



Community-based tourism: integrated approach to promote hospitality to “temporary citizens” (tourists)

The territory and its community as a cultural tourism destination

*A new strategic approach based on sustainability
criteria*



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Local Community represents a crucial element of the landscape of a territory; it is the context in which a real “non-material cultural heritage” originates and develops.

- The Community, besides being a human and relational context, is the cradle of identity resources, working energies and creativity.
- The Community and its settlement spaces are a “*place*”.
- The Community is a place of “*narration*”, in which people desire to socialise their individual experience and “*capitalise*”, with collective forms, their identity heritage, know-how and “*life project*”.



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Each Community and its territory are original and unrepeatable, they are a “*unicum*”

Today the interest of travellers towards the communities and their territories, even if not famous and/or with tourism flows, is growing.

In the European tourism demand, the need to conceive the holiday (even if short) as **an experience** is growing.

The experience is perceived as a “*relational value*” characterised by:

- Need of “*discovery*” (details, history, senses);
- Desire to interact with people and local population;
- Need of a “*testimony*” (to keep a memory, add new experiences to the individual narration).

The offer, therefore, if pervaded by experience values, increases its own competitive effectiveness.



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In this conceptual framework, the quality of landscape (natural, urban, cultural and human) and local architecture are “*friends*” of hospitality:

Community-based hospitality is based on the assumption that the host has a sufficient quality of life, since a community that does not have elements of “*happiness*” can hardly be attractive and a place in which to have an experience.

Therefore, the strategic enhancement processes of a tourist and cultural offer of a territory are the result of the following variables:

- a good protection and conservation of the physical landscape;
- a sufficient level of urban quality (respect for local architectural tradition, functional spaces, accessibility, low pollution);
- efficiency in individual and family services;
- efficient organisation of reception;
- quality and sustainability of accommodation facilities (waste management, use of renewable energy);
- awareness about the disposability of material and non-material local resources and presence of an efficient enhancement device;
- Presence of local skills in communication (narration) to the exterior (the possible visitors), but also to the interior (the citizens).



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Within the context of the national network of Borghi Autentici (150 small municipalities), a strategic project has been developing in the last years. The project is called:

“HOSPITABLE COMMUNITY”

The global goal of the project is to *“make the village and its community a tourist – cultural, but also residential destination”*, that is to say a place to which people, appreciating the local lifestyle, can go on holiday, temporarily or permanently or in order to create a business that is compatible and sustainable with the local context.

The project includes a device based on the logic of active interaction of all the components of the local community, not only of tourist operators. Indeed, the protagonists are:



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- accommodation and catering operators;
- people in charge and the managers of direct and indirect hospitality services (transport, information, accompaniment and guide, emergency and social services, car, etc.);
- The Municipality, for its governing and managing role both in the services and in local public micro-policies on hospitality;
- young people and their capacity to organise events, services, innovative and creative structures;
- old people, as bearers of a productive “*know-how*” and an active testimony that is a precious resource for narration;
- the organised associations with their capacity to mobilize citizens (events, services, etc.);
- in general, the citizens as a human-cultural context in which to enhance creative attitudes and wills that are useful to hospitality.



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The “Hospitable Community” project becomes really strategic if framed in a process that increases the quality of the territory through the adoption of good public policies and innovative plans with respect to:

- Environmental protection and enhancement and preservation of local biodiversity;
- Improvement of sustainability, mainly on the energy front;
- Preservation and improvement of urban quality, also through the development of Integrated Accommodation Networks (*Reti Ricettive Diffuse*) in the old town centre, or rather the regeneration, with bio-architectural criteria, of parts of the building heritage, public or private, which is abandoned or underused;
- Enhancement of the identity heritage as a dynamic resource able to compete and get elements of integration in the modern time;
- The focus of cultural, productive (typical productions) and social (mainly the new generations) context as a strategic field in which to trigger development and improvement processes able to strengthen the sense of community and the local competitive position with respect to the demand markets.



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The “Hospitable Community” is a challenge. An articulated and complex process in which the protagonists are the Municipality, the economic operators and citizens.

The “Hospitable Community”, finally, is not only a project of local development.

It is a medium-term strategic perspective, to which a community, with its institutions and economic structures, aspires since it shares the need to mobilise, in quality, all the resources of the territory, ensuring their use for the future generations.