

A concrete action system in shaping an organizational field for roots tourism exploitation. The case study of “Rete Destinazione Sud”

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Abstract

Frame of the research: *Roots Tourism (RT) is a rapidly growing socio-economic trend among travellers, tourists and immigrants searching for a connection with their ancestral locus. In order to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this socio-economic phenomenon, it is essential to implement a series of processes involving a range of actors. These processes, overseen by one or more institutional entrepreneur, facilitate the formation of a concrete action system.*

Purpose of the paper: *The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the relational dynamics among actors playing a central role in the institutionalization of an organizational field to exploit the opportunities deriving from RT. The work presents a case study of a concrete project aimed at fostering the Southern Italian tourism destination, focused on a relationship model of value co-creation through multi-level agents' engagement, coordinated by an Institutional Entrepreneur, using a fitting case-study singled out as “Rete Destinazione Sud”*

Methodology: *The paper adopts the “descriptive” epistemological paradigm. Through the lens of the neo-institutional theoretical framework, the case study analysis tries to define how it is possible to recognize the Institutional Work carried out by the Institutional Entrepreneur, in shaping a Concrete Action System (CAS) aimed at fostering touristic development.*

Results: *Through this study, a strong interplay between institutional and local actors emerges, to develop a new way to network - in a bottom-up and top-down synergy -, coordinated by an Institutional Entrepreneur.*

Research limitations: *The interactions and dynamics within a CAS are multifaceted, opaque and, not easily observable or quantifiable. This complexity poses a challenge for scholars attempting to analyze these systems. Here an adopted descriptive approach has limitations, insofar as it may emphasize a detailed understanding of the parts of a system without necessarily providing a full interpretation of the dynamic relationships and mutual influences among these components. A comprehensive epistemological paradigm might well contribute to understanding motivations and interests activating the actors involved in shaping a CAS.*

Managerial implications: *Following the neo-institutionalist perspective, the work aims to shed light on how and to what extent a CAS is involved in the organizational and multi-stakeholder configuration. This approach provides a comprehensive framework relying on a critical analysis of institutions, identification of incentives and disincentives for the actors involved in building coalitions, promoting the institutional learning.*

Originality of the paper: *This paper analyzes the Concrete Action System through the neo-institutional perspective declined in a new organizational and institutional model, identified in “Rete Destinazione Sud”.*

Key words: *roots tourism; neo-institutionalism; concrete action system (CAS); organization field (OF); Networking; bottom-up and top-down dynamics.*

1. Introduction

2023 marks the return of Italy to the forefront of international attention, with its rich history, vibrant culture, and unique place in the Mediterranean region. Italy plays a key role in shaping the touristic and cultural future of Europe. From this perspective, 2023 is considered the *Year of the return to Italy* and this expression gives the name to a new touristic project in which the most authoritative professionals are involved, including Municipalities, Regional and National Institutions, Universities, Tourism Entrepreneurs, Consortia, National Parks, Associations, Business Networks, and foundations in Italian Regions. In particular, the project “2023 Anno del Turismo di Ritorno - Alla Scoperta delle Origini” is aimed at reaching Italians and over 70 million 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation compatriots living abroad. Focusing on the strong linkage between the youngest generations of Italian descendants living abroad and their motherland, and especially on their affection for the country-of-origin traditional practices, this project is inspired by emigrational flows, which started in the past decades and led to an important development of the Tourism of Return, often termed Roots Tourism (RT).

The realization of this ambitious project requires the involvement of different actors, coming from the socio-economic world to the political and institutional one, together engaged in ‘creating a system’ around the definition of a new form of tourism. At the same time, it should be noted that the current Italian scenario is characterized by adverse socio-economic conditions, small size, marginalization, and fragmentation of agents in the Italian system, as well as its low levels of competitiveness, all of which represent central issues on the political agenda of recent years. These conditions appear even more evident in tourism dynamics, in which heterogeneous actors coexist. Indeed, tourism is a large and articulated industry whose boundaries are not always well defined. After all, the same tourist product can only be understood as the result of a complex system composed of many different and strongly independent components, in which the interacting actors can come from both the private and public sectors.

In this complex context, scholars’ and decision-makers’ attention has increasingly focused on the design and implementation of processes that would allow actors to be involved in any stage of the production of economic activities. In particular, in this scenario, what has progressively emerged is that aggregation processes (between individuals, groups, and social and economic organizations) may be strategic in overcoming the low competitiveness and low dynamism of the Italian socio-economic system. For example, it is evident that in the tourism sector, the great

fragmentation of its economic actors represents a strong limitation for achieving desired aggregation levels (see, among others, Selin, 1994; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Hall, 1999; Scott *et al.*, 2008; Beritelli, 2011).

With this premise, the management science debate has been enriched by contributions regarding aggregations among socio-economic operators, focusing on the mechanisms aimed at regulating relations that would orient strategic conduct in a complex, strongly competitive, global, and modern environment (see, among others, Boari *et al.*, 1989; Thompson, 1990; Ring and Van De Ven, 1992; Rullani, 1994; Gulati, 1995; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995; Rispoli and Tamma, 1995; Arcari, 1996; Lorenzoni and Lipparini, 1999; Soda *et al.*, 2004; Brondoni, 2010; Yin *et al.*, 2012).

Aggregations can be based on spontaneous mechanisms of coordination rather than on regulatory and contractual mechanisms. The aim of these aggregations is to build collaborative, stable, and lasting relationships that can achieve relational performance. This performance is justified by the motivational growth of cooperation, inspired by solidarity, mutual adaptability, and the desire to reduce opportunistic behavior risks (Das and Teng, 2001; Mancini, 2010; Gulati *et al.*, 2012; Geretto and Zanin, 2017).

The purpose of this work is to reconstruct the relational dynamics among actors playing a central role in the institutionalization of an organizational field to exploit the opportunities derived from RT. To reach this scope, we adopted the neo-institutionalist approach, allowing us to broaden the focus from the analysis of the relationship dynamics within the sector to a wider relational context involving a plethora of different actors with a very diverse profile. From this perspective, the Concrete Action System (CAS) assumes centrality as a multi-level actor's perspective, a structure of organized human interaction, and a logical and sociocultural space of exchange of shared value creation in which various actors are involved in negotiation and cooperation processes in an attempt to construct the observed social reality (Powell and DiMaggio, 1983; Scott, 1995; Barley A., Tolbert P.S., 1997, Scott and Meyer, 2000; Wooten and Hoffman, 2008; Greenwood *et al.*, 2017). In pursuing their own interests, social agents draw a network of mutual influences, and, in practice, they contribute to defining (if not always intentionally) a type of rationality, whereas certain behaviors are imitated and diffused, while others are abandoned over time (Scott *et al.*, 2008).

In this scenario, the CAS can support the development of RT, and through the neo-institutionalism framework, the importance of social norms and institutions in fostering underlying dynamics can be understood. Neo-institutionalism is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the role of social agents, organizations, and institutions in shaping economic and social behaviors. A set of shared expectations and rules, laws and regulations, cultural values, and customs represents the routed constructs of this viewpoint.

The CAS could thus be read as an engine capable of setting up cooperation and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors towards the institutionalization of an Organizational Field (OF), whose scope is to catch opportunities and mitigate the risks linked to tourism development.

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The institutionalization of an OF to stimulate RT is based on the activation of relationship dynamics, consistent with the regulatory framework and territorial policies of the communities and associations participating in a new challenging CAS.

To address this aim, the paper is structured as follows: The first section briefly presents the Roots Tourism phenomenon in the literature. Then, a theoretical framework aimed at identifying the Concrete Actions System (CAS) is presented and applied to identify a double level of negotiation (bottom-up and top-down relational dynamics) involving actors in the institutionalization process. Thus, *Rete Destinazione Sud* is presented as an emblematic case of CAS aimed at building a strategic network able to play a key role in the institutionalization of an Organizational Field engaged in capturing the opportunities coming from Root Tourism.

This case study contributes significantly to the managerial debate by proposing reflections on the relational dynamics that underlie the construction of strategic networks. These dynamics result from top-down processes aimed at engaging socio-economic actors and politicians rather than bottom-up pressure exerted by them. Negotiation actions are then activated among all the actors involved, resulting in a well-coordinated and effective network. Finally, the discussion and conclusions of the study are presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 A brief declination of Roots Tourism (RT)

Roots Tourism (RT), often referred to as *Tourism of the Roots*, is a segment of the tourism market that focuses on visiting places significant to historical personal heritage or cultural identity. This phenomenon appears in the literature in many different ways because it encompasses various aspects of travel related to cultural heritage and personal ancestry. This variegated set of terms reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of the socio-economic phenomenon. Each term emphasizes different aspects of the experience and appeals to the motivations, interests, and expectations of travelers (Poria *et al.*, 2003; Coles *et al.*, 2005; Butler, 2015; Wagner, 2015; Basu, 2017; De Santana Pinho, 2018).

In literature, the RT concept is linked to other locutions:

- “Nostalgia tourism”, which refers to the emotional need to go back to family, visiting parents and childhood friends, in order to spend some quality time (Maslow, 1954);
- “Legacy tourism refers to “ancestral tourism” or “genealogy tourism” and has the same meaning (Gaudry, 2007);
- “Ethnic tourism” is concerned with travel to exotic cultural locations, such as places of the habitat of indigenous tribes, people, or adventures in general, not related to one’s roots in sentimental tourism (Tomczewska-Popowycz *et al.*, 2022; Kouchi *et al.*, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2020).

All of these locutions are detectable in the RT notion that embraces a touristic phenomenon “generated by migrants who leave their country of

origin and travel for vacation, often being away for a long time, or by their descendants who desire to visit and discover their family's land of origin. The trip and the stay in one's birthplace is a highly emotional experience: for the first generation, it becomes a way to research one's roots and to discover the places where one's ancestors lived, especially for those who have partially or completely lost their connection to their homeland (De Marchi and Mingotto, 2016; Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021).

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This type of tourism is significant in all countries around the world that have experienced important emigrational phenomena throughout their history. Due to the strong expansion of the phenomenon, which not only involves Italy but many other countries across the globe, different terms are used throughout the literature to describe this touristic phenomenon and its various aspects (Sorrentino *et al.*, 2022; Tomczewska-Popowycz *et al.*, 2022).

Above all, RT is closely related to the migratory flow phenomenon, which affected some countries suffering from economic hardship, in which people left their country of origin to seek their fortune abroad. This could include visiting the hometown of ancestors, places associated with a particular ethnic or cultural group, or sites that are important to personal or cultural history. The goals of RT are related to the chance to connect people with their past, learn more about heritage, and gain a deeper understanding of their cultural identity. Indeed, during their holidays, root tourists desire to visit their motherland to understand their ancestors' heritage and experience the lifestyles of their countries of origin.

In the state of the art, RT has been linked to many benefits, including (Durie *et al.*, 2006; Canestrino *et al.*, 2015; McKercher, 2016; Marschall, 2017; Backer, 2019; Cannas, 2022):

1. Cultural heritage promotion and preservation: Visiting places that are significant to heritage can help raise awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage, which can lead to its preservation.
2. Enhancing personal and cultural identity: By visiting places that are important to one's heritage, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their personal and cultural identity, which in turn can have a positive impact on their self-esteem and sense of belonging.
3. Reconnecting with family: It provides an opportunity for people to reconnect with their family members and learn about their ancestral history, or travel for family events such as weddings, family reunions, funerals, or meetings.
4. Promoting intercultural understanding: RT can promote the understanding and appreciation of different cultures, which can help foster greater tolerance for and respect for diversity.
5. Improving individual well-being and quality of life, such as medical and business tourism, where it is more convenient for immigrants to return to their motherland to receive cheaper medical treatment or more advantageous job offers.

The table below provides an examination of the concept of Roots Tourism as discussed in the relevant literature by various authors who have addressed the issue of Roots Tourism. Classification according to the main topics covered allows for mapping of areas of interest in relation to the broader reference area.

Tab. 1: *Roots Tourism in previous works*

Main Topic	Contributions	Authors
Roots Tourism (RT) - An Overall	RT focuses on visiting significant places related to personal heritage or cultural identity. It encompasses various travel aspects related to cultural heritage and personal ancestry	Poria <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Coles <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Butler, 2015; Wagner, 2015; Basu, 2017; De Santana Pinho, 2018
Identity Journeys of Italian Emigrants	RT among Italian emigrants, travel motivations and links to other tourism segments like retirement and residential tourism	Nicotera, T. (2021)
Sustainable Development in Italy	RT in the context of Italian emigrants or descendants revisiting their origins, its potential for sustainable development in rural areas	Cannas, R. (2022)
Nostalgia Tourism	Emotional need to return to family, visiting parents and childhood friends for quality time	Maslow, 1954
Legacy Tourism/ Ancestral Tourism	Similar to “genealogy tourism”, it involves visiting places significant to ancestral heritage	Gaudry, 2007
Ethnic Tourism	Travelling to exotic cultural locations, not necessarily related to one’s ancestral roots	Tomczewska-Popowycz, 2022; Kouchi <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Wong <i>et al.</i> , 2020
Migration and Roots Tourism	Migrants and their descendants as drivers for RT. Visiting their country of origin, often depends on emotional and familial connections	De Marchi and Mingotto, 2016; Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021
Benefits of Roots Tourism	Cultural heritage promotion, enhancing personal and cultural identity, reconnecting with family, promoting intercultural understanding, and improving individual well-being	Durie <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Canestrino <i>et al.</i> , 2015; McKercher, 2016; Marschall, 2017; Backer, 2019; Cannas, 2022

Source: our elaboration

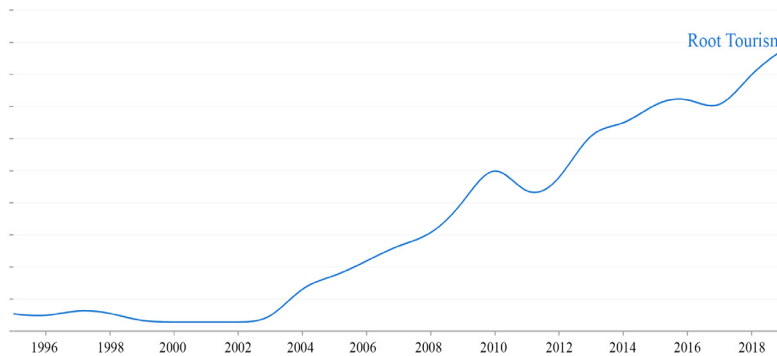
Based on the arguments outlined above, RT provides both personal and socio-economic benefits, playing a role in promoting cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging, and developing new tourism projects.

During our research process, to provide a strong but necessary structural composition of our literature review, we started with *Google Ngram Viewer*¹. This technique allows us to make the trends in the data clearer and easier to interpret, showing the frequency of how many times “Roots Tourism” terms appeared throughout the literature studies.

The graph (Figure 1. “Roots Tourism” *Google Ngram Viewer*) shows spikes and valleys of these terms and where they became popular, taken account by scholars. Moreover, scholars’ growing interest in this subject from 1995 to 2019 is not surprising.

¹ This is a tool that charts the frequencies of a word or a phrase of some sets of search strings. In this case, it charted the frequency of the words *Roots Tourism* using a yearly count of n-grams and it found some results in a published corpus of books over a specified period of time, between 1970 and 2019. In this context, we used the “smoothing” algorithm (equal to 3) that refers to a statistical technique needed to smooth out variations in the data and reduce noise in the results.

Fig. 1: "Roots Tourism" Google Ngram Viewer



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Source: our elaboration

Businesses, policymakers, and public authorities are becoming more aware of this form of tourism and about its touristic potential in terms of market attractiveness. RT has many peculiarities, but the most important one is being a tourism development tool for potential destinations affected by population loss.

2.2 The role of the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in shaping tourism development

Understanding the evolving landscape of the tourism industry, particularly in the context of Roots Tourism (RT), requires an in-depth examination of the multifaceted role of destination management organizations (DMOs). This literature review (Tab. 2) provides a brief overview of destination management organizations and demonstrates how this topic has impacted tourism development. In accordance with the views of Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), Minguzzi (2006) elucidated that the concept of destination management encompasses the unified administration of procedures essential for facilitating a reciprocal interaction between a destination and its visitors.

This section explores how DMOs manage stakeholders' engagement, navigate legal structures, and balance the intricate interplay between top-down and bottom-up approaches while also highlighting the transformative impact of emerging technologies on tourism management and marketing.

The involvement of DMOs highlights their crucial role in coordinating various stakeholder interactions in the tourism industry. Effective stakeholder engagement strategies and the integration of various management styles are mandatory for managing the underlying complexity and ensuring sustainable tourism development (Carrus and Melis, 2019; Humsona *et al.*, 2023).

Bono *et al.* (2023) emphasize the significance of integrating community involvement and heritage conservation into DMO strategies, highlighting the mutual intersection between cultural and institutional aspects. Dodds (2010) further discussed the role of DMOs in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of RT, particularly in promoting sustainable

practices and stakeholder collaboration. Governance structures are crucial for determining the extent to which DMOs effectively engage stakeholders. Sheehan *et al.* (2016) examined the vital link between the success of DMOs and their legal and governance frameworks. Borzyszkowski (2013) investigated the influence of legal and organizational structures on the functions and responsibilities of DMOs. This aligns with Zain and Zahari's (2023) findings regarding the impact of digital platforms on tourists' perceptions and intentions.

The synergy between bottom-up and top-down approaches within DMOs is central to effective tourism development. This is exemplified in Southeast Asia, where the implementation of regional autonomy demonstrates the practicality of these approaches. Furthermore, the role of DMOs in implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates their significant contribution to guiding tourism towards safety and maintaining stakeholder engagement. The significance of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning within DMOs is highlighted in a compelling case from Australia. Moreover, the complexity and challenges associated with this aspect of their operations have also been explored (Pforr and Brueckner, 2016). Additionally, the stakeholder engagement model in halal tourism ecosystems in rural areas was analyzed, emphasizing the importance of government regulations and active stakeholder involvement.

Tab. 2: A brief literature on DMOs

Year	Authors	Contributions	Themes
2010	Dodds	Destination marketing organizations and climate change-the need for leadership and education	Role of Destination Marketing Organizations in Addressing Climate Change with an Emphasis on Leadership and Education
2013	Borzyszkowski	Legal forms of modern destination management organization and their influence on the range tasks and responsibilities	Influence of legal and organizational forms on DMO tasks
2016	Pforr, Brueckner	The quagmire of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning: A case example from Australia	Challenges in stakeholder engagement in tourism planning
2016	Sheehan, Vargas-Sánchez, Presenza, & Abbate	The use of intelligence in tourism destination management: An emerging role for DMOs	Role of intelligence in DMOs and destination management
2019	Carrus, Melis	Stakeholder engagement in value co-creation processes: The case of some experiences in tourism	Importance of stakeholder engagement in tourism networks
2020	Seyhan, Russo	Top-down versus bottom-up approaches in heritage tourism management and planning: An analysis of contrasting models based on two Turkish case studies	Effectiveness of top-down and bottom-up approaches in heritage tourism
2023	Bono I Gispert, Anton Clavé, Casadesús Fa	The Internalization of Participation and Coherence Dimensions of Governance in Tourism Destination Management Organizations-An Exploratory Approach	Exploration of Governance Dimensions in Tourism DMOs with a focus on Participation and Coherence
2023	Wahab, Fudil, Zain, Zahari, Asyraf	Destination Management Organization (DMO) Website Features: Does Its Influence Users' Intention To Visit A Destination?	Examination of the Influence of DMO Website Features on Users' Intention to Visit a Destination
2023	Chatibura, Motshewa	Developing Virtual Tourism in the Wake of COVID-19: a Critical Function of Tourism Destination Management Organizations	Exploration of the Role of DMOs in Developing Virtual Tourism as a Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: our elaboration

It is essential to understand why the research group has adopted a Concrete Action System (CAS) framework. As mentioned, DMOs are perceived as economic actors with a formal mandate in pursuing a development project. They operate as contractors, have access to a specific and limited territorial area in order to define a clear destination, interact with few institutions, and aim to structure formal and active links between incoming and outgoing processes. Indeed, the concept of DMO was deconstructed and analyzed through the lens of the CAS model, since it can be understood as the outcome of an institutionalization process. In fact, a DMO can originate from directives issued by legal entities formally tasked with carrying out tourism development projects. Conversely, by delineating the typical activities of a CAS, it is possible to discern the formal and, above all, the informal processes that give rise to the formation of DMOs. An analysis of the internal dynamics of a CAS would allow us to identify both individual and collective actors (such as Institutional Entrepreneurs), who, with their interests and objectives, dedicate time and resources to the potential creation of a DMO, understood as a formal entity in its final form.

By describing the activities that define a CAS, the authors outline both formal and informal processes that lead to the creation of potential DMOs.

In the absence of a DMO in developing Roots Tourism, the adopted approach allows the identification of the dynamics within a CAS among individual and collective actors investing time and resources in the creation of proto-DMOs. Understanding these complex dynamics provides a more nuanced perspective on how DMOs come into being, highlighting the often overlooked informal processes that play a crucial role in their formation.

3. The Theoretical Framework: Neo-Institutionalism and the Concrete Action System (CAS) in Shaping an Organizational Field

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon and the limited availability of case studies on CAS for tourism development on an epistemological level, this study adopts the descriptive paradigm. This study aims to identify the components of a Concrete Action System (CAS). Through the descriptive approach, the actors involved at different institutional, social, and economic levels will be illustrated by outlining the role of the coordinating subject (or Institutional Entrepreneur).

The methodological level was conditioned by the epistemological options. The neo-institutionalist paradigm was used to identify the actors involved, including institutions, tourism businesses, and local communities, as well as the work carried out by an Institutional Entrepreneur to build coalitions and networks.

Adopting the neo-institutional perspective in Roots Tourism research provides valuable insights into how institutional frameworks shape stakeholder behaviors and decisions. This approach can become crucial in examining tourism dynamics, in which interactions between personal histories and institutional narratives of heritage are central. Institutions influence both the marketing and consumption of roots

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tourism experiences, making the neo-institutional perspective key to understanding these dynamics.

3.1 *The basis of the Neo-Institutional Perspective*

Neo-institutionalism is a theoretical perspective based on the role of institutions and their shaping function on human behavior and social outcomes, in which socio-economic actors tend to conform to institutional prescriptions and postulates. This approach is related to the processes of construction, destruction, and reconstruction of social reality, as well as the pressures exerted on individuals and organizations (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 2000; Bonazzi, 2002; Sparti, 2002; Mehtiyeva and Prince, 2020).

The focal point of this approach is based on human actions and the role played by socio-economic actors and stakeholders, acting bound by an institutional framework created over time and made up of a set of rules, procedures, and decisions (Carolillo *et al.*, 2013).

This is the keystone to understanding the neo-institutionalist theory, conceived as an approach to figure out the way in which institutional actions impact the behavior of individuals and groups, through the binding and enabling effects of formal and informal rules. It can be stated that the neo-institutionalist approach in organizational studies could help to understand the institutional environment as a set of rules, customs, institutions, and organizations, especially focusing on the complex dynamics of interactions among the various actors.

The *field of action*, therefore, emerges from individual and collective actors, becoming the essential result of a sedimentation of cognitive elements that find legitimacy in being adopted widely over time by the same actors who deviate from it, rather than in technical rationality (Costa and Nacamulli, 1996). Thus, the actor, both individual and/or collective, becomes the architect, albeit not entirely intentionally, of the environment itself in structuring the social reality to which he/she belongs. Therefore, the neo-institutionalist approach recognizes the concreteness and inescapability of the field of action, within which the relational plot between the actors takes shape.

In a scenario in which these different actors are simultaneously *agents and acted out*, the unit of analysis that acquires priority refers to the concept of Organizational Field (OF), described by Powell and DiMaggio as a “*recognized area of institutional life*” (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991), as a cross-result of the actions of a “*constellation of actors that comprise central organizing unit*” in a given context (Scott, 1995). According to Scott’s analysis, the concept of OF refers to “*a community of organizations that partakes a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with the actors outside the field*” (Scott, 1995).

To better understand the scope and centrality of this concept, we need to be aware that any OF appears as an immanent and *significant group* ‘concretely capable of acting’ aiming at creating and giving meaning to an intersubjective concept of the environment. In other words, an OF is

a network that acquires cognitive capacity once structured, such as the ability to influence the social, political, cultural, and economic systems with which it interacts.

The relationships between the actors in the field allow the production of a set of shared meanings among all the interacting actors, based on the common perception of organizations belonging to the same field. In an OF, all the actors involved are simultaneously the object and subject of the pressures that cross the field itself (Bonazzi, 2002). An OF assumes the dimension of 'contextualized space,' that is a "relational space that provides an organization with the opportunity to involve itself with other actors" (Wooten, Hoffman, 2008) to intercept more resources than those they would get standing alone.

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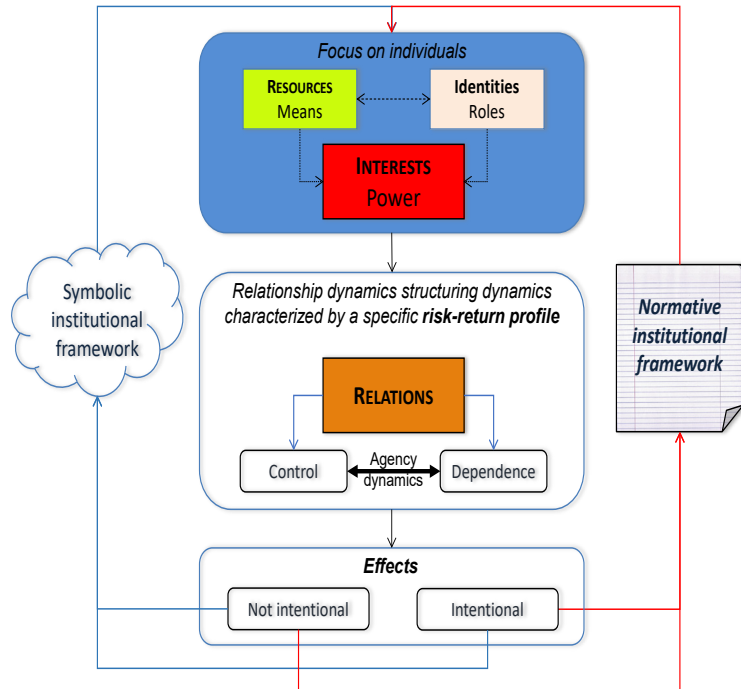
3.2 *The Concrete Action System (CAS)*

To exploit the opportunities derived from RT, the creation of an OF becomes crucial, by a Concrete Action System (CAS), capable of pooling the efforts and resources available to a series of key players, so-called Institutional Entrepreneurs (Buhalis and Westlake, 1993; Laws, 2004; Ateljevic *et al.*, 2007; Lew *et al.*, 2008; Gretzel, 2011; Fyall *et al.*, 2012; McCabe, 2014). CAS refers to a set of interactions between multiple agents acting on a common scope, accepting a criterion of rationality as the basis of any institutional framework (Crozier and Friedberg, 1978). In other words, the CAS refers to the ability of individual or collective actors to structure interactions according to their own interests and to exploit the constraints and opportunities of the context to establish, maintain, and expand the relative margins of maneuver and uncertainty. This intention can lead the actor to activate aggregation processes, emerging from the interaction of social actors as a result of a set of games, conflicts, negotiations, values, and rules as well as the tool of the strategic game that the actors involved implement (Nigro and Iannuzzi, 2017). Figure 2 shows a simplified scheme of a Concrete Action System.

The CAS model comprises three main components: actors, structures, and processes. Actors refer to individuals or groups involved in a particular social context, and they are seen as rational agents who make choices based on their goals and available resources. Structures are formal and informal institutions that shape their behavior, both symbolic and normative, providing actors with freedoms of action and constraints within which their choices are made. Processes are interactions that occur between actors and structures over time, relying on the agency dynamics of control/dependence, including negotiation, conflict, cooperation, and competition.

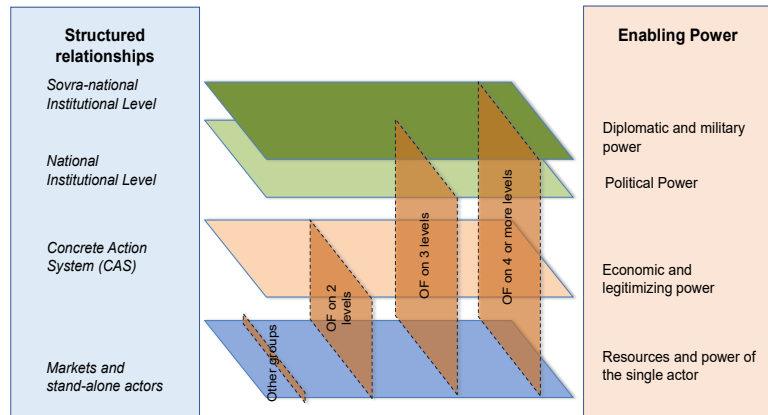
Overall, the CAS model provides a powerful tool for analyzing complex social phenomena and understanding how different actors and institutions shape one another's behavior. By breaking down social systems into their components, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that drive stand-alone actors to become networked (Table 3).

Fig. 2: A Concrete Action System Scheme



Source: Nigro, Iannuzzi, 2017.

Fig. 3: A Concrete Action System Scheme



Source: our own elaboration.

3.3 The Institutionalization of a Concrete Action System

Understanding the processes and mechanisms of structuring a CAS is the central theme of this study. Thus, it is appropriate to consider a procedural perspective, focusing on the analysis of two fundamental elements:

1. The nature and role of some key players, called *Institutional Entrepreneurs*;
2. The activities carried out by actors to define a certain institutional framework, constituting *Institutional Work*.

First, given the difficulties in building a CAS in the face of competition and to obtain the underlined opportunities in the tourism industry, it is necessary to define and analyze Institutional Entrepreneurs and their Institutional Work.

Institutional Entrepreneurs are individuals or organizations that play a key role in initiating and driving change within an institutional context. They work to create new institutional arrangements or modify existing ones to advance their goals and bring about societal transformations. They often challenge the *status quo*, and their actions can lead to changes in the formal and informal rules, norms, and practices that define an institutional field. What emerges, in particular, is how CAS may occur from the everyday activities of some practitioners struggling to accomplish their work, how it becomes sensemaking at the level of the context in which the same agents work, and how it operates in the industry in which their organization exists.

Indeed, Institutional Entrepreneurship (IE) is associated with the process of institutional change as an agent in charge of a specific role to create new arrangements or to alter existing ones to achieve their objectives. This can include the creation of new organizations, the development of new norms, or the revision of existing policies, as long as the actor has received sufficient resources. For this reason, they are capable of seeing an opportunity to realize interests with high value in the process aimed at the creation of a new system of meaning, which is related to the functioning of a set of different institutions (DiMaggio, 1988).

Recovering Coase's theory, institutional entrepreneurship is "*the activity of initiating, creating and leading organizations that specialize in developing institutional frameworks that lower transaction costs*" for other actors in the field (Coase, 1992). These actors usher in the Institutional Work (IW), and then, make use of a very large range of additional actors, whose role is to support and/or facilitate the efforts made by the former (Clemens, Cook, 1999). IW promotes IE and is structured by advocacy, public affairs, and lobbying strategies. They move 'in institutional corridors' to favor a relative income position for the plethora of other agents interested in the activities promoted by the CAS, or to legitimate the representation of their interests.

From these notes, it emerges that the neo-institutionalist theory, through the recognition of the concept of IW, deems it necessary to focus its attention on the process of construction, maintenance, breaking, and reconstruction of a framework that can define itself "institutional, temporarily bound and binding".

Alongside the process of aggregation carried out by the IE (a bottom-up process), it is important to underline the attempt of institutional players to be involved in the social and political debate, furnishing a clear example of participatory deliberation (a top-down process).

This motivation stems from the belief that those affected by political decisions play an active role in constructing the regulatory framework.

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Involvement in the political decision-making process reduces the risk of failure in such initiatives (Felt and Wynne, 2007).

The legitimacy of decisions comes from the existence of open debate (Felt and Wynne, 2007, 55), which makes the decision-making process 'democratic' and increases mutual trust, replacing a cynical spirit with a civic one (Regonini, 2005). Beyond these specific effects, participatory processes allow a broadening of the scope of decisions, making alternatives and methods more transparent. Deliberative participation creates a Concrete Action System mixed with public spaces in areas where limited and opaque exchange mechanisms would otherwise prevail. Nonetheless, there is a paradox in participatory practices in that they appeal indiscriminately to all citizens; however, in practice, it often involves only a very small minority.

However, a short-sighted reading should not be adopted; instead, we should seek in democratic involvement the best way to obtain *a priori* effective decisions without knowing the effectiveness of the actors. We wonder whether the choice to become involved does not in fact represent the first result of a negotiating game based on the enabling power of institutional actors.

The integration of these three components, together with the neo-institutionalist theory, is likely to explain how different stakeholders create a relational structure to develop "Roots Tourism" and a connected touristic destination brand.

In light of the above, the relationship between neo-institutionalism and "Roots Tourism" is explained by the cultural, economic, and political institutions of a country, since they could shape the perception of the country as a destination for "Roots Tourism" and the availability of resources and infrastructure to support it. Institutional norms and practices can also impact the types of experiences and interactions tourists have while visiting their ancestral homeland. Institutional norms and practices are likely to impact tourists' experiences and interactions while visiting their ancestral homeland.

So, "Roots Tourism" could contribute to the institutionalization of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural norms and practices. In conclusion, "Roots Tourism" becomes more popular and influential, it is likely to create a demand for cultural preservation and representation, and to lead to the creation of new institutions, policies, and practices, aimed at promoting and supporting cultural and touristic heritage.

3.4 Roots Tourism read by the neo-institutionalist perspective

Some aspects of tourism intersect significantly with the neo-institutional theory, as demonstrated in a few studies (Tab. 3) focusing on sustainable tourism and the circular economy within the industry (Alonso-Muñoz *et al.*, 2022). The neo-institutional framework emphasizes the significant impact of Institutional Environments, including governmental policies, cultural norms, and economic structures, on the patterns of tourism production and consumption, particularly in distinctive niches such as Roots Tourism (Vargas-Sánchez, 2021).

Applying this perspective allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of how roots tourism evolves and is influenced by broader socio-economic factors. This leads to a more holistic comprehension of its impact and potential for sustainable community development.

Tab. 3: Neo-Institutional perspectives on Tourism dynamics

Main Topic	Contribution	Authors
An Institutional Perspective on the concept of Sustainability in Tourism	Sustainable tourism in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 integrated with the neo-institutional theory	Alonso-Muñoz <i>et al.</i> , (2022)
Tourism Industry under a Circular Economy	Transformation of the tourism industry under circular economy principles, guided by the neo-institutional theory	Vargas-Sánchez (2021)
The Neo-Institutional Theory in Tourism Research	Discussion about the underutilized potential of the neo-institutional theory in tourism research and exploration of how it can be applied to analyze various phenomena in tourism (legitimacy, isomorphism, dissociation, hybridization, and categorization)	Falaster <i>et al.</i> , (2017)

Source: our elaboration

The neo-institutionalist perspective provides to the RT context a set of contributions:

- Explanation of institutional influences: The neo-institutional theory helps to explain how institutional norms and practices shape the development and growth of “Roots Tourism”, as well as the experiences and interactions of tourists visiting their ancestral homeland;
- Understanding power dynamics: The neo-institutional theory highlights the role of power and politics in shaping institutional norms and practices. This perspective can help shed light on the power dynamics involved in the development and growth of “Roots Tourism”, including the influence of local and national institutions, governments, and other stakeholders.
- Analysis of institutional change: The neo-institutional theory provides a framework for analyzing how institutions change over time in response to external pressures and internal processes. This perspective is likely to help the understanding of how “Roots Tourism” and cultural heritage institutions evolve and adapt to changes in cultural, economic, and political contexts.
- Emphasis on organizational culture: The neo-institutional theory strongly emphasizes the role of organizational culture and practices in shaping institutional norms. This perspective can help to understand how the culture and practices of “Roots Tourism” organizations, such as tour operators, heritage sites, and local communities, contribute to the development and growth of “Roots Tourism”;
- Synergic collaboration between different actors: in this kind of organization, there are some protagonists that are involved in the development process of touristic networks (City/Town Hall, Pro-loco, Regions, and Associations);

- Confined touristic Organizational Field: Organizational Field is a concept developed by Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio. It refers to the set of organizations and institutionalized norms, values, and practices that define a particular organizational domain. This concept highlights the importance of the external environment in shaping organizational behavior and decision-making. In other words, organizations are not isolated entities but are shaped by the context in which they exist and interact with other organizations. In this particular case, “Rete Destinazione Sud” is an inter-connected Organizational Field composed of: Rete di Imprese (Business network), Rete di Destinazioni (Destination Network), Reti di Portali (Web Portal Network), Startup innovative (Innovative Startup), Rete di Commercializzazione (Marketing Network) and Rete di Relazioni (Network of Relations);
- The neo-institutional theory highlights the importance of legitimacy in shaping institutional norms and practices. This perspective can help us understand how “Roots Tourism” is perceived and evaluated by different stakeholders and how the legitimacy of “Roots Tourism” practices and institutions impacts their development and growth (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and Di Maggio 1991).

When we talk about Organizational Field (OF) in a tourism context, we refer, in general, to the set of organizations and institutionalized norms, values, and practices that define the tourism industry as a whole. It encompasses all the various organizations, institutions, and actors involved in the development, promotion, and delivery of tourism services, as well as the norms and practices that shape the behavior of these organizations and actors. It provides a framework for analyzing the competitive dynamics of the tourism industry and the role of power and politics in shaping the development of the field.

In the tourism context, overall, in “Roots Tourism”, the Organizational Field includes a wide range of organizations, such as hotels, tour operators, attractions, and transportation companies, as well as government agencies, industry associations, and other institutions involved in promoting and regulating tourism (entrepreneurs, associations, foundations, community initiatives). These organizations are connected through a system of relationships such as contracts, regulations, and shared norms and practices that shape the behavior of individual organizations and the development of the field as a whole.

The Organizational Field of tourism also interacts with a broader set of institutions, such as the global economy, cultural norms, and political systems that shape the development of the tourism industry. The interplay between these actors and institutions creates a complex and dynamic environment that shapes the growth, development, and competitiveness of the tourism industry.

The acknowledged importance of “Roots Tourism” leads municipalities to give life to some cultural initiatives and to create events dedicated to the migrants who return to their homeland for vacations, holidays, or patronal festivals.

“Roots Tourism” is considered an important tourist segment, also in potential terms, by local administrators, especially in small centers; in

fact, these local administrators consider their cities to be attractive tourist destinations for Roots Tourists.

The main reasons for the trip, especially in Italy, are meeting relatives and friends, researching the origin's family, and so on.

According to the Neo-institutionalist perspective, Pro-Loce, as well as other voluntary local associations, are involved in the organization of tourism and cultural events, fairs, concerts, shows, coordinating, and sharing a summer calendar with tourist operators and other associations in the territory.

"Roots Tourism" is an international phenomenon, and it can be demonstrated by the level of institutional involvement. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI - Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale) is working towards the development of "Roots Tourism" in Italy.

In addition, Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo (ENIT) is involved in the Roots Tourism interest in Italy, studying the flow connection to Roots Tourism and other promotional activities.

There is also a Confederation of Italians around the World (Confederazione degli Italiani nel Mondo), an organization showing a strong interest in Italian descendants, emigrants with some proposals on the topic of "Roots Tourism" (Ferrari and Nicotera, 2021).

As previously stated, the concept of the Organizational Field is useful for understanding the drivers of change and innovation in the tourism industry, as well as for exploring the relationships between organizations and the broader institutional context.

In line with the theoretical framework and model in Figure 2, the institutionalization of the network of the "Roots Tourism" sector passes through the work of individual and collective actors, in which, in various capacities, they have contributed both to the configuration of the OF and the current institutional, regulatory, and symbolic framework. This approach highlights the role played by social actors in this process, due to the relative negotiating power that enables the action, that is, the aggregations and associations between economic operators and consumers in the "Roots Tourism" sector and the relative negotiating weight that they manage to exercise carving out their own decision-making processes.

In our opinion, the analysis of the OF requires a double focus to classify the actors and the actions they undertake: 1) the domain of politics in terms of multi-functionality; 2) the convergence of the interests of the "Roots Tourism" actors to create synergies that enhance local resources.

The guidelines refer to a double level of negotiation involving actors, protagonists, and minors in the institutionalization process.

- The first level emerges among actors - be they local, national, or supranational - sometimes in competition, contributing to the reconfiguration of the domain of policies.
- the second level contributes to affirm the alternative sectoral circuits due to the collective actors (for example, due to the activation of alternative circuits for local action promoted by associations and movements expressing the interests of the actors in "Roots Tourism").

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4. Case Study - Rete Destinazione Sud²: a Challenging Way to Networking

“Today we can no longer compete alone in a globalized World and, above all, we can no longer compete with traditional tools and with often significant structural and infrastructural gaps. Some diseconomies and some gaps can be bridged with a network system capable of developing synergies and generating economies and value”.

Michelangelo Lurgi - President of “Rete Destinazione Sud”.

4.1 The idea of “Rete Destinazione Sud”

“Rete Destinazione Sud” (RDS) is an innovative start-up project based on the creation of tourist destinations with cooperation among companies, institutions, associations, consortia, and different types of stakeholders from the territories of Southern Italy.

It was founded in 2014 by a group of Southern Italian tourism entrepreneurs from Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, and Puglia to create a regional network in which different socio-economic stakeholders, as well as different typologies of institutional and non-institutional actors, could enhance territorial resources and cultural heritage.

The focal point of this valuable case study is made up of the idea to create an Expo of “Italianness” (Brochure - 2023 Anno del Turismo di Ritorno).

As a result of the collaboration and authorizations of the Italian Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Rete Destinazione Sud” has the potential to become a wide-ranging project, thanks to the promotion of events and activities, taken up by the RDS website and listed below:

- Presentation in major tourism and agri-food trade fairs in the world, in collaboration with business networks, consortia, associations that have already joined the initiative, and with ENIT (National Italian Tourism Bureau).
- Initiatives involving the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad;
- Presentations to Italian associations and foundations in the world;
- Presentations in all the Italian regions and municipalities, already joining the project;
- Promotion of networks of companies that work with foreign countries already adhering to the initiative;
- Fostering television and radio networks abroad that have already expressed their willingness to support and promote initiatives.
- Constituting networks of honorary consuls in Italy;
- Collaboration with Italian consulates and embassies abroad in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Farnesina.
- Developing networks with Italian universities.

This project consists of a complex combination and synergy among different kind of networks: Rete di Imprese (Business network), Rete di Destinazioni (Destination Network), Reti di Portali (Web Portal Network), Start-up innovative (Innovative Start-up), Rete di Commercializzazione

² <https://www.retedestinationsud.it/>

(Marketing Network) and Rete di Relazioni (Network of Relations).

Due to this synergic collaboration, RDS created a brand, “*Sud Italia*”, known also internationally, by planning websites and web portals in order to share information about activities, social and cultural events for compatriots who live abroad, interested and willing to be up-dated on the latest events or to know better the places where their ancestors departed from.

The managerial organizational structure of the project initiative is composed in the following way:

- 3 teams activated and setting up the project, the activities program and the coordination of the National Committee;
- A national coordination committee;
- A regional coordination committee;
- A scientific-technical committee;
- A participatory foundation, responsible for promoting and following the development of the project.

RDS developed a model capable of involving companies, entrepreneurs, local administrators, and public and private operators in the construction of a system that can transform a destination into a touristic product that can be replicated in national and international markets, as well as in all the realities of Southern Italy (Figure 4).

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Fig. 4: “Rete Destinazione Sud” structured model



Source: translated from <https://www.retedestinazione.it/la-rete/>

Among the various initiatives, the network promotes RT, soliciting the interests of all network players and, at the same time, third parties.

In particular, the network is engaged in the creation of a shared strategic project for the animation and promotion of social, economic, cultural, and tourist development based on the definition of a “*Model of destination*”.

Indeed, in the two-year period 2012-2013 a series of meetings among entrepreneurs from Southern Italy was held, with the aim of verifying the conditions for the creation of a single development project for the South, and in November 2013 a two-day event on tourism, called “Destination South - Analysis and planning for tourism” was conceived and organized.

Driven by the results obtained from this last event, a discussion was opened among the participants and those who had taken part in the initiative of October 2012: “Let’s put the Territory on the Net”. The result is a multi-regional aggregation project that sets a program and objectives to stimulate confrontation with all entrepreneurs in Southern Italy.

Evaluations emerged from this experience, comprising over 40 presentation meetings organized by Dr. Michelangelo Lurgi throughout Southern Italy (Salerno, Cosenza, Bari, Taranto, Cagliari, Olbia, Potenza, Matera, Grottaglie, etc.) and led to the birth of the RDS in May 2014, with a notarial act at the headquarters of Confindustria in Salerno. The Network was officially presented at the National Press Conference in July 2014 at the headquarters of Confindustria in Rome.

4.2 “Rete Destinazione Sud” as a Concrete Action System

Consistent with the theoretical framework, in which the interaction between the individual and collective actors contributes to the structuring of a Concrete Action System characterized by the convergence of a specific interest, RDS emerges from the activation of relations among actors who are already part of it and who have the purpose of grabbing the opportunities coming from RT (Tab. 4). Indeed, all actions starting in 2014 and persisting in the following years (memorandum of understanding, agreements, and conventions with institutions, GAL, etc.) are the premise for the configuration of a CAS, as previously reported.

As mentioned, the CAS refers to the ability of individual or collective actors to structure interactions according to their own interests, to exploit the constraints and opportunities of the context, and to establish, maintain, and expand the relative margins of maneuver and uncertainty.

Tab. 4: Actors involved in Rete Destinazione Sud - Year 2021

Actors	No.
<i>Institutional Entrepreneurs</i> - Lurgi M., Formica M., De Simone M., Scapolatiello L.	
<i>National Promoting Committee</i>	
- Municipalities	509
- National Organizations: Associations - Federations - Development Agencies	16
- Organizations of national importance: Foundations	11
- National Organizations: Business Networks - Consortia - Network - DMC	22
- Other Regional and National Bodies and Associations	33
- Regional organizations: Gal - Mountain Communities - Parks	17
- Organizations of Italians in the World	54
- Others who have expressed interest in supporting the initiative	19
<i>Total number of actors involved</i>	<i>681</i>

Source: our elaboration

The process which led to the configuration of the network starts from the first project, “*I Turismi*”, promoted by Confindustria, Federmanager and Fondirigenti, in collaboration with industrial associations of the South, establishing itself in the first phase as a network of companies. In 2019, the network evolved by starting the establishment of an innovative SRL, in which several members, who were part of the National Promoting Committee, became part of the nascent start-up³. In 2021, the Configuration of the National Promoting Committee consists of over 650 Italian Municipalities, representing 93 Italian Provinces, already formally joining the committee of the project, as well as the most important associations and foundations. Today, it has gone from national to international and is currently made up of over 1, 250 institutions and over 11, 000 private individuals.

The governance model of RDS is designed to promote a collaborative approach to sustainable tourism development between public and private entities, aimed at facilitating sustainable tourism in the southern regions of Italy, in which all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process and work together to achieve common goals. The network is governed by a board of directors, including representatives from various stakeholder groups, such as local communities, tour operators, hoteliers, associations, foundations, and other tourism industry stakeholders.

This initiative is so meaningful and significant that the press was interested in this topic, publishing a large number of articles in newspapers and online magazines, underlying the growth and expansion of this entrepreneurial strategy. The relevance of the network has been emphasized by the attention of third actors in the initiative, constituting a real CAS.

The motivation behind the choice to build a network has undoubtedly been found in the need to connect all the actors around a common project, which would allow everyone, despite the heterogeneity of interests in the field, to derive effective benefits for themselves and for the reference area.

The strength and the replicability of the model launched lies in two innovative factors:

1. Bottom-up approach, that is, from the direct involvement of the actors of the entire territorial offer made up of the operators of tourism, oenology, agri-food, and crafts.
2. The integration between territorial tourism promotion and electronic commerce, giving life to the first integrated Marketplace solution built around the identity of the territories.

“We are convinced that our project responds to two fundamental needs, too often ignored. The first need is to give life to NEW promotional models of the integrated territorial offer, MODELS DEVELOPED TOGETHER with local operators and built AROUND THE IDENTITY and

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³ The National Promoting Committee are listed below:

- Municipalities; organizations of national importance: associations - federations - development agencies
- Organizations of national importance: Foundations
- Organizations of national importance: business networks - consortia - networks
- Other bodies and associations of regional and national relevance
- Organizations of regional importance: Gal - mountain communities - parks
- organizations of Italians in the world
- other subjects who have expressed an interest in supporting the initiative.

for the sustainability of the territories. The second need is to intercept the question where it arises, in order not to abandon it to global platforms that have no interest in enhancing the richness and diversity of Italian heritage, represented by tourism, food and wine, made in Italy". (Michelangelo Lurgi, CEO of Giroauto Travel Sas, Confindustria Salerno, "Mettiamo in rete il territorio").

Moreover, the particularity of this project is inspired by the interplay between the *bottom-up* and *top-down* approaches, which gives the network of local actors a form of legitimacy through the institutional recognition of their actions.

The actions proposed by the network not only go in the direction of strengthening relations, but mostly in the attempt to contribute (by taking an active part) to the decision-making process or political debate. Furthermore, the relational dynamics that led to the structuring of the network allow for governance to structure the IW through public affairs, lobbying strategies, and pressures, directly moving in institutional corridors to favor an active position for them and, at the same time, legitimize the representation of their interests. With these relational dynamics, we refer to *bottom-up* actions of IW, as briefly described below.

Among the initiatives, we can mention the actions aimed at acquiring legitimacy to act, both at a social and juridical level (i.e., signing memoranda of understanding). It would be interesting to take into consideration the actions undertaken by the founding actors of the network on the national territory of afference, undoubtedly aimed at creating a single system legitimized to act in the institutional field. The reference is to all the memoranda of understanding signed with the Italian Regions and Municipalities (Southern Italy and the Islands), with particular reference to the 2023-2028 Return Programme. The choice of the form of memorandum of understanding appears emblematic from an organizational point of view because they configure a juridical institution with guiding value, aimed at orienting strategic actions on objectives shared by the parties that share common interests.

Furthermore, the Creation of the "Tourism and Destinations Forum" which, to date, envisages the participation of 150 Speakers and over 1500 including stakeholders, opinion leaders, institutions, companies, consortia, foundations, associations, and citizens involved in discussing touristic topics regarding Southern Italy. All these actors are called to plan improvement actions, try to understand the advantages, and improve the organization in view of catching resources and optimizing results.

The debate among actors continues on social networks (with particular reference to the Facebook social channel) as a place for discussion and comparison of the convergence of ideas, interests, and objectives to be implemented at the institutional level.

To reinforce the institutional role of the network, RDS requested and received, regarding the "2023 Year of Return Tourism" Initiative, participation in the Conference of Regions (May 2022) and granted patronage to the entire initiative with a favorable opinion from the tourism councillors of all the Italian regions.

The various initiatives aimed at involving local institutions concerned with RT converge in the establishment of a National Technical-Scientific Committee, with the participation of sector experts, to better formalize the institutional role in representing common interests and, at the same time, widespread throughout the territory.

In the field of IW, actions can also take the form of pressure on Institutional and Political authorities so that they can influence the decision-making process.

A recent example in the history of the network is the Audition at the Senate of the Italian Republic at the Commission for Industry in December 2021, in which President Michelangelo Lurgi was summoned to a hearing at the Presidency of the X Committee. On that occasion, he presented the initiative “2023 Year of Return Tourism Initiative. Discovering the Roots” and explained the necessity of interventions in the redevelopment of many villages in Italy.

In the same way, the network presented the “Return to Italy 2023-2028 Project” in Brussels at the headquarters of the European Parliament, to highlight the program to the Representatives of the European Parliament.

As a result of these actions, it is interesting to note recent initiatives promoted by institutional bodies with the aim of involving the network in the political debate with a view to defining sector policies.

By way of illustration, we can consider their participation at the headquarters of the Chamber of Deputies in the halls of parliamentary groups in June 2022. During that parliamentary sitting, the network presented the “2023 Year of Return Tourism” to government representatives and ministries.

Valuable of being mentioned is also the recent Convocation of audition in the Senate of the Republic in December 2021, in which RDS was summoned to debate on the topic “PNRR Borghi”, as an expert of the sector issues.

Both *bottom-up* and *top-down* processes contribute to defining the ideal boundaries of the ‘contextualized space’ - an OF in an Institutional perspective - in which all the actors involved are, at the same time, object and subject of the pressures that cross the field itself (Bonazzi, 2002).

5. Final Remarks

In a socio-economic context, roots tourism could be an economic and social enhancement tool. Thus, our study has shown the important role of the engagement of diverse actors and stakeholders interested in structuring a network able to pursue tourism development through territorial heritage and through the interest of descendants regarding their own origins and knowledge of the places of their ancestors.

Furthermore, organizational coordination by a Concrete Action System (CAS) could accelerate and amplify institutional change to face the challenge of intercepting the opportunities derived from a new segment market. Following the analysis of the concepts of Organizational Field (OF), Concrete Action System (CAS), Institutional Entrepreneurship (IE),

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and Institutional Work (IW), we can conclude that the birth of networks between entrepreneurs, socio-economic actors of the territory, and multi-level institutional actors can give life to important entrepreneurial initiatives (as did RDS) to start new and significant governance models for the socio-economic development of places that have suffered migratory flows some time ago.

The case study could be considered the first multi-level account of an interplay between managerial practices, organizations' goals, and institutional logics, aiming to support tourism development. In this study, we observed two interactive processes. First, institutional change could arise from the "periphery" of the large tourism field because agents engaged in the Concrete Action System are going to play an important role at the institutional level. Furthermore, the policymaker requires active interpretation at a local level encouraging, in this way, more and more effort to be made by the agents.

The present work has yielded important insights into why, where, and how CAS-like RDS might be helpful in fostering tourism promotion, especially in the presence of institutional voids. Indeed, building markets is neither easy nor unproblematic, and if the RT is considered a new vital segment for the Italian economy, the opportunities derived from it cannot be relegated to a local or organizational arrangement level.

An epistemological comprehensive paradigm (rather than the adopted one) might shift the focus towards the motivations and interests of the diverse actors involved in constructing the CAS, beginning with the Institutional Entrepreneur. This approach highlights incentive and disincentive factors, which are useful in designing policies and strategies that align the interests of the actors with the tourism development objectives of a territory. Notwithstanding, the adoption of the neo-institutionalist perspective enables the surfacing and interpretation of dynamics such as isomorphism and free-riding. The CAS activated thus far relies on Institutional Entrepreneurs' activism without requiring financial resources from the actors involved in program implementation. The CAS plans to intercept financial resources from regional, national, and European institutions for tourism development in disadvantaged areas, such as Southern Italy's EU Objective 1 Regions, with confidence.

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