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THINK PAPER #1

INSIGHTS FROM THE INCULTUM RESEARCH & INNOVATION ACTION

CULTURAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, A TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL FOR EUROPE'S RURAL AREAS

While the harmful consequences of over-touristification are well established and are attracting increasing attention, there is now recognition of the benefits of regulated tourism activity in stimulating the life of regions, particularly when it incorporates cultural heritage. The attachment of local communities to their heritage is a lever for the development of sustainable cultural tourism projects based on cooperation and participatory approaches.

As part of the INCULTUM project, the perspective shared by the experiments carried out is to consider tourism not only as a means of local economic development, but also as a means of strengthening the resilience of local communities and their living environment, a key issue in the context of climate change.

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THINK PAPERS

Project's Summary

Tourism is more than travelling and consumption; it has great potential when it comes to culture, nature, knowledge, and personal experiences. Travelling is a way to learn and improve oneself, to enrich one's vision and improve mutual understanding. The INCULTUM project deals with the challenges and opportunities of cultural tourism with the aim of furthering sustainable social, cultural, and economic development. It will explore the full potential of marginal and peripheral areas when managed by local communities and stakeholders. Innovative participatory approaches are adopted, transforming locals into protagonists, able to reduce negative impacts, learning from and improving good practices to be replicated and translated into strategies and policies.

This Think Paper has been produced to stimulate debate on the issues raised by the INCULTUM research and innovation action and to create new economic and social dynamics for rural areas.

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ISSUES SHARED AT LOCAL LEVEL

Strengthening the resilience of rural communities and their living environment

Awareness of an area's heritage value is a **motivating factor for local communities**, and encourages them to commit to maintaining the area's heritage features. It fosters a shared sense of **place attachment**. Knowing more about our shared heritage fosters a desire to protect it by taking ownership of its management.

In rural areas, the collective management of common property is often based on community **know-how and** on principles of sharing that differ from those of public or private ownership. The rediscovery of **traditional practices and community management methods** highlights the central role of the stakeholders involved, who can be considered **heritage communities** within the meaning of the Faro Convention.

EXAMPLE

Cultivating attachment to the landscape: the Grand Site de France approach

*The pilot project set up at Bibracte to reveal and enhance the area's landscape commons, in particular the rural paths, is based on the Grands Sites de France **landscape approach**. This approach is an effective and virtuous lever for regional action, because of its ability to mobilise the players who make up the landscape (farmers, foresters, tourism players, etc.) and its capacity to encourage **a holistic and integrated approach to the regional project**.*

TAILORED SOLUTIONS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

1. Revealing the territorial commons

Water, forests, paths, hedged farmland... these are the building blocks of Europe's rural landscapes. They represent a rich heritage and a **shared attachment** for the people who live there. These local heritage resources, whether tangible or intangible, are closely linked to the natural elements and are sometimes neglected. These resources are often part of a **network**, such as irrigation systems or housing service roads, traditionally **managed collectively** by local communities, thus ensuring their preservation and sustainability.

These resources provide a range of ecosystem services. For example, they help to maintain fertile soils, recharge aquifers, preserve ecological corridors and act as carbon sinks. They are also a source of pride and self-esteem for local communities. They can be likened to **common assets to be reappropriated**, since their management has been neglected in the recent past.

EXAMPLE

Recognising the contribution of farming communities to ecosystem services

*In Spain's Granada Altiplano, irrigation communities have signed agreements with municipalities to maintain traditional irrigation systems and associated tourist discovery routes. These agreements usually do not provide for monetary remuneration, but only material support from the municipalities, such as the loan of equipment or the provision of labour. Above all, it is a **symbolic exchange in which the community recognises the know-how and beneficial impact of the farmers' work as well as the services they have always provided in terms of water supply.***

2. Developing local entrepreneurship around a sustainable cultural tourism project

The INCULTUM pilots have developed **new cultural discovery itineraries** to showcase territorial commons, thereby encouraging the local economy and stimulating new activities based on the preservation of traditional know-how, the maintenance of the rural socio-economic fabric and the promotion of local products. These initiatives encourage **the cohesion of stakeholders**, such as municipalities, tourism sector players and the various users of the networks, leading to greater enhancement and preservation of these routes, as well as **sustainable economic development of the area**.

Support for entrepreneurial initiatives aims to create a positive local dynamic, by encouraging cooperation between local players and building on the resources available in the area. **Territorial entrepreneurship** is seen as an alternative to public action and private entrepreneurial initiatives, which can take a variety of legal forms, particularly those based on the social economy. An important aspect of this approach is the **hybridisation of rural economic sectors**, enabling farmers in particular, who are considered to be the "gardeners of the landscape commons", to maintain a decent standard of living by also becoming involved in the service and tourism economy.

Setting up a **regional brand** is also a powerful way of enhancing and promoting a region. By mobilising local players around shared values, it encourages cooperation and raises their profile with a variety of audiences. These brands or labels also help to promote activities with a strong social impact and local industries, while guaranteeing product traceability and reinforcing local identities.

EXAMPLES

San Pellegrino, a small village on the mountains that complements nature with culture, attracting visitors

In Italy (San Pellegrino in Alpe), the relaunch of the ethnographic museum of San Pellegrino and the creation of a new tourist offer that complements nature with culture has allowed the creation of a wider tourist system. This system aims at increasing the impact of cultural tourism for the residents by allowing the presence of a greater number of tourists even in the "low season who can spend more time in the area.

A label to recognise farmer collectives committed to preserving the local commons

In France, as part of the Bibracte pilot project, a collective of farmers was set up to work together to take over farms, preserve landscapes, create links with the service economy, particularly tourism, and strengthen solidarity within farming communities. The collective is organised as an association and is recognised as an Economic and Environmental Interest Group (GIEE), a label awarded by the French Ministry of Agriculture, which provides visibility and financial support for its actions.

WHAT ADDED VALUE FOR RURAL AREAS?

Towards an integrated territorial project

Highlighting the area's heritage assets - landscape, networks, know-how and traditional practices and historical traces - can serve as a basis for enhancing the **area's attractiveness** and as a lever for developing **collective projects to promote cultural discovery routes**.

Close collaboration between heritage communities and public authorities, through appropriate governance, promotes sustainable management of common assets by stakeholders, generating **social, cultural, economic and environmental capital**. Using sustainable cultural tourism as a means of recognising and diversifying economic activities based on the resources of a shared landscape makes it possible to **strengthen territorial synergies** and to consider tourism policy not only as a policy of economic and residential attractiveness, but also as a facet of an integrated territorial project.

SOME LEVERS FOR ACTION BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS AT LOCAL LEVEL

1. **Reveal territorial common heritage** by setting up concrete actions to inventory them, identify their uses, restore and maintain them, and pass them on to future generations.
2. Organising regular **restoration projects** involving local residents and trainees recruited from outside the area.
3. **Gathering and promoting the views of local residents**, particularly those directly involved in maintaining the rural heritage and landscape through their work or their role in the local community.
4. **Supporting the development of heritage communities** that seek to facilitate the organisation of cooperation between their members and with external players.
5. **Formally recognise the role and expertise of local players involved in maintaining heritage and landscape features.** Provide them with material and financial support on a contractual basis.
6. **Mobilise experts and build the capacity of local stakeholders:** Implementing holistic territorial projects, including tourism as one aspect among others, requires mobilising multidisciplinary expertise over the long term and encouraging the development of local expertise that is firmly rooted in the area.
7. **Establish a clear governance structure** for the integrated territorial project, giving a place to each group that claims to be a stakeholder in the project.
8. **Set up a working group** dedicated to cultural discovery itineraries and build/adjust the offer in a concerted manner.
9. **Identify and support local entrepreneurship projects:** the visitor services sector offers a wide range of opportunities in the context of agritourism, such as direct sales of local produce, farm hospitality or the development of guidance and concierge services, all of which contribute to the sustainability of local resources.
10. **Encourage the region's economic players**, particularly those in the agricultural sector, to receive training in tourism and organise a tourism offer that enables them to be paid.
11. **Support cooperative initiatives by drawing on the skills and engineering capacity**, as well as the operational tools available to the local authority (economic development agencies, attractiveness agencies, etc.).
12. **Create the conditions for mutual listening and solidarity to avoid conflicts between stakeholders**, starting by sharing subjects and objectives on which consensus is easy to reach, before gradually tackling more sensitive subjects.
13. **Organise the discussions on the fields - for instance in the middle of the landscape - rather than in a room**, so that the participants can express their views on a concrete situation and avoid creating conditions conducive to the expression of political positions.
14. **Contribute to the creation of territorial intelligence:** by implementing systems for monitoring tourist activity and the perception of tourism by local players.