context we can well understand that the "politics of the product" managed by the Public Tourist Organisation is determinant. Let's think for instance about the actions which can be determined by the Public Organisation, in order to encourage the rising of some services the "tourist offer" misses in a special place, about the coordination of the opening hours of the shops, which is in Italy a task of the Municipality and which is a basic aspect as regards the tourist reception.

The public action however seems to be more incisive when we deal in particular with the theme of "Cultural Tourism".

The tourist development of an area is strictly connected to the valorisation of the artistic, cultural inheritance. It is up to the Public Tourist Organisation to promote all the initiatives aimed to the knowledge of this inheritance, to make it be easily enjoyable, to remove all the obstacles preventing it from becoming an attraction of an area and valorisation of its tourist vocation. These actions fall within the logic of the "Product politics".

However the politics of the patrimony involves two aspects: From one hand the issue of adequate laws, from the other hand the carrying out of preservation works which need a large investment of money.

Both these aspects depend on the sensibility, on the financial conditions and on the actions of the public administrations at any level, from the national Government to the local council.

We are sensitive to the patrimony conservation in carrying out the town plans of our small municipalities, but at the same time the contrast between our sensitiveness and the financial means available for the fulfilment of these politics of conservation / valorisation which are always lower, prevents us from achieving a local adequate action.

Today more than ever, we feel the need to apply to those financial forms which the Tuscan Region defines "Structured Finance", which may involve also private sources for interventions which have involved up to now the only public financing. Within this context public institutions are always more compelled to involve the enterprises rooted in the local area, which may feel the need to contribute to the valorisation of the patrimony and to adopt cultural communication strategies, although they find it difficult to consider "culture" an abject of their investment.

The Regional Tuscan Law on Town - planning N. 5/95, which is being currently reviewed, (we mentioned this law several times during our conferences), emphasises for each village / town its vocation, without bounding it to one role and invites us to realize what is its most suitable strategy of development. The same law promotes a new utilisation of the existent building patrimony, also as an investment for the future. This allowed the small historical centres to be restored and revalued, so that they have become a new attraction and in many cases a tourist destination, but not only this. All the persons among You who have been in our village have had the opportunity to see how the recovering of the patrimony has meant in terms of tourist development, seen the strong increase in the Agro tourist structures, which have been created in ancient buildings.

Moreover in Pergine we can speak also about "indirect" Cultural Tourism. The tendency to stay in a small village like ours, is due to its being near historical artist towns such as Florence, Arezzo, Siena. Therefore the tourist arriving in Pergine can get two advantages:

- 1) On one hand he can move to the historical town centres, visit the museums and the buildings of great artistic interest,
- 2) From the other hand he gets the benefit from staying in an agro tourist structure, strictly in contact with local traditions, with nature, country life and typical products, close to an ancient corner or a medieval square where You can breath history. Also this means "Culture".

Besides in the last years new initiatives arose, wanted by the President of the Republic himself as well as by organisations supporting the environment protection like "Legambiente". These events are aimed to make the same inhabitants of a village rediscover the value of the small historical centres. All over the national territory we promoted moments in which the centres of our villages came to life again, through the expressions of different cultural events. Therefore on some Sundays during the year also in Pergine we invited the local people to live their village again, by offering at the same time initiatives on a local level which could represent attractions for "the tourist" as well. It dealt with small events which have induced us to promote the architectonic and cultural patrimony situated in our county area.

Moreover each small Municipality, which has got less financial sources available for big works than the town, should undertake all the possible initiatives which can contribute to the local "tourist offer". Also within the promotion of the reception, we can activate forms of promotion of "Cultural Tourism". The promotion of the local tourist attractions in fact can be either projective, or better to say towards the places where the tourist flux come from, or "reception promotion", turned to the tourists present in a specific area.

The historical centres of the small villages can be the cradle of events and cultural initiatives promoted by the public Institution itself. These events increase the tourist offer and they allow the tourist to make use of the Patrimony in a more complete way. This encourages their involvement in the local environment and their stay in that area, with an advantage for the shops and commercial services. In this way we protect the existent attractions and we promote their marketability.

This is one of the actions also of the Municipality of Pergine Valdarno, where, during the year, we promote cultural events or initiatives for the valorisation of the typical local products such as olive oil and wine.

For small Municipalities to invest in culture in fact represents, also in tourist terms, a transversal purpose which contributes to create an "integrated offer" and induces the tourist to become an "usual customer".

Romina Zamponi

Pergine Valdarno, October 19th, 2004