

# **Cultural policies and local development strategies: The cultural district of Caserta, Italy**

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper presents and discusses the reaserch project carried out by AISLo during the year 2006-2007 jointly developed with the University of Naples, Department of National Heritage and Cultural Activities, and the Province of Caserta. The project deals with the idea that several areas both in Italy and in other countries need to connect their cultural, artistic and environmental endowments with human and economic resources in order to enhance local economic development.

Caserta is nationally and internationally renowned for its cultural resources, namely the famous Reggia di Caserta<sup>2</sup>. Each territory needs to govern its own development path in an active way and needs to adapt to continuous internal and external requests in order to be able to survive. In this sense, innovation and transformation processes have to represent the key issues for development. Some conditions are therefore necessary: objectives convergence, speed in taking decisions, ability of planning and ultimately, knowledge of the material and immaterial endowments to be enhanced.

The Province of Caserta is rich of an extraordinary set of cultural, industrial, historic, agricultural, artistic and touristic resources. A place well known in Europe and all over the world thanks to its local knowledge, new and old traditions, specific and unique activities. A territory that is characterised by such qualities and features has huge possibilities of development if it is able to enhance its image, the identity of

its communities, culture, history, international visibility, all the material and immaterial assets that it owns.

It is more and more evident to everyone that territorial competitiveness also depends on the capacity to assign “value” to invisible and soft endowments and to the related knowledge, that create a specific competitive advantage in the global market. Cultural, artistic and natural endowments of the Province of Caserta represent a unique opportunity for development: the key idea of the project is to connect such a system with all the activities focussed to sustain and develop local economy, employment, human and social capital.

However, although all this abundance of material and immaterial assets, Caserta Province has to face real economic and social difficulties and backwardness: high unemployment rates, organised crime that damages local economy and society, low development, innovation, research rate, low social cohesion, lack of hard and soft infrastructures

The Project developed from the idea to find the right road to sustain economic and social development adopting a joint strategy between economy and culture, highlighting interdependences and possible integrations among different value chains. The project aimed to develop a policy proposal to enhance local development and local government to this task.

The project is built upon three main hypotheses. The first hypothesis deals with the idea that innovation is crucial to connect the economic dimension of a city or a territory with the city’s cultural endowments. The second hypothesis is based on the idea that local development strongly depends on the capacity to integrate public interventions with private initiatives. Thirdly, in order to act as a “system” or a

“network” it is necessary to test new forms of innovation governance able to connect projects, programmes, agencies and so on.

The whole project is developed within the logic of territorial participation, in order to enable local actors to co-plan and manage social and economic changes.

The paper is organised as follows: the second chapter briefly reports some best practices of different forms of “cultural districts”. The third and fourth chapters describe the case of Caserta and the policy choices available to enhance local development processes. The fifth chapter presents AISLo proposal of an integrated cultural districts system.

## **2. “Cultural districts” in Italy and abroad: Some best practices**

The first part of the project aimed to answer to the following question: which are the solutions adopted in Italy and abroad to promote synergies between culture and local development?

Today, all urban areas that promotes a coherent and ambitious strategy of economic local development put “culture” at the centre of the agenda: opening museums, experiencing new ways to disseminate culture locally, pulling for attracting artists and creative people, requalifying urban cultural contexts. However, whatever the strategy is, it could have some results just in presence of the right conditions to accumulate “soft and intangible” resources (in primis human resources) able to match demand and supply. The development of cultural markets is a necessary precondition for a local development pattern culture-driven.

Successful culture-driven local development experiences give evidence that the most important element for success is the ability to connect cultural and non-cultural resources in order to create an innovative and integrated local culture supply system.

Within the present project some cases have been analysed and used as best practices to identify critical and successful issues useful to build a coherent strategy for Caserta Province. The project therefore referred to the cases of: the cultural museum district of La Ville de Strasbourg; the industrial cultural district of Caltagirone; the urban cultural district of Linz; the institutional cultural district of Le Langhe; the advanced cultural district of Denver; the cultural borough of Sheffield; the ecomuseum of Alghero.

The cultural district, according to Valentino (2001) can be referred as a set of relationships and links that integrates the valorisation process of cultural endowments (both soft and hard) with infrastructures and with all other connected productive sectors. Starting from this point of view, the huge number of possible actions and suggestions have been interpreted according to the following perspectives:

- The **museum cultural district**. Its main characteristics are: spatial concentration of museums institutions and spatial concentration of artistic and cultural endowments; a tight link with the social and cultural history of the territory where it is located; the existence of organisational hierarchies that express an organic policy through leading and persuasion methods (Santagata, 2004).
- The **industrial cultural district**. It's a typical industrial district where production is focussed on culture-based goods, in other words on goods strongly linked to old local traditions (Santagata, 2004).
- The **institutional cultural district**. Institutional cultural districts are different from industrial cultural districts because these latter are characterised by specific juridical institutions that guarantee collective property rights to local typical products. This helps local firms to differentiate from other competitors (Santagata, 2004).

- The **cultural borough**. If the advanced cultural district tries to develop as many synergies as possible within the district, the cultural borough tries to reproduce this pattern in a smaller scale. Cultural boroughs, in fact, represent a specific aspect of urban planning and they focus on a specific area of the city (Throby, 2001).
- The **advanced cultural district**. It is based on the existence of strategic complementarities among different cultural chains, belonging to different productive sectors, both within and outside culture production activities: main users of externalities produced by this model are city residents (Sacco-Blessi, 2005).

### **3. The case of Caserta: the emerging issues**

Caserta is one of the places in the world where it is possible (rather necessary and urgent) to test a virtuous integration between economy and culture, in order to create a new economy, firms able to produce services and products at a high quality and value standard level, culture based production processes and not only culture fruition/enjoyment, everything based on an extraordinary artistic and archeological heritage.

In order to carry out a diagnosis of Caserta Province it has been necessary to gather detailed information about the territory and its complex dynamics. A specific analytical tool, applicable to other situations, has been used to describe the context through different profiles:

1. a “territorial” profile that describes the area in terms of physical characteristics (size, location, borders, natural resources, climate, artistic endowments) and urban planning characteristics (infrastructures, access, territory wellness).
2. a “demographic” profile that describes population characteristics (population density, average age, immigration rate, creativity).

3. an “economic” profile that describes local economy features through local productive system dynamics, employment rate, average income.

4. an “institutional” profile that describes both private and public institutions and in the case of public ones their institutional aims.

5. a “service” profile that describes the area in terms of services supply to people and to firms.

6. a “historic and cultural” profile that describes the community’s culture and its values (historic development of the area, cultural traditions, local mores and ways of life).

7. a “relational” profile that describes the quality of relationships among local actors and their inter-dependences (degree of public life participation, projects and experiences that involve many different actors).

The information derived from such analysis has been used to build a SWOT analysis that identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each profile. If you gather all the profiles and the relative SWOT analyses in a single matrix, you can build a SWOT map that can be interpreted in two different ways: either horizontally or vertically. If you look at the map from the horizontal point of view, you can identify each single profile with its relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. If you look at the map from the vertical point of view, you can identify the links between different profiles.

In synthesis, this method of analysis brought to identify several weaknesses that the Province of Caserta has to deal with. As far as territory and territorial community is concerned, it has been found that Caserta has a weak sense of identity; it is too much dependent on Naples but it needs to be more integrated with it; it has a widespread culture of illegality; the environment is highly polluted; the area does not

have an efficient infrastructural system. As far as the public administration is concerned, it is evident that local government does not have a strategic long-term view; there is scarce inter-institutional cooperation; scarce ex-ante and ex-post assessment culture; scarce ICT ability and diffusion. As far as tourism and culture valorisation policies are concerned, it is evident a lack of a wide scope valorisation strategy; a weak provincial cultural programming coordination; a focus on “big event”; a limited supply of information and promotional material; funding often agreed on the basis of nepotistic logic; weak touristic hotel supply and weakly computerised touristic supply. As far as university and research is concerned, it seems that the area is not able neither to attract nor to keep high skilled human resources. Finally, as far as the production system is concerned, it is evident that many important sectors are going through a crisis period, production chains often suffer of internal fractures, there is not any propensity to invest in culture.

#### **4. How to plan local development and culture integration?**

SWOT analysis not only highlighted several difficulties emerging in the Province of Caserta, but also some important local assets that could be exploited to enhance local economic development. The possible solutions of integration between local development and culture should be based on the valorisation of these positive aspects rather than focussing just on problems and weaknesses.

In the present project we used to refer to such positive aspects as “power centres”, that we have gathered, as it is graphically represented in the figure below, in different categories: events, handicraft, typical local products, artistic-cultural-environmental endowments, artists, education-research, productive sector.

Positive aspects of reality, in order to represent concrete opportunities of change and development, have to be reciprocally integrated. Some existing and potential

interconnections have been found both within each category and among different categories in order to favour synergies, aggregate production chains, plan new local development projects, identify new services and possible cooperative links. The above matrix is therefore able to stimulate the creation of new solutions. The matrix shows, for its own nature, the context at a specific moment in time. It gives the possibility to analyse the territory and to identify useful solutions and actions. Moreover it can be constantly updated becoming a real tool used to ideate new solutions.

The solutions identified, to be considered a continuous and lasting engine for development, have to be integrated in specific and effective local government actions. In other words, local policy makers can find further interesting elements to support harmonised actions, within the classification of the interdependences in specific public policies:

- **cultural policies** that include all the activities aimed at translating local policies to promote citizens' social and cultural life in concrete events and initiatives: private and public sponsorship of events and restorations; local and innovative performances; cities valorisation prizes; local artists valorisation; cultural initiatives in favour of Aversa Ospedale Giudiziario patients.

- **tourism policies** that include all the initiatives that enhance and improve local artistic and cultural endowments: “thematic walks” (royal sites, Roman, green, wine and food, silk, goldsmith walks); development of a museums network; implementation of info-points and printing of information, touristic guides and brochures; promotional campaigns for the territory; realisation of a unique website that gathers all local cultural-touristic information.

- **education policies** that include all the initiatives addressed to favour the synergy between school, university and labour market. The aim is to promote reciprocal



integration and specific knowledge development: internships at events organisation societies, restoration sites and Ospedale Psichiatrico Giudiziario; development of a Art and Craft City; implementation of a botanic garden; creation of a university campus near SUN University; development of extra-school courses on legality, natural environment, local history; organisation of ad hoc courses for developing local entrepreneurship; organisation of professional training courses for young people, unemployed and foreigners.

- **industrial policies** that include all actions addressed towards the improvement of the local productive fabric and the integration between it and other economic and institutional sectors: research and development activities thanks to University and local industry agreements; activities addressed to facilitate synergies among different but complementary sectors.

- **trade policies** that refer to those activities which aim to enhance typical local products sale: development of a specific e-commerce website for local productions; join-sale of some typical goods such as silk and gold or wine and cheese; promotional activities of typical productions during events' performance and closed to main touristic centres.

- **policies for cultural-artistic-natural endowments protection:** carrying out of a constant monitoring activity to protect local natural environment; cleaning up activities of polluted water; conversion of polluting activities in environment-friendly ones.

## **5. AISLo proposal: An integrated cultural districts system**

In order to put the hypotheses described in the introduction into effects, the project refers to two main concepts: “culture” with its double meaning of tangible and intangible assets, and “district”.

Different typologies of actions can favour the creation of different kinds of cultural districts. In particular, in the light of the analysed context the most appropriate proposals are: the museum cultural district and the advanced cultural district.

#### Feasibility context

For succeeding in the building process of new institutional and organisational forms (in this case the two districts) it is necessary to respect some preconditions in relation to the general context in which the project is placed:

- Planning feasible projects.
- Planning achievable aims.
- Protecting project originality.
- Guaranteeing the continuity of activities through time.
- Diffusing benchmarking.
- Developing effective network of communication and distribution.
- Developing marketing and communication strategies.
- Developing managerial capacity.
- Developing entrepreneurial culture.
- Fostering resources coordination capacity.
- Developing financial resource managerial capacity.

#### Culture as lever for local development

Culture is considered, in the context of this project, as a revitalisation element of the territory able to sustain standard of living and competitiveness both for residents,

for tourists and for certain entrepreneurs. Culture is perceived both as a set of tangible (monuments, museums, etc) and intangible (common values, local traditions, behaviours, etc) assets.

In order to use culture as a determinant for local development, the following preconditions are necessary:

- Favourable and beautiful physical environment
- Existence of a local intangible culture
- Existence of a cultural endowment
- Interdependence of cultural activities
- Intention to promote the image of the territory
- Agreement on a common system of values and rules
- Participation to local community and tourists life
- Attention to children and young needs
- Attention to ethnic groups
- Social service inclusion
- Valorisation of the marginalities
- Culture of integration and reciprocity.

The district as a model for local development

In order to achieve the objectives of the project it is useful to adopt a “district” logic, in other words a logic according to which, even if each actor perceives his own interests, it is widely agreed that cooperation leads to better results for everyone.

The district is based on three main elements: 1) localisation economies (that imply a reduction costs due to the localisation in the same area); 2) a high level of localisation density (that implies a more efficient coordination of the complex interdependences system that characterises a specific production chain); 3) a

production context based on an integrated system of small independent but cooperative firms (different from a model in which a big firm internalises coordination problems through an integration of the different phases of production, or builds an asymmetric relationship with a myriad of small satellite firms).

The district is a local entity characterised by the presence of a socially integrated community where the people are deeply integrated in their local context. Moreover, people develop a set of technical tacit knowledge and a set of common values.

All the involved institutions (families, school, public institutions, banks, religious communities, no-profit organisations...) are part of the system and share the same values characteristic of the area.

When, as in the present case, the district is a cultural district, it means that culture is at the base of the value chain, and therefore it is not culture that needs a district to be improved but, on the contrary, it is the district that needs culture to be able to develop.

In order to develop such a model of cultural district the following preconditions are needed:

- Involvement of specific places physically closed one to each other
- Concentration of the activities in specific sectors
- Definition of formal rules, conventions, agreements
- Development of a negotiating context
- Defining direct forms of contact between partners
- Promoting different forms of exchange among actors
- Involvement of local labour force
- Developing communication capacity.

A system of cultural districts for Caserta

The system of cultural districts for Caserta is defined by the development of two different kinds of districts. The first one is based on the development of a “museums cultural district” which has at its centre the main cultural attraction of the area, namely the “Reggia di Caserta”. Such a district is necessary for the development of the second type of district that, otherwise, would not have the strength and visibility to compete in the global arena. The second type of district follows the model of cultural districts based on material culture as the main resource, but it also includes successful elements such as local actors direct and indirect participation through a culture supply that stimulates creativity. Here, key words are: participation and creativity. Their effects are defined by the creation of horizontal synergies among different production sectors. In such productive sectors, creative innovation should interact with local culture producing a new competitive aptitude that involves all members of the local community.

#### The museums cultural district

As already pointed out, following Professor Santagata’s definition, main characteristics of a museums cultural district are: 1) spatial concentration of museum institutions and artistic-cultural endowments; 2) link with local social and cultural history; 3) the existence of organisational hierarchies that express an organic policy through leading and persuasion methods.

The policy actions identified to develop this kind of district in the Province of Caserta are:

1. The development of thematic walks (Roman walk, Royal sites Walk, etc)
2. The development of a museums network with a unique coordination centre
3. The realisation of an integrated ticket
4. The realisation of info points, brochures and guides

5. The creation of a unique culture/touristic initiatives website for the territory
6. Public and private sponsorship for restoration activities
7. The improvement of the quantity and quality of tourists attraction
8. The improvement of quantity and quality leisure services.

The most appropriate strategy to implement these actions is the creation of a unique public or public/private institution (a Foundation) that:

- involves in its strategic committee all the representatives of the museums institutions involved;
- gives standard directions to all museums involved in the network;
- spreads all the information through the internet website and the guides, brochures etc;
- takes care of the integrated ticket selling and defines pricing policies;
- leads the negotiating relationships with all suppliers;
- gathers, according to best fund-raising techniques, public and private funds for restoration activities and special initiatives;
- becomes the reference centre for cultural associations and no-profit organisations in order to coordinate activities.

The advanced cultural district

As already pointed out, following the definition of Professor Sacco, an advanced cultural district is defined not only by the typical districtual characteristics but also by:

1) the ability to become destination for professionals, talented and creative people (model based on the Florida's 3T); the ability to promote innovation in the transition towards post-industrial society (model based on Porter's theory); the ability to develop capabilities and motivational re-orientation (model based on Sen's theory).

In order to develop an advanced cultural district for the Province of Caserta are:

- the valorisation of cultural and environmental endowments;
- the valorisation of local material culture;
- integrated selling of local products;
- creation of a local trademark or one or more collective trademarks for local production (IGT, DOC, DOCG, DOP);
- the development of a silk circuit that involves silk industry, silk museum and San Leucio;
- the development of a gold design circuit;
- the development of food and wine walks;
- the development of green walks (parks and castles);
- the development of a cultural borough in the area of Macrico;
- the investment in long-term training and in research activities.

The strategy to effectively implement these actions asks for the development of an ad hoc private or public institution /Foundation) that:

- a. is responsible for the development of cultural districts and for the cooperation among them, in particular it takes care of the cooperation with universities, research centres and entrepreneurs for recovering traditional productive activities, for developing new products or productive processes; of the management of collective trademarks and their coordination in an integrated system; of the creation of an e-commerce website for selling local typical products; of the relationships with local, regional institutions; of the searching for events sponsorships; of the realisation of research and development activities and thanks to University-firms cooperation.
- b. is responsible for developing local actors' capabilities, in particular it takes care of: the realisation of quality packaging for the most famous products, exploiting local knowledge and the area's image; the promotion of typical products during May events;

the creation of an Art and Craft City in the area of Macrico; the realisation of innovative performances of local creative artists; the organisation of competitions and prizes to promote local creativity; the organisation of ad hoc courses for favouring local entrepreneurship, realisation of consulting activities to the development of events and restoration activities; the organisation of professional trainings for young people, foreigners and marginalised people; realisation of extra-school courses on the legality, environment and local history topics; the realisation of activities aimed at the valorisation of Ospedale Psichiatrico Giudiziario.