

Between slow tourists and operators

Expectations and implications of a strategic cross-border proposal

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Introduction

The decline of mass tourism has introduced the figure of the post-tourist, one who is no longer identified in a collective dimension, but seems to seek confirmation of existence and identity through diversity of the holiday experience. Leed (1992) showed that the tourist journey induces socialization, as well as being a means of transforming social identities. Today politicians and tourism operators talk about responsible tourism, which requires adherence to a logic of sustainability where territory is a common cultural heritage. Slow tourism supports an alternative holiday based on these criteria, shifting the attention from each specific landmark and symbolic places (the beach, the main cultural resource, the old town, etc.) to the many paths and routes that cross the territory.

This chapter analyzes the results achieved by the European cross-border cooperation project Slowtourism: Implementation and Valorization of Slow Itineraries between Italy and Slovenia. The project, which was implemented between 2007 and 2013, sought to increase cross-border cooperation through coordination and promotion of tourism offerings in the region with a specific focus on the niche market of slow tourism. Notably, through interviews with the operators who have joined the network Slowtourism and slow tourists, the chapter highlights the system of expectations that both have had towards the project, services and territorial development. Furthermore, attention is given to the links with other cross-border projects that enhance typically slow activities (cycling, walking, food and wine, fishing, etc.), highlighting the spatial planning of the Upper Adriatic in supporting a tourism industry based on sustainability, authenticity, uniqueness and environmental protection, keys for long-term economic development.

The Upper Adriatic in policies of cross-border cooperation

The present study focuses on the Upper Adriatic cross-border area between Slovenia and the Italian Friuli Venetia Giulia Autonomous Region. Border conditions gave a kind of imprinting to these areas, of cultural complexity and

cohabitation of different ethnic groups (Italian, German and Slovene speaking) that have always inhabited the area. This complexity played itself out violently through nationalist conflict during the first half of the twentieth century. However, this area has also been able to handle the border specificity directing relations to local hinterlands at Italian-German and Slavic-Hungarian prevalence or towards the Mediterranean and the imperial lands (Valussi, 2000).

Within the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), this has been one of several areas to benefit in 2007–13 from the opportunity to participate in many European funding programs: Central Europe, South Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Alpine Space, Interreg IVC, Urbact II, Espon. With a total budget of over €2 billion, these programs promote competitiveness, growth and integration through the creation of transnational partnerships and joint actions (De Felice, Fioretti, & Lanzilli, 2009; Nadalutti, 2015).

Historically the European Economic Community and subsequently the European Union (EU) have promoted policies aimed at reducing disparities among different regions and member states. Especially since the 1990s, considerable attention was paid to border areas where 38 percent of the European population lives. The promotion of cross-border cooperation (CBC), which arose with the recognition of the border served as a limit or obstacle to the development of an area as well as to a single European Market and political unit, has become the instrument for the reconstruction of administrative and economic fractures. The capacity attributed to CBC to recenter an area is greater where there is a balance between activities carried out in the economic and cultural spheres and between indirect and direct relations by which such activities are enacted (Del Bianco, 2010).

Implemented by the European Regional Development Fund and national funds, ETC has several objectives, including (a) help to transform regions located on either side of internal or external EU borders into strong economic and social poles (i.e., Cross-border cooperation), (b) promote cooperation among European regions, including those surrounding sea basins (e.g., Baltic Sea Region, North Sea, Mediterranean and Atlantic Area) or mountain ranges (e.g., Alpine Space), and (c) provide a framework for local and regional actors from across Europe to promote the exchange of experiences and the identification of good practices (i.e., Interregional cooperation). Financial resources allocated to the ETC have been about €8 billion – 2.5 percent of the resources allocated to cohesion policy (approximately €350 billion) – of which 74 percent to 6,000 cross-border cooperation projects focused on 60 EU border areas (European Commission, n.d.).

Notably, great attention was paid to the tourism sector in view of the fact that it is the third most valuable economic activity in Europe in terms of turnover and number of employees. In addition, it was viewed as the productive sector that could most effectively develop a cross-border area (see the Madrid Declaration of 15 April 2010 signed by the ministers of tourism of the member states). The programs mentioned above significantly targeted the growth of sustainable tourism, improving the quality of products offered and promoting new brand of international appeal.

Features, actors and projects of tourism cooperation

The Operational Programme of the Cross-Border Cooperation Italy-Slovenia 2007–2013, “Strengthening the attractiveness and competitiveness of the programme-area” received final approval by the European Commission on 20 April 2010, with a public funding of about €137 million in tourism. It favored specific niche segments as alternatives to mass tourism. The program aimed at promoting the production and marketing of local products, agriculture and fishing, the development of agritourism and the promotion of resources and tourist destinations in compliance with sustainability principles and focused on specific segments, such as cultural, environmental, river, spa and wellness, active, enogastronomic and accessible tourism (VVAA, 2010).

The cross-border area includes the provinces of Ravenna, Ferrara, Rovigo, Padua, Venice, Treviso, Pordenone, Udine, Gorizia and Trieste in the Northeast of Italy and the statistical regions of Gorenjska, Goriška, Obalno-Kraška, Osrednjeslovenska and Notranjsko-Kraška in Western Slovenia. With a population of about 6 million inhabitants in an area of 31 thousand km², the area draws about 40 million tourists per year, often of a seasonal nature. Overall, the cross-border area, which can count on a strategic positioning on key transport routes between East-West and North-South European corridors, includes a wide variety of landscapes - coasts, plains, alpine reliefs – including the Adriatic Sea, which is an important factor for commercial activities and a driving force for the tourist. The area has significant naturalistic landscape attractions; a rich biodiversity; important endemic species; many parks (the Po Delta, Triglav); seaside resorts with a good state of coastal waters in terms of bathing (Adriatic Riviera, Jesolo, Lignano Sabbiadoro, Grado) and skiing (Tarvisio, Sella Neva, Kranjska Gora, etc.); numerous shopping centers and historic towns, castles (Miramare, Duino, Udine, Gorizia, Bled) and archaeological sites (Aquileia); religious sites (Castelmonte, Monte Lussari, etc.); and natural (Po Delta, Dolomites, Škocjan Caves) and cultural (Ravenna, Ferrara, Venice and its lagoon, some Palladian villas, Aquileia, Cividale del Friuli, the Botanical Garden of Padua) sites recognized by UNESCO, accompanied by various expressions of the local handicraft (majolica of Faenza, Murano glass), the maritime, wine (Collio, Vipava, Prosecco) and gastronomic culture (Gasparini & Zago, 2011).

Given these characteristics, cross-border cooperation has been oriented to strengthen and promote sustainable tourism as a distinctive brand identity of the program area. With a public contribution of about €26 million, projects in tourism sector were substantial and varied. Among them, some aimed at achieving several objectives related to the reorganization of transport accessibility of the whole cross-border area (Adria A, Tip): constructing cross-border cycling circuit to promote integration between the cities and rural areas and reduce the volume of traffic (Bimobis, CroCTaL, Idago, Interbike); decreasing the negative impact of intensive agriculture on the environment and improving the quality and recognition of indigenous products and crafts (Agrotur, Lanatura, Pesca,

Solum, Ue-Li-Je II Treccorala with attention to marine biodiversity), in order to stimulate the development of rural tourism (Enjoy Tour, Rural); improving economic competitiveness in tourism and cultural cooperation through the promotion of thematic routes (Heritaste) or the development of an integrated market of agricultural products (OGV); developing new ideas to improve the supply of tourist attractions and offerings, increase the flow of information, and improve access to the best technologies and improve collaboration (Motor, T-Lab); and enhancing and promoting itineraries featuring natural elements of value such as the salt pans (Saltworks) or the water by developing forms of slow tourism, paying particular attention to the concepts of sustainability, responsibility and eco-compatibility (Slowtourism) (see Table 9.1).

Thanks to the information found on the website of the CBC program (<http://www.ita-slo.eu>) and provided by the Joint Technical Secretariat, it is possible to reconstruct the significant transfrontier network of actors created by the implementation of these projects. The graph in the Figure 9.1 draws the

Table 9.1 Italy–Slovenia 2007–13 cross-border funded projects in tourism

Acronym	Title	Partner n.		Budget €
		Ita	Slo	
<i>Adria A</i>	Accessibility and Development for the Re-launch of the Inner Adriatic Area	18	11	2.838.872
<i>Agrotur</i>	Kras Agrotourism	3	3	1.022.915
<i>Bimobis</i>	Bike Mobility Between Italy and Slovenia	6	8	1.468.947
<i>CroCTaL</i>	Cross-border Cycling Tracks and Landscape	6	8	1.286.268
<i>Enjoy Tour</i>	Bon Appetit on the Cross-border Routes of Flavors	6	5	391.374
<i>Heritaste</i>	The Routes of Knowledge and Tastes	6	4	1.152.610
<i>Idago</i>	Improving Accessibility and the Attractiveness of the Cross-border Mountain Area	1	3	1.159.762
<i>Interbike</i>	Cross-border Intermodal bike Network	12	11	3.027.535
<i>Lanatura</i>	Tradition and Innovations in the Use of Animal Materials	6	6	386.961
<i>Motor</i>	Mobile Tourist Incubator	5	4	1.156.618
<i>OGV</i>	Gorizia's Vegetable Garden	6	6	487.561

Acronym	Title	Partner n.		Budget €
		Ita	Slo	
<i>Pesca</i>	Food Educational Project to a Healthy Eating	6	6	903.028
<i>Rural</i>	Cross-border Development of Rural Tourism and Joint Promotion of Local Products	2	1	446.750
<i>Saltworks</i>	Eco-touristic Valorization of the Salt-pans Between Italy and Slovenia	3	2	1.084.070
<i>Slowtourism</i>	Valorization and Promotion of Slow Tourism Itineraries Between Italy and Slovenia	16	14	3.590.571
<i>Solum</i>	Joint Itinerary Through Traditional Taste	4	4	1.103.901
<i>Tip</i>	Transborder Integrated Platform	5	5	1.150.865
<i>T-Lab</i>	Laboratory of Touristic Opportunities in Cross-border Regions of Slovenia and Italy	4	3	1.104.332
<i>Treccorala</i>	Rocky Outcrops and Coralligenous Formations in the Northern Adriatic: Enhancement and Sustainable Management in the Gulf of Trieste	8	3	1.430.000
<i>Ue Li Je II</i>	Olive Oil: A Symbol of Quality in the Cross-border Area	4	9	870.591
	<i>Total</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>26.063.531</i>

Source: VV.AA. (2010). Programma per la cooperazione transfrontaliera Italia-Slovenia 2007–2013. *Programma Operativo*. Retrieved from http://www.ita-slo.eu/progetti/progetti_2007_2013.

network based on the regional location of the beneficiaries. The values along the lines represent the number of partners involved in cross-border projects, while those inside the circles the number of partners involved on the basis of their national belonging. The greatest number of cross-border collaborations is between the organizations of Friuli Venetia Giulia and Goriška (n. 137) and between the latter and Veneto (n. 59). Furthermore, the region Friuli Venetia Giulia has 79 collaborations inside its territory while 61 are inside the Goriška region. The graph shows a greater participation among Italian operators rather than among Slovenian operators. The graph in Figure 9.2, however, reconstructs the network on the basis of the main types of beneficiaries: local

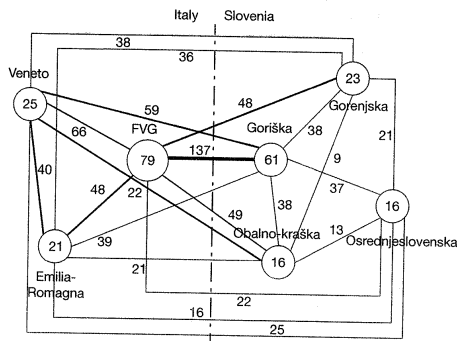


Figure 9.1 The cross-border cooperation network: list of beneficiaries by region.

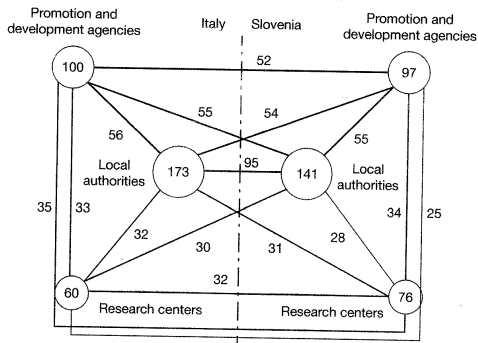


Figure 9.2 The cross-border cooperation network: list of beneficiaries by organization.

government (municipality, province, region), promotion and regional development agencies, research institutes and universities. In this case, cross-border cooperation takes place primarily among the authorities (numbering 95 partners), although the Italian partnership network seems to be stronger than that of Slovenia (n. 173 vs. n. 141 partners).

The *Slowtourism* project

In May 2010, the EU funded *Slowtourism*, a strategic project of cross-border cooperation for the enhancement and promotion of slow tourist itineraries between Italy and Slovenia. The project, led by the Local Development Agency of Emilia-Romagna Delta 2000, led to the participation of 30 institutional partners including regions, provinces, municipalities, development and promotion agencies, natural parks, and universities. Taking into consideration the fact that the area is characterized by a significant natural, historical and cultural heritage and by a wide range of tourism products and services, the aim of the project was to produce a strategy for cross-border slow tourism through the implementation of joint products of “slow” activities such as cycling, fishing, bird-watching and water-related tourism products, thus defining the Upper Adriatic as an area for slow tourists.

The traditional mass tourists have increasingly since the 1980s been replaced by post-modern tourists who, through their leisure and vacation, search for experience, diversity, and confirmation of their own identity. The growth of alternative forms of tourism confirms the importance of the dimension of consciousness, as *knowledge* of self and others - the locals who host, places, cultures, and so on - and as *awareness* of the impact that the presence has on the environment (Lavarini, 2008; Nocifora, de Salvo, & Calzati, 2011). Although taking on many labels, these new forms of responsible, ethical and sustainable tourist combine recreation and learning (edutainment), recognize the central importance of the host communities, pay attention to the environment, hold respect for different cultures, and support local development. The relevance of these types of tourism is confirmed by some data. At European level, the answer “Nature (landscapes, mountains, etc.)” was for Europeans the second most popular reason for going on holiday in 2014 (31 percent), following the answer “Sun/beach” (48 percent) and preceding the answer “Culture” (religious, gastronomy, arts, etc.: 27 percent) (European Commission, 2015, pp. 6–7).

A more specific survey implemented by the project on a sample of 800 tourists of the Italian-Slovenian border area underlined the appreciation of the following activities: doing outdoor activities and contemplating landscapes (61 percent, response category *very much appreciated*); visiting castles, churches, historic buildings or ruins (48 percent); visiting nature reserves and visitor centers in the parks (44 percent); walking, hiking and trekking (42 percent); tasting local products in agritourism or winery (40 percent). These are all activities that well embody aspects of slow tourism (Zago, 2012, p. 162). Applying factor analysis on a list of 20 items reveals five latent dimensions that reproduce 57 percent of total variance of the original variables.

- 1 *Practicing sport activities* (24.1 percent): the stay, either short or long, is seen as a chance to free one’s energies and to find one’s psycho-physical equilibrium through sport practice.
- 2 *Diving into the local* (11.3 percent): the tourist is seduced by typical rhythms and values of local life, tempted by local products

and attending courses on local culture, such as on wine and food, environment, history, etc.

- 3 *Living in nature* (8.3 percent): using one's own feet only, the tourist observes wild plants and animals within natural or protected environments, such as nature reserves, visitor centers, etc.
- 4 *Looking at the past* (6.4 percent): for the tourist, means to visit the vernacular heritage, which includes churches, castles, ruins, architectural styles but also the reproduction of the past in historical, ethnographical, archaeological, etc. museums.
- 5 *Getting possession of time again* (5.7 percent): the tourist is seduced by those rhythms that are imposed in a place where there are no fast practices or means. They stay in accommodation facilities that are different from hotels, such as agritourism facilities, mountain huts, campsites, etc. and time is driven by the speed of his or her pace or, at most, by the speed of their push on a pedal (*ibid.*, pp. 163–166).

A follow-up quantitative-qualitative survey carried out in 2013 on a sample of 245 tourists visiting the border area has evaluated these five dimensions and put in evidence the meaning of slow living and travel. On a Likert scale, the top response was “Living in nature.” Some 69 percent of respondents answered that this category was *very important* on the item. Next was “Getting possession of time again” (63.3 percent), followed by “Diving into the local” (60.8), “Looking at the past” (50.4) and “Practicing sport activities” (11.4). When asked what slow tourism means to them, among notable responses were as follows:

- “to know the country, the city, the mountain in all their entirety; to live the vacation as a local citizen, not as a tourist, watching and visiting only the important things for locals” (Female, 18–35 years old);
- “to leave the motor vehicles to pay special attention to the most relaxing vehicles (such as the legs!) that allow you to enjoy with your eyes and your heart what you have around, experiencing the time without timetables or conditions of too many movements” (Female, 36–50 y.o.);
- “to give the right time to see and learn about the place you visit; less things to visit but deeper and it is better to visit with someone of the place able to capture different aspects of the local life” (Male, 18–35 y.o.);
- “to choose and prepare a travel itinerary, looking for little or strange things or that nobody cares, at your own pace” (Female, 51–65 y.o.);
- “to be able to organize the contents of the trip according your own needs” (Male, 18–35 y.o.);
- “to get in touch with local flavors, attending local wine and food tastings itineraries and the production of natural products” (Female, 36–50 y.o.); and
- “to travel in an environmentally friendly manner, thoughtful and appropriate with a strong respect of the territory and taking home feelings and values perhaps a little lost” (Male, 51–65 y.o.).

On the basis of these results, the study considered that the classification of an experience (supply and demand) of slow tourism must simultaneously satisfy the following six dimensions (*ibid.*, pp. 167–169):

- 1 *Social Exchange*: This dimension is the sphere of relationships among individuals (with different opinions, beliefs, knowledge, cultures) and the capability of the supply system to create fruitful opportunities of more genuine exchange among them. Even if tourism has become the leading economic sector in the world, we still have the problem of cultural dialogue between the culture of those who leave and those who welcome. Travel could be the opportunity to understand ourselves through the eyes of others and this is the best way to deal with otherness (Lucchesi, 1995). Considering that 80 percent of international travel concerns residents of only twenty richest countries, practicing slow tourism also means to be able to build a society of different people based on equality. The relationships under consideration are in particular those between guests and the local people and among the guests themselves.
- 2 *Authenticity*: The concept of authenticity is eclectic and changes over time. Today, travelers and tourists are brought together by hunger for uncontaminated places and cultures. According to recent studies (Sedmak & Mihalic, 2008), authenticity has proved to be an important factor of choice, a factor that will tend to be regarded as increasingly important in the future. If the traveler and the tourist share the same desire, what changes is the way they interpret and enter into relationship with the different situations and environments. Those who practice slow tourism wish to be in a unique place, where they seek out peculiarities that characterize exclusively the chosen destination and the people who live there. Authenticity is the capability to create and offer a non-artificial experience strongly connected with local culture and traditions, and non-standardized products and services.
- 3 *Sustainability*: According to the Brundtland World Commission on Environment and Development (1988), development is sustainable if it meets the present needs without compromising those of future generations: “A development capable of future” (Ronchi, 2000). Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Sustainable tourism operates in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures, so that these become the permanent beneficiaries and not victims of tourism development (UNWTO, 1996). Slow tourism shares this concern with the impact of tourism on the local environment. It claims the need for a sustainable approach in the long term that is economically viable, and ethically and socially fair toward local people.
- 4 *Time*: Modern society is characterized by an accentuated acceleration of the present and the loss of the future: we make fewer plans, we have

less hope, and relationships are less stable. The reflection arising from the literature is that in the society of acceleration it is more gratifying to orientate to the present rather than the future (Crespi, 2005). Thus, time here deals with the capacity of taking (the organization) and giving (to the guest) the right time to understand and act properly. Slow tourism seeks to dedicate time to analyze, understand, and plan quality improvements (for the customers and the employees), following a strategic orientation with an explicit medium-long-term planning, timely opening of the services, and offering the guest a comfortable experience.

5 **Length:** Related to the point in the previous paragraph, Bauman (2009) argues we live in a society that has lost a sense of time and that has emptied the criteria by which it is possible to distinguish the enduring from the ephemeral, the essential from the superfluous. The real waste of time is deceived by speed, even on vacation. Often the journey is seen as an obligation. Get the plane, take just two photos and then move on to the next exhibit, ultimately coming home to show them to friends. Slow travel teaches, instead, to enjoy the luxury of “wasting” time, to understand, to enter into the travel, not to do it: an experience that involves all the senses. Thus, the supply of services and products of slow tourism with non-frenetic rhythms, enable the guest to engage in a more complete experience that allows them to gradually assimilate and build relationships with local people. Slow means to reduce quantity and focus on quality of experiences.

6 **Emotion:** Slow tourism must rise, first of all, from the desire to get involved. The journey is not just the final destination, but it is the valuing of many experiences and sensations. The contemporary tourist is a multisensory tourist (Costa, 2005) looking for playful, liminal, experiential component and of sense gratification. As described by Bruno (2006), places become generators of moods, feelings, and emotions: emotional geography. Thus, place holds the capability to generate memorable moments and emotions, giving to the tourist a true involving and gratifying experience. By acknowledging and acting upon this, service providers may facilitate tourists' desired emotions.

In this sense, slow tourism is an approach to the use of tourism products that stimulate interactions with the host community (contamination), enhance the specificity of places (authenticity), minimize the impact on the environment (sustainability), require a planning aimed at improving the quality (time), prefer not frenetic rhythms (length), involve in a multisensory experience (emotion) (Castle model).

Classifying activities as “slow” requires all six criteria. The presence of one or more is not enough. Instead all must be present, although this can be done with different degrees of intensity. Without meeting all these criteria, one is probably in the presence of other types of tourism, already widely recognized and codified by institutions, traders, travelers, media and general public (see Figure 9.3).

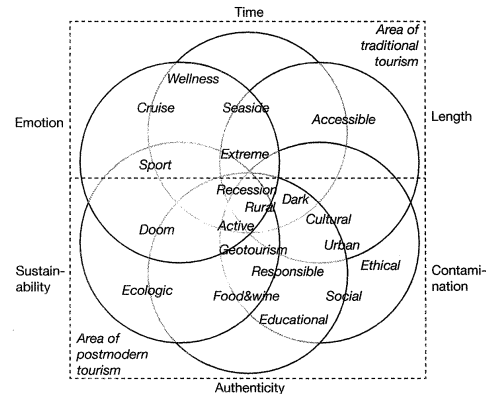


Figure 9.3 Slow tourism dimensions and types of traditional and post-modern tourism.

Project outcomes

With a budget of approximately €4 million, the *Slowtourism* project put together 23 pilot projects between 2010 and 2013 in the fields of cycling, river tourism, bird-watching and environmental tourism, and sport tourism and identified 32 separate itineraries. More than 600 stakeholders and tourist operators attended 24 organized workshops for the dissemination of the guidelines. The project also organized two educational tours for travel agencies and disseminated and promoted the project and slow routes through slow moments/events. In addition, it carried out 30 meetings of training activities for tour operators (over 1,000 participants) and four meetings for school managers (about 60 participants), aimed at spreading the concepts of slow tourism at professional and education level. For schools, the project produced two manuals for elementary school pupils and for middle and high school students.

The *Slowtourism* project has also participated in several international travel and tourism fairs in China, Japan and Italy, where it utilized brochures, apps and multivisual materials in order to promote the project and the larger philosophy. In Beijing, at the COTTM (China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market) fair held in 2012, considered as a leading outbound tourism fair in China, the Slow Tourism project received first prize in the category “Product innovation” of the CTW Chinese Tourists Welcoming Award as a recognition

for successful collaboration between the two countries and for the interest for the Asian market. This recognition took place in a particularly important venue, as China recently became the world's top tourism sending country and the World Tourism Organization estimates the total number of outbound tourists from China will reach 100 million by 2020 (Delta 2000, 2014).

In the end, the project created a new slow tourism network in order to not just publicize slow travel in the region but also to guarantee quality and consistency of the services offered, to allow accessing the regional and national funds for quality projects, and to guarantee the continuation of the project activities by private operators. The network has been joined by 133 operators (hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, restaurants, tour guides, etc.).

Assessing the *Slowtourism* project

As the EU project closed at the end of 2015, questions were submitted to the operators who joined the *Slowtourism* network. The goal was to understand how enhancing the cross-border area according to the feelings, the interests and the specificities of the activities and territories and to gather all opinions and ideas about further encouraging cooperation and partnerships. In all, 75 interviews have been completed: 36 operators in services (guided tours, learning activities, boat and bike rental, etc.), 22 in accommodation and food services, 13 in accommodation services only and four in food services.

For the most part, operators agree that there is not enough coordination at cross-border level, which is ironic, given that cross-border cooperation was the primary motivation behind the project. Interviewees responded that operators would be instantly recognizable if they could present themselves under the same umbrella, with a single slow brand. They would be recognizable to the tourists looking for a slow holiday, those who take their first steps in this kind of experience and those who intend to mix the traditional holiday with naturalistic, cultural, sport activities, enogastronomic aspects. In fact, the cross-border area allows them to diversify offerings because it contains the characteristics of a singular natural environment, the variety of food and wine that combines the flavors of the sea and the mountain with the Austro-Hungarian, Istro-Venetian and Slavic traditions, elements of the long and troubled borderland history, crossroads of people and cultures. Operators also require a promotional network that publicizes the various initiatives highlighting the relevance for the tourist to find in each structure a specific space devoted to information and distribution of materials on initiatives that can be taken by the tourist independently or with the help of specialized guides.

On the other hand, many operators report having developed synergies with other institutions in the area not only linked to tourism, but also to parks, marine reserve, botanical gardens, natural history museums, and so on. Many initiatives have found fertile ground and initial cooperation has continued. For others cooperation between operators is not always successful. Coordination and management of activities proves to be difficult in both promotional and

organizational terms. It may be that this kind of experience requires some time to show concrete results. Finally, most attraction operators require the intervention of travel agencies that deal with incoming tourists, and many contend the agents present the area insufficiently given the nature of the project. Many incoming agencies often do not have anything structured to offer to the tourist who is looking for things to do, see and experience from a slow perspective.

Operators insist on using different tools to promote the area and especially to facilitate structured tour packages utilizing the language of slow. They have also pushed public institutions responsible for promoting tourism to erect billboards even outside the program area – at railway stations, airports, national and international fairs – dedicated to tourism. They consider of primary importance the creation of a website that can act as a clearinghouse for slow tourism attractions in the area. Some operators also insist on promotion through the media: press, press conferences, promotional videos to be run on local television networks and on Internet sites in other regions. A small group of operators talk about Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) e-commerce promotional tools that, they argue, are the best way to meet the needs of tourist today – well-informed, innovative, faithless and impatient - by the interaction through online auctions. In general the operators know the potential of the Internet, but lack the skills and training to handle this form of promotion with certainty and autonomy. For this reason, operators feel a need for entrusted promotion management with competent people who can support the launch of this innovative new experience offered by the *Slowtourism* project.

As a result of the *Slowtourism* cross-border initiative and the subsequent transformation of the marketing strategy of Friuli Venetia Giulia 2014–18 from “live” to “slow” (Four Tourism, 2014), operators now aim to formalize the network, registering a *Slowtourism* trademark in order to distinguish specific slow tourism offerings and identify the participants who joined the *Slowtourism* program. Further, operators have worked to create structured tour packages to be included in the cross-border tourist offers using the regional and national Tourism Agency's web portal as a promotional channel, very attentive to the slow proposals and convinced to focus on this kind of tourism.

At present, it is not possible to quantify results of the initiative in terms of slow tourists to the area. In part this is due to classificatory challenges. The spatial proximity makes the area attractive for tourists who, for different reasons, spend a few days and come from nearby places: Croatia, Austria, Germany and which seem to reveal more interest in local events and naturalistic activities. Tourists from Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic have long been a presence in the area and now they seem involved in the slow tourism; many Russian vacationers, staying in seaside destinations, like to move within a day's time to visit a historic center, a castle, a cave, a winery or to walk along nature trails. The activities related to the slow tourism – that work on elements of authenticity, original experiences, emotion – can contribute to a real increase in the perceived value of a vacation in the area.

The *Slowtourism* project tried to analyze results by three types of tourists who border on slow tourism:

- 1 Slow tourism as the main reason for their visit: this segment is made of people who visit the destination in order to do activities which are naturally slow (trekking, cycling, nature tourism, river tourism, outdoors sports, etc.) as the main reason of their stay (11 percent of current flows).
- 2 Slow activities in traditional tourism products: this segment is made of those who, even though they do not state a slow motivation as the main reason for their travel, still engage in activities related to slow tourism (17 percent).
- 3 Slow trekkers who live in the nearby areas: they are people who live in the area and in the nearby areas, inclined to do activities close to the slow tourism (7.5 percent of the resident population for the in or up to 1-hour travel range and of 3.7 percent for the between 1- and 2-hour travel range).

The analysis highlighted that the slow tourism product can move almost 3.7 million people each year in the project area (Dall'Aglio & Zago, 2011, pp. 55–57).

Conclusion

In the future, if the Upper Adriatic area wants to capitalize on slow tourism, there are some strategies that should be supported or implemented at the level of central and peripheral administrations. Slow tourism cannot be separated from well-informed local organizations and operators and a shared social responsibility in a territory which is an *affair of all* (Citterio & Lenzi, 2007). The uniqueness of a place depends on “the innovative strategies implemented simultaneously by residents, local and external operators and consumers developed on the basis of an efficient and open system (not exclusive) of information and communication among different types of subjects” (Savelli, 2003, p. 145).

The following guidelines highlight the issues needed to be addressed in the process of the creating offerings, managing them in an effective and cohesive manner, and promoting them systematically:

- 1 *Territory and environment*: support the recovery and the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage, especially of the rural areas in order to avoid their deterioration, compromise the offer of slow products and the economic development on local population's behalf; support the use of transport alternative to automobiles, stimulating the use of public transportation, in order to reduce environmental and crowding impacts on the area.
- 2 *Economy and society*: develop the local competences and skills in order to fight against the creative and intellectual impoverishment of the area, which ultimately leads to depopulation; support the local entrepreneurship in non-tourist fields in order to strengthen the identity of places in terms of traditions, skills, lifestyles.

- 3 *Accessibility*: use the central position of the cross-border area in Europe and the several road and infrastructural connections in order to increase the number of tourists in emerging countries; supplement the local road network in order to develop short-break tourism and the connections between coasts or mountains and hinterland; support the transformation of information centers into service centers in order to offer tourist the opportunity to stop and prolong his stay; support the image of slow tourism product on the web, outside, in order to communicate with potential tourists, and inside, to exchange information between operators.
- 4 *Institutional support and image*: support the creation of uniform quality standards for services, infrastructure and resources in order to meet the increasing demand for quality; support the creation of network models between operators, through a centered coordination that performs planning activities, in order to diversify and personalize the offer; support and spread the image of slow tourism product in a coordinated and unitary way, though highlighting the specificities of each area; support and spread the image of an area rich in cultural and natural heritage and where to live unforgettable moments outdoors or practicing sports to intercept the increasing demand for sport, walking, cycling and wine and food; explore marketing plans in order to support traditional tourist fields (development of slow tourism product) in order to fight against the competition of emerging destinations, of new and far attractions but easily reachable; support and spread slow tourism principles through an effective information circulation system in order to develop a common view of operators and local people; support the specialist training of the people in charge in the tourist field in order to offer a service from a slow perspective.
- 5 *Tourist fruition*: utilize the attractions of sea, mountains and cities in order to develop an additional occasion to visit the area from a slow perspective; develop common strategies aimed at the extension of tourist offerings and at the de-seasonalization of tourist flows; spread slow tourism principles between operators and population in order to improve the welcoming skills (opening times flexibility, willingness to talk with the client, etc.); support the uniqueness of the slow tourism product in order to avoid the fragmentation of supplies at a promotional level; support local wine and food offerings and protect food farming productions in order to safeguard culinary traditions and to intercept the increasing demand from gastronomists.

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