

The Lavazé pass – Negotiating tourism development and landscape diversity

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Regeneration of an existing high altitude resort according to an innovative model, based on the remarkable natural values of the area (Natura 2000 sites, UNESCO sites, wetlands and the most southern pinewood of *Pinus cembra* L. of Europe), and sustainable development (conversion of existing buildings, use of renewable energy sources and integrated mobility systems).

The ‘Lavazé pass’

Landscape characteristics

Located in the South Tyrol (I), the Lavazé pass (1,800 meters altitude) is an area of remarkable landscape value and with an ancient tourist tradition (since from the end of the XIX century), although on the decline. Beautiful and now relatively unfrequented, it extends into the heart of the Dolomites World Heritage Site – between the two component sites of Bletterbach Gorge and Latemar-Rosengarten massif – and offers a complete sequence of still intact cultural landscapes, both Alpine and Dolomite.

It is in fact an Alpine pass frequented by man since pre-history and also a mountain pasture plateau, which has always been linked functionally to the stable settlements of the valley bottom. The woods, pastures, grasslands and many rural infrastructures which make up its landscape diversity are still administrated by one of the oldest institutions for collective actions in the Alps (the Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme, 900 years old). This institution corresponds to a social-economic unit based on the concept that the commons are indivisible and inalienable. In fact its main interest is to guarantee the reproducibility of the natural resources which symbolically represent the community itself [MCF, 2009]. For this reason the administrative boundaries of this collective property correspond to an ecosystem. The area has also a long tradition of tourism but with deterioration problems due to the transit of motorized traffic and a consequent loss of appeal.

The ‘Lavazé project’

Project interventions

The Lavazé project is a landscape regeneration strategy that follows an innovative model, based on sustainable planning, the use of renewable energy sources (biomass and solar) and public mobility systems (car-free areas, electric-powered transport systems, etc). The aim of the project is to create a local tourism model with a strong identity through interventions of landscape governance, regeneration and interconnection of open spaces and above all redemption of the local cultural matrix. The plan is based on complementary functions: i.e. it examines in detail the relationship between the resources of natural habitat (hydrology, morpho-

logy and vegetation) and those of human habitat (soil use, types of settlements, public spaces and road networks) with the aim to reduce environmental fragmentation and to develop energy chains and smart grids. It also intends to present a case-study for the reduction of the effects of mobility on Dolomite passes laying underground the part of the road that run across the village.

The main expected result of this intervention on road network is the re-establishment of the landscape and hiking continuity, connecting two different component parts of the Dolomites World Heritage Site and a Natura 2000 site (a peat-bog of high altitude, which existence is directly linked to the hydraulic behaviour of the little alpine lake of Lavazé). In order to make that, the project is based on three landscape planning principles: connectivity conservation, participatory process and negotiation.

Connecting natural values

The Lavazé project represents an experimental implementation of a wider connectivity conservation project concerning the entire Dolomites World Heritage serial site that we are coordinating for the Dolomites UNESCO Foundation and the Italian Ministry of the Environment. The connectivity conservation approach, promoted by IUCN / WCPA [IUCN, 2008], is a landscape planning method based on establishing inter-relationships among identified natural areas (protected areas), through various types of functional connections like landscape corridors, linear corridors and habitat stepping-stones [Worboys, Francis and Lockwood, 2010]. The purpose is to mitigate the effects of environmental fragmentation on species, communities, ecosystems and ecological processes [Bennett, 2004]. It is therefore a method that does not focus so much on the conservation of certain restricted areas (core zones), but on the careful management of the surrounding connection areas (buffer zones).

Updating traditional management rules

Linking landscape and local community, the Lavazé project is based on a contractual principle which reinterprets the ancient rules of management and administration of communal property in a modern key. The project calls for a local strategy, elaborated by means of a participatory process which includes everyone involved in the area (Municipalities and Magnifica Comunità – commons, cross-country trails managers, farmers and animal breeders, tourist and cultural operators), who use the collective management principles traditionally developed by these alpine cultures: regulative and administrative autonomy, sharing, reciprocity and collectivism. The elements of the project are in fact shared and formulated by everyone involved, then they are set out in a written agreement – the ‘Lavazé Integrated



Figure 1. Cross-country skiing is the most important winter outdoor activity in the Lavazé pass. On the background: the Dolomites World Heritage.

programme for Landscape Regeneration’ – on which the constitution of specific management consortium is based.

Negotiating tourism and landscape diversity

Finally the project is based on negotiation. In fact the excessive specialisation in tourist activity risks weakening the strong physical and mental tie which determines man’s sense of belonging to his own territory. Once the area begins to be “lived in” only in function of tourism, it ceases to have any value in its own right. The main principle is therefore to negotiate, that is to find points of agreement between two different systems of values: the landscape diversity as product of the interaction between nature and local culture on the one hand, and tourism as product of a global culture on the other hand. These two worlds are now not separable. With this principle of negotiation the project wants

to consider landscape diversity as the common good of a specific community, and would to operate on tourism as a vehicle of local specificity rather than an instrument of global standardisation.

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