



The Value of Designations of Origin in Emilia-Romagna

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Designations of origin (DOs) form a part of our history and culture by their own definition. The most usual approach is to consider them as if they were brands and include them in a *filière* approach, while considering their products only and not their overall peculiarities. Today, some different requirements - i.e. the inappropriateness of using the chain and label approach in international negotiations and the possibility of a rapprochement between the agricultural world and society (a “normal” sector, neither backward, nor unaffiliated) – have opened the way to the possibility of leading the analysis of designations of origin back to their historical and cultural meaning, thus practically returning them to their legitimate owners: the people who live in the territory.

This study project – which is funded by the Agriculture Department of the Emilia-Romagna Region – is based on the assumption that designations of origin are a common good for the citizens of this regional territory. After drawing up an identikit of both the territory under examination and its designations of origin, the next step was to understand what meaning (what Value) the people in the territory and those who gravitate around it attribute to these designations. Finally - in order to put into perspective the role of this common asset in relation to the people’s overall requirements - people living in the territory were asked if they were ready to invest in this “project” and how DOs ranked among their priorities.

During our study the concept of Value had to be refined in order to clearly establish a common language with the interlocutors while overcoming a stereotype which reduced everything to economic outcomes. The essential question then became that of letting the interlocutor evaluate how the presence of designations of origin contributes to make that territory the best possible territory, i.e. the territory where one decides to have children. This concept was summarized in three items: how the designation of origin can contribute to the keeping of social peace (Peace), the obtainment of a relatively well-distributed wealth (Wealth) and the safeguarding of the environment and citizens’ health (Health).

The territory chosen for this study was the *Strada dei Vini e dei Sapori “Città, Castelli, Ciliégi”*, the first wine route established in Emilia-Romagna. This itinerary runs through the area of hills and foothills between Bologna and Modena. An area which – through this Itinerary - has already started a first significant step toward the valorization of its own designation of origin assets: a step in which these assets are identified as an “amenity”, i.e. as an “attraction” (in Spanish amenity is translated as “atractivo”) and, thus, a cause for recognition and attraction for outsiders. Local people (either agriculture- and food-industry operators or others) let these “outsiders” get to know their territory in various ways.

This work provided multi-fold results. The territory did not appear homogeneous: the relevant designations of origin showed varying ability to form entrepreneurial cohesion and had a varying impact on people.