Developing Sustainable Tourism Products for Mediterranean Hinterland Areas

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Innsbruck (AT), September 11, 2019

Interreg Mediterranean EMbleMatiC
Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund
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IMC Innsbruck 2019 International Mountain Conference

The EMbleMatiC project

The EMM (Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains) Network consists of nine complex living mountains located around the Mediterranean Sea. All these areas share a common challenge (facing unbalanced tourist flow concentrations) and –more important- their willingness to propose a new positioning for their tourism development policy, focusing on 3 objectives:

i. preserving patrimonial values from endogenous and exogenous threats;
ii. sharing positive experiences and good practices; and
iii. increasing international recognition

Changing resources for tourism

The areas of focus are located in the hinterland of very popular touristic coastal areas, and at the foothills of (locally, regionally and, in some cases, nationally and internationally) well-known mountains. This means that they have been traditionally **set aside** from a critical socio-economic activity during the last century: to offer an autonomous tourism destination.

Drivers of change

- Trend towards **environmentally-friendly tourism** and slow tourism.
- Social **demand** for visiting places differently, far away from crowd and standardized tourism.
- Increasing **pressure** to address and to fight negative consequences of coastal tourism.
- **(Public) Institutions** investing in and fostering this kind of tourism in the times of enormous challenges of ecological, social and economic nature.
- **Local actors** being conscious of the trade-offs of standard tourism and wish alternative ways to develop (quality > quantity).

Impacts of change

- Nine areas share **similar problems** and they deal with **similar challenges**. However, they have **singularities** that make a single solution **neither possible nor desirable**.
- In most of the areas, people feel the need to do something that turns tourism a kind of virtuous circle with as many as positive aspects and as less as negative aspects as possible. The trends and the tools are **very similar**, but their implementation and effects are different.

Potential solutions

- Implementing the *ecojourneys* widely **surpassed** our internal capacities.
- We had to **adapt the benchmark** regarding sustainability related topics (e.g. sustainable mobility, monitoring and implementation of quality labels and certifications), because certain partners and local actors lacked important conditions to implement them.
- We tried to do it as sustainable as possible, taking into account **local specificities** and involving **local actors** from the design of the product.
- We tried to **plant some seeds** among our areas' local "ecosystems" that will contribute to rethink some issues and to dare to make thinks differently.

Contribution of science

Science is a systematic way of observing and analyzing phenomena. Thus, it has contributed with a privileged perspective, since the day-to-day actors belonging to the local and regional socio-economic systems that participate in the EMbleMatiC project could not afford systematic and rigorous analysis (because of time and knowledge lack). This was offered by the scientific partners and external scientific collaborators.

Thank you!
Armosino De Luca