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Placetelling® as a Strategic Tool for Promoting Niche Tourism to Islands: The Case of Cape Verde

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Abstract: This paper reports on the experience of the first Placetelling® training course in Santo Antão and Santiago, Cape Verde, promoted by Società Geografica Italiana and Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso. Placetelling® is a particular type of storytelling of places that promotes local development and helps to develop a sense of identity and belonging among the members of the community. Indeed, Placetelling® supports local communities to become directly engaged in the preservation of their common legacy in order to transmit it to coming generations. Tourism is the field where Placetelling® can best express its potential. This is particularly true for what concerns tourism to islands. The paper shows the first results of what we can define as a "maieutic reworking of local heritage" in Cape Verde, through the sharing of narrative and symbolic artifacts. Special attention will be dedicated to some crucial issues: The involvement of stakeholders through the lenses of empowerment, the discrepancies between how sense of identity is perceived by the locals and how it is communicated to tourists, and how and to what extent Placetelling® can change stakeholders' awareness of their own cultural heritage.

Keywords: Placetelling®; local heritage; islands; sustainable tourism; Cape Verde

1. Introduction

This research was conceived within the theoretical and methodological debate about Placetelling® and, more specifically, that it is inherent in the strategic role that Placetelling® can play in defining tourism-driven trajectories for local development. Reflections in this essay were inspired by two thematic pillars: Firstly, we considered which typologies of identity narratives could be identified depending on the purposes to be pursued and, secondly, we analyzed islandness as a complexifying variable in outlining new effective strategies for identity narratives.

Placetelling® is a method to create place narratives, a strategic asset to support communication and promotional processes. It was launched in 2016 thanks to the cooperation between the Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (European University Center for Cultural Heritage, depositary of the trademark) and the University of Salento. In 2017, the first School of Placetelling® took place at the University of Salento. Since then, two other editions have been organized, as well as a number of scientific and popular events. The main aim of the School of Placetelling® is to train a specialized professional, namely, the placeteller, who is an expert in the field of place-oriented storytelling, able to enhance places for their peculiar identities.

In this essay, we report the experience and the early results of the Placetelling® training course held in Santiago and Santo Antão, Cape Verde.

Cape Verde is an archipelagic state in the North Atlantic Ocean made up of 10 volcanic islands with a total population of more than 500,000.

Because of its strategic location (500 km from Senegal, close to the major north-south routes), it was colonized by Portugal in the 15th century, and became one of the most important slave trade centers. Since its independence, gained in 1975, Cape Verde has been one of the most stable African states, both economically and politically, yet it faces a number of geographic, economic, and social disadvantages because of which it is categorized by UN (United Nations) as SIDS (Small Islands Developing Countries) [1]. Hence, because of the severe lack of natural resources, the Cape Verdean economy is mainly based on development aid, foreign investments, remittances, and tourism [2]. Indeed, it is correct to say that the Cape Verdean economy is tourism-driven, largely depending on Eurozone countries. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estatistica Cabo Verde, tourism flows to the archipelago have increased significantly in the last decade; in 2017, more than half of the tourists came from four European countries (United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Holland) [3].

Although Cape Verde offers a wide variety of environmental and cultural resources, it is considered as a mere seaside destination, with severe impacts on resource shortage and landscape deterioration processes [4]. The current economic reforms, intended to diversify the economy in order to attract foreign investments and to boost employment, also include strategies to diversify tourism supply according to the principle of sustainable tourism, oriented to the crucial aim to preserve territorial carrying capacity [5,6].

Besides being the first occasion for testing Placetelling® abroad, this experience triggered both epistemological reflections and provided pragmatic evidence with regard to the relevance of the territorial element (in this case, islandness) and of identity in outlining shared, bottom-up narratives of the place and, consequently, how these elements could converge towards an effective strategic tool for local development. Place narratives for sustainable tourism are a pertinent example.

The essay starts with a theoretical overview regarding the intrinsic relationship between Placetelling® and sustainability, especially for what concerns cultural sustainability and how it can be interpreted considering the specific case of island tourism with its peculiar criticalities. Therefore, the taxonomy of place narratives and the mutual link between place narratives and nissology represent, in this specific study, a crucial issue. The link between Placetelling® and sustainability is self-evident: It arises from the need to build a narrative mechanism that makes the local community aware of the mutual relationship that binds it to the place. Such a reciprocity makes the local community a distinctive social organism. The adjective "local", in fact, means that the community is such when it recognizes itself in a territory and represents itself in symbiosis with it.

Secondly, we introduce the Placetelling® methodological framework, underlining its peculiar multidisciplinarity: Placetelling® is inspired by a prescriptive geographical approach, but it shows a robust attitude to hybridization concerning both theoretical aspects (e.g., semiotics, media studies, sociology) and practical applications (e.g., video making, photography, creative writing). Finally, we present the experience of the first Placetelling® training course in Cape Verde, which took place in April 2019 within the project "Cabo Verde: Historia, Cultura e Ambiente para um Turismo Sustentàvel", promoted by Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso and Fundacão Amilcar Cabral and funded by the European Union. The training course was designed by geographers from University of Salento (Lecce, Italy) and University of Tor Vergata (Rome).

Though the project has only just finished, some early results are already available. These results, which also represent the direct output of the training course, are intended to be the first step towards the development of a shared promotional strategy to be implemented by all the local operators according to the principles of sustainable tourism.

2. Theoretical Framework

The scientific reflection about Placetelling® is quite recent and, due to its potential multidisciplinary applications, it encompasses a wide range of suggestions. An essential trait is the relationship between sustainable tourism and Placetelling® and, in particular, how the enhancement of local bottom-up narratives could favor the development of new forms of sustainable tourism within a SIDS context.

UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) pays close attention to the relation between tourism and SIDS. Starting from numbering the "three key characteristics: Small size, with implications for pressure on resources and limited economic diversity; remoteness and isolation, leading to challenges for trading but also to a unique biodiversity and cultural richness; and a maritime environment, leading to strong tourism assets but vulnerability to climate change", sustainable tourism, intended as a kind of tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of the visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities is presented as a supporting tool for local development [7]. The scientific debate mirrors the prescriptive framework outlined within international organizations and offers theoretical robustness to the complexity of the issue. Only to cite the most recent studies, attention was paid to the analysis of the determinants of tourism toward SIDS, to the links between tourism and social issues, and to the way tourism affects environmental systems [8–11].

In addition, many social scientists have underlined the persistence of a sort of colonialist relationship between many SIDS with a colonial history and their former colonizing countries [12–14]. This calls into question a fourth dimension of sustainability, namely, cultural sustainability, defined as the effort "to respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions, and distinctiveness of host communities". [15]. Such a statement appears particularly urgent if we consider tourism in relation to globalization, and we grasp not only its dimension as an economic phenomenon, but also as a social habitus fed by the desire to experience otherness in its many manifestations [16]. The resulting cultural interaction, however, can be corrupted by asymmetries that often have geo-economic genesis, and in the context of which we observe the action of dominant cultures capable not only of modifying the behaviors and lifestyles of the host community but also of contributing directly or indirectly to an exogenous and instrumental re-territorialization of the places of tourism. In the specific case of SIDS, as will be explained below, there is traditionally a prevalence of globalitarian forms of tourism, in which the need to attract capital induces a complete adaptation of tourist supply to global demand; the consequence is 'topophagy', a de-territorializing action whereby places become non-places [17,18].

On these bases, we argue that place narratives are deeply entwined with local sustainable development. Such an observation lies on a post-structuralist interpretation of development, and the attention paid by post-structuralist scholars to the quest for discourses, explanations, theories, and descriptions which are contextual and, consequently, plural [19]. These narratives are expected to be self-centered and representative of the local communities, so as to be functional to contrast what defines "imaginary geographies", often disseminated by dominant cultures.

3. Methodology for Identity Narratives

3.1. Orientative Narratives, Attractive Narratives, Hyperconnective Narratives

Hence, place narratives have a territorializing power, as they act as determinants within local development processes which are, in turn, immersed in complex systems of local relations. Questioning the implications that the narratives of a place, according to its hetero-directed or self-centered nature, have on the processes of territorial development, requires us to go beyond a purely semiotic investigation to try to understand how these implications materialize within a specific space, how they "take place". In this, the perceptive dimension referring to complex identity systems, within which the processes of construction, negotiation, and renegotiation of meanings take place is relevant. This is especially true when we focus not only on the fruition, but also on the modes of active perception of the dominant narrative, as well as on the forms of production of alternative and place-based narratives stemming from everyday life.

There are at least three typologies of place narratives, which can converge and/or diverge: Orientative, attractive, and hyperconnective.

Orientative narratives [20] stem from the territory for the territory, in order to build or rebuild its own identity dimension and hand it on to forthcoming generations, so as to make them aware of

their heritage as well as make them responsible for its protection and enhancement [21]. Orientative narratives are based on two fundamental skills: "To make local community" and "nurture amor loci" [22]; these two skills are conditio sine qua non for setting off a sustainable, shared, "contextualized patrimonialization" [23]. This form of narrative is useful to guide or re-orient both individual and collective attitudes towards the local, in order to make them coherent and functional to a full comprehension of change processes occurring at local and global scale. In other words, it supports the resilience of local systems and, therefore, their capacity to adapt to changes in the global scenario, improving competitive performance and wealth levels among local community members.

Orientative narratives are focused on the quality of social networks, landscapes, heritage safeguarding, culture, and history, and consider local community as the core and the crucial element in designing strategies for the enhancement of the characteristic features of a place. The expressive forms generally used aim to give an overview made up of anecdotes and everyday stories considered as unique and essential, which are often hidden from and unknown to outsiders; such stories are chosen and recovered by local actors themselves (citizens, tour operators, local authorities), who show a proactive attitude towards a shared comprehension of symbols and values, as well as strengthening cohesion starting from the sense of belonging.

This kind of narrative, which underlies the rebuilding of a sense of belonging among the members of a local community as well as heritage regeneration, can in turn generate attractive narratives [1]. Attractive narratives are intended to transmit identity features to those who belong to other cultures and other contexts, so as to increase territorial attractiveness and stimulate a mutual empathic relationship [1]. As a consequence, functional cultural mediations are established, in order to respond to a touristic demand which is: (1) relational—the sharing of the same relational space favors interaction between tourist and territory and allows the former to develop a direct, not mediated, awareness of place cultural values; (2) experiential—a large part of intangible cultural heritage is accessible only through its local community. Therefore, interaction with the local community allows the tourist to experience the place in its intangible aspects; and (3) sustainable—it is not the territory that adapts to the needs of tourist flows; on the contrary, the tourist lives an immersive experience, a community experience, respectful of place values and environment. It is a community-involved approach for three reasons:

(1) Local community itself, as keeper of the intangible cultural heritage and cultural medium between tourist and territory, becomes the main territorial attractivity;

(2) Through awareness raising and empowerment, local community becomes the real protagonist of tourism supply, by managing, individually or collectively, the overall tourism services. For instance, we refer to the community hotel model as a strategy to reuse residents' houses as accommodation [20,21]. In general, the local community takes the lead in maintaining a territorial heritage that would otherwise be lost, and boosts active enhancement processes in order to contain both the decline of places—especially those facing abandonment and severe depopulation trends—and a museum-like approach to the preservation of whatever is considered as "authentic" [24].

Attractive narratives see the tourist as a "temporary" citizen who is "encouraged/invited" to: (1) Taste local foods and drinks originating in an invaluable, anciently rooted tradition [25]; (2)explore the history of the place through the in-depth knowledge of tangible and intangible assets layering within the territory; and (3) live the habits, handicrafts, celebrations, all the possible itineraries and workshops, sharing emotions and inclusive and original experiences with the local community.

Different from the first two narratives, the hyperconnective narrative gives absolute priority to the projection of a local system's core business within the global scale, aiming to enhance some specific tangible/intangible assets (a building, a museum, a festival, a site of pilgrimage, etc.) that are deemed appropriate to respond to specific supralocal needs. The fact that these elements, which often represent the main object of local investments, are able to satisfy the taste of a wide international audience may open up new creative and original scenarios and generate substantial multiplier effects and

promising cultural bridges with other cultures. Nevertheless, many case studies have demonstrated that, in the long term, the precious "passe-partout" of cross-cultural influence can easily become a dangerous means to undermine tradition, here considered as a mere tool for territorial marketing; in this way, tradition is subjected to logics and models completely different to those characterizing sustainable tourism.

This approach underlies dangerous trends inspired by the current fashion, with the realistic risk of the damage or destruction of existential, sentimental, and emotional values which concur within a milieu and, as a consequence, to enhance the use value of that milieu to the detriment of its exchange value. Instead of being the pivotal protagonist of individual and collective growth of the local system, local community threatens to become nothing more than a bit player on a stage that can rapidly change from being the hot focus of external stakeholders to the most complete abandonment.

3.2. A Preliminary Methodological Note: Island Narratives between Mainstream Narratives and Placetelling®

As already stated, the foundational aim of Placetelling® is to achieve an identity narrative as a result of self-representational processes carried out by the local community. This appears to be particularly relevant with regard to the case of Cape Verde, given its connotation as an island state. Hence, islandness concurs in further problematizing the debate on an already complex issue, namely, the self-representation of local communities through self-determined re-appropriation and use of their own cultural and symbolic heritage. A further level of complexity comes from considering this process as the basis of local development strategies, as in the case of tourism.

The relationship between islandness and identity has been largely developed within the scientific debate, also with regard to tourism. Indeed, such a thematic triangulation (islandness-identity-tourism) identifies the focus of the most debated issues animating island studies. In particular, the emergence of a decolonial approach in island studies [26] and, more generally, the analysis of the relevance of colonial thinking in approaching islandness [27] have determined the theoretical set on which to base further reflections on the topic.

Tourism dynamics still reflect colonial links, mediated through the persistence of economic and political benefits, among former colonies and their former colonizing country, as well as language similarity. It is not the case that a huge number of small islands' economies are tourism driven; moreover, as already underlined in the literature [28,29], the effectiveness of tourism-led development strategies in island economies depends on their affiliation with more powerful countries, according to a center-periphery model [30,31] that affects both the impacts of tourism on island territories—whose carrying capacity is usually limited—and the touristic demand and supply system, often directed from the outside.

What has been said above finds further validation through the analysis of marketing narratives related to islands. As observed by dell'Agnese [32], islands are subjected to an aggressive branding operation. If we consider the place as a unique combination of objective elements and subjective perceptions, able to create what Tuan [33] defined as topophilia, islands must face a de-territorialized stereotyped imagery according to which an island—no matter where, no matter which island—represents nothing more than a pleasant, exotic refuge from the stress of urban and industrial civilization. In this imagery, historical, political, and cultural characteristics underlying island orientative narratives have no place; the hyperconnective narrative of the island as "warm water" [28] prevails on the attractive narratives which depict islands as univocally identifiable territorial entities.

In order to find evidence of the above assertions, we thought it would be interesting to see what would be the result if we entered the key word "Cape Verde tourism" on any browser, and then clicked on the most indexed links (Figure 1).
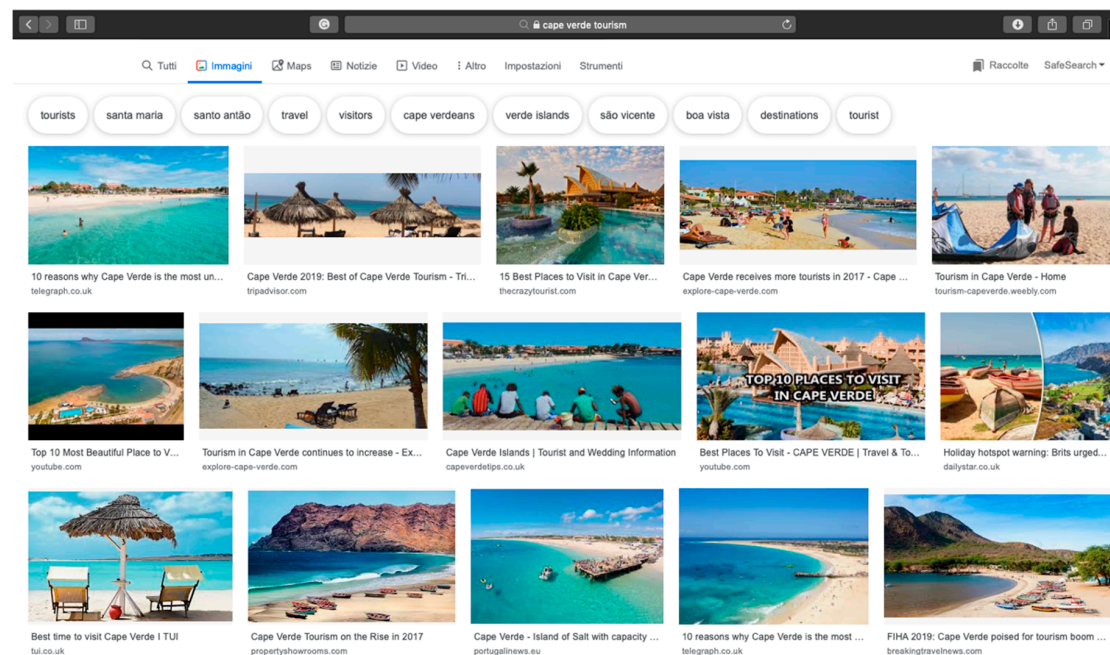
(a)

(b)

Figure 1. Example of conventional attractive narrative about Cape Verde. The two word clouds were generated using Wordclouds (www.wordclouds.com), a free online tool. Though it was not possible to customize the n-grams' dimension and word clouds in general may not be very accurate (for instance, semantic networks are not considered), what emerged was worthy of an in-depth analysis. The word clouds in Figure 1 refer to two of the most indexed links: Lonely Planet (**a**) https://www.lonelyplanet.com/cape-verde [34] and World Travel Guide [35] (**b**) https://www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/africa/cape-verde/. (Source: personal elaboration).

Word clouds are visual representations of text data, which show the frequency of a word within a text. The bigger the word, the higher the frequency within the text (corpus) analyzed.

In both cases, it was possible to observe that, besides local toponyms and, of course, *island/islands*, the most frequent words were related to leisure activities (*music, hikes, bars, tour*) and landscapes (*mountains, beaches, dunes, seaside, valleys*). Moreover, there was a clearly identifiable reference to what we could define as a general sense of remoteness (*abroad, foreign, travel*), as well as a wide range of lemmas describing beautiful, uncontaminated, peaceful landscapes (*peaceful, unspoilt, framed*), also by recalling colors (*white, green, indigo-blue*). Finally, a very few references to local culture (*moraleza, creole*) were recorded.

The same remarks are applicable to visual contents (Figure 2). By typing the search key "Cape Verde tourism" on Google Chrome and selecting the filter "images", the results were pictures of the same kind of landscape: Sandy beaches with sparkling blue waters, palm trees, tiny wooden boats on the shoreline, a rocky skyline. Green-blue, light blue, and white were the prevalent colors, respectively referable to the sea, the sky, and the sand. In the majority of the pictures, the absence of people within the framed space evoked the idea of a peaceful, desert island. The only human traces were straw parasols and deckchairs. If present, tourists were depicted swimming or sunbathing, while the presence of locals was quite rare, mainly reduced to a picturesque element embedded within the landscape.

The result was a stereotyped description of an earthly paradise whose attractive narrative lies in its power to instill in the reader a certain sense of peace and relaxation. However, such evocative potential derives from a mere aesthetic, and a static idea of the place, rather than a full comprehension of its relational and symbolic fabric resulting from unique processes of territorialization.

Landscape representations themselves, delivering the idea of stunning, captivating, striking, surreal places and views, were characterized by recurrent elements, none of which was uniquely attributable to Cape Verde. In other words, the representation delivered by the mainstream narration on Cape Verde was more like a setting, rather than a landscape or a place; the perfect setting for holidays and honeymoons, rather than a relational experience [36].

Figure 2. The first page of results after typing "Cape Verde tourism" on Google images. (Source: Google Chrome, 11 September 2019).

The risk [28] is to incur a neocolonialist-like nissology, written by outsiders—including both foreigners and islanders living outside the island—mainly for outsiders. For instance, in tourism narratives, elements like the language used (vehicular languages prevail over vernacular), the reference to a set of characteristic features as representative of a locality (those with a wider evocative potential on the large scale), even the kind of narrator (heterodiegetic narratives prevail over autodiegetic [37]), concur in preserving such tendencies.

Testing Placetelling® within an island *milieu* shows a clear epistemological value because islandness underlines the importance of the territorial variable in characterizing Placetelling® compared to other kinds of storytelling, whereas it inspires not only the goals, but also the design and implementation of narrative processes. With regard to our case study, it was a crucial Placetelling® aim to achieve an orientative and attractive narrative able to limit the globalist effects of hyperconnective narratives.

4. Case Study

4.1. Introduction

Placetelling® is a method for narrating places, which is:

- Identity-driven: It tells about the places, understanding their essence and their meaning, intended as a complex emotional attachment [38].
- Endogenous: Starting from the so-called genetic traits of a territory, which are born from the territory for the territory [1].
- Self-centered: It is a process that increases the capacity of a territory to elaborate narratives that operate on the territorialization and capitalization processes in compliance with the principles of sustainability [1,39].

A placeteller is able to develop new immersive narrative techniques, to act in supporting place interpretation. He or she is likely to be an expert in the field of information, communication, and education, in the subfield of infotainment and edutainment, who makes storytelling a powerful tool for the interpretation and enhancement of local heritage starting from the lived space shared by the dwellers.

From a methodological point of view (how can places be told?), Placetelling® gleans its theories and techniques from literature, narratology, aesthetics, and media studies, thus highlighting its interdisciplinary character.

To be effective, storytelling has to possess some specific characteristics.

Semiotics tell us much about these aspects. Indeed, in Placetelling® the relationship that is established in the narrative representation of reality between interpretation and hermeneutic processes is crucial.

With regard, in particular, to the functions of narrating, we will use a summary scheme that illustrates the factors at stake in the construction of a functional narrative, using an *R* to indicate the reference to reality, *S* the concepts and symbolic values (also of fundamental importance because they act on an emotional level), and *F* the formal values (good narrative form and quality of exposition/illustration).

Since no good narrative text is exclusively formal or symbolic, nor does it narrate reality without an attribution of meanings (otherwise it would be pure chronicle or documentary narrative), there are no cases of good narrative that properly relate to the vertices of the illustrated triangle. Instead, there are an infinite number of combinations that are placed within it and that describe, with different objectives and measures, the three fundamental components.

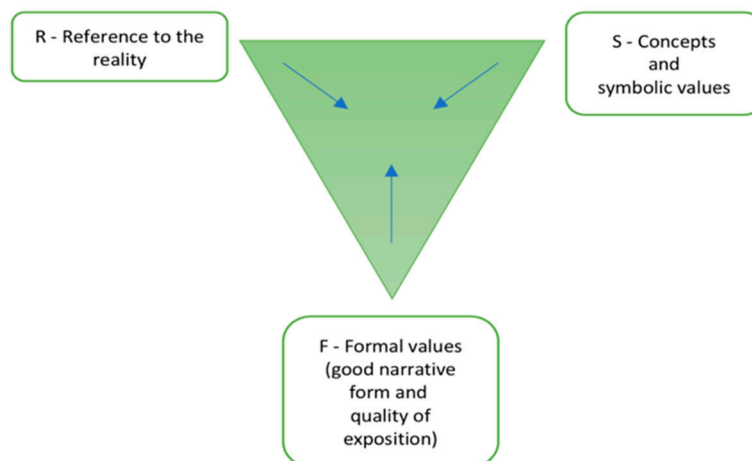What is described here can, therefore, be summarized, as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The scheme presents the functions of the narrative, *R,* indicating the reference to reality, *S* concepts and symbolic values (also of fundamental importance because they act on an emotional level), and *F,* the formal values (good narrative form and quality of the exhibition/illustration). (Source: Personal elaboration).

From the point of view of a narrative structured and finalized in this way, it is necessary to listen to the places before they are represented, experiencing them, letting the places speak, creating a universe of meanings in a sort of autopoietic process.

Placetelling® is, therefore, a precious instrument of transmission and conservation of the narrative heritage, nourished by written and oral stories of humanity.

At this point it is appropriate to make some clarifications to dispel any doubts about a possible overlap of meaning between Placetelling® and other methodologies that could present affinities, such as place-making [40]. We argue that Placetelling® can be functional to place-making, in the sense that the former can accompany the latter and make it a participatory and conscious process, capable of truly restoring the territorial identity and demands of the local community in planning terms. At the same time, Placetelling® is also an instrument capable of reducing the risk that place-making could become the expression of an intellectual elite, in an undemocratic planning process. Empowering a community's narrative attitude means making it aware of its own distinctive identity and of the material

and immaterial manifestations that it assumes: An unavoidable prerequisite for the community to be involved in place-making and to become aware of its role and the purposes of planning.

In the same way, we think that Placetelling® cannot be assimilated to a technique of involvement of the local community because involvement is not the final aim of the narrative, but its presupposition. Placetelling® is a technique aimed at strengthening the identity dimension and projecting it outside. The story is a way of recognizing and representing oneself and these are actions that can contribute to strengthening the collective dimension and giving feedback on the level of participation in the political dimension.

4.2. Description

The first Placetelling® training course in Cape Verde was promoted within the project "Cabo Verde: Historia, Cultura e Ambiente para um Turismo Sustentàvel", implemented by Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso and Fundacão Amilcar Cabral and funded by the European Union. The project, launched in 2016, intended to trigger the diversification of Cape Verdean tourism according to the principles of sustainable tourism, so as to preserve and enhance environmental, social, and cultural conditions. Specific objects were identified in enhancing Cape Verdean cultural and environmental diversity by a high-quality tourism supply, able to create employment opportunities; improving awareness among local communities and local authorities with regard to the importance of preserving territorial capital as an asset for local development, also through tourism; and foster new community-oriented and rural-oriented tourism dynamics, in order to include peripheral areas with an attractive high potential in tourism chains [41].

The project's output included the creation of two itineraries: Circuito do Aguardente e derivados-O Grogue como produto cultura, in Santo Antao, and Circuito da Baixa da Praia-Das Águas Doces e Salgadas in Santiago.

Consequently, the training course was conceived as a maieutic process during which attendees were invited to identify the most significant elements of local culture and, on that basis, discuss how to develop a narrative product able to catch the attention of a specific target tourist interested in living a realistic experience of the two localities, starting from the narrative interpretation of the two itineraries.

In order to involve a larger number of participants and to develop a more place-oriented process, two three-day sessions were held in Sant'Antão and Santiago. Each session was attended by about 20 participants including local tourist operators, cultural operators, local administration officers, artists, women, and young people. The two training courses were conducted by Fabio Pollice (University of Salento), Simone Bozzato, and Marco Prosperi (University of Tor Vergata).

Placetelling® principles and methods, implemented in the creative process, were illustrated during the first part of the training, through short intensive classes. In particular, participants were invited to reflect on:

Experiential tourism and identity-driven constructs: How to favor the discovery of real local culture by promoting the place as relational space and, as a consequence, the tourist's immersive experience (embeddedness) and how to recover narrative local capital and identify the intangible and tangible characteristic elements which define place identities, so as to make them accessible both by insiders and outsiders? It has to be clarified that place identities are to be considered as a symbolic and relational complex, which could be perceived through the double dimension of sense of belonging (for the local community) and mutual recognition (among local community members). As a consequence, Placetelling® works as a "passe-partout code" for entering the place's relational networks [42].

Identity narratives and immersive narratives. This session calls into question the debate about a place's authenticity, which becomes relevant in outlining a truly place-based narrative. In this case, taking our cue from Massey's observations about the risk posed by the spread of a "regressive sense of place" [43], we recall Cohen and Cohen's definition of "hot" authentication as "an imminent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving and reinforcing an object's, site's or event's authenticity. It is typically an anonymous course of action, lacking a well-recognized

authenticating agent. The process of "hot" authentication is emotionally loaded, based on belief, rather than proof, and is therefore largely immune to external criticism" [24]. In this way, we intend identity community narratives to be an inclusive, plural, and dynamic direct expression of daily life as lived by the locals, who represent, in turn, a plurality of subjective experiences and narratives, rather than a static, museum-like experience of the place.

Narrative forms, techniques and strategies. The definition of effective narrative place-based products and their implementation must consider four aspects.

(1) Languages. Placetelling® can use different languages, each with its own code, characterized by a set of techniques, styles, and indications. The language is profoundly linked to the concept of form, according to which each language (textual, pictorial, photographic, cinematographic) corresponds to a precise communicative mode: A story or a film can tell a story or a plot because it develops along a temporal sequence (storytelling power); a photograph, a pictorial work or an image immediately suggests, instead, an idea, without developing a plot (evocative power). The choice of a language and of a form depends on a series of factors, such as the reference target, the objective, and the functions, and the medium or the media through which the narration will be conveyed.

(2) Channels. This aspect appears particularly crucial with reference to tourism, especially if we consider Placetelling® as a way for generating shared narratives to share, in turn, with outsiders. More specifically, it is possible to identify direct (or face-to-face) channels (dealers, hoteliers, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, tour guides, residents, other tourists) and indirect (or mediated) channels (websites, books, films and documentaries, brochures). In fact, the principle of specificity remains the fundamental paradigm of Placetelling® for the public as well as for the language, channels, and integrated media for communication. Not all audiences, in fact, have the same characteristics: They can be distinguished by target group (e.g., age groups) or, better still, by composition of the public, that is, by homogeneous groups as regards socio-demographic or psychological characteristics. This allows the placeteller to identify the correct communication strategy to convey geo-historical content related to the enhancement of cultural heritage. A preliminary investigation allows the placeteller to trace the profile of the users/recipients provided, for example, to choose the most inclusive and captivating language (e.g., performative, literary, or audiovisual), the channel, and the media that will promote wider participation (e.g., social network, TV, cinema, etc.) and with them also the techniques of narration.

(3) Multi-sensorial narratives. The narrative and communication techniques used in Placetelling®—with particular reference to Immersive Placetelling®—aim to outline a narrative path able to catch the evocative potential of the place, in order to stimulate the perceptive sphere of the tourist and involve him or her in a totally immersive experience. In other words, a place can be experienced, for example, through the sense of smell (typical smells, local scents), hearing (soundscape, environmental sounds, typical local instruments), taste (traditional food and drinks), sight (landscapes, skylines, colors, typical architectures), and touch (materials, artifacts, and local fabrics). This does not mean mystifying the place, but rather favoring the understanding of its symbolic layer through the use of the narrative strategy deemed most appropriate for that specific case and for that particular audience.

(4) Narrative strategies. The placeteller must be able to grasp the very essence of the place and outline a specific story for a variety of objectives. In order to achieve this, it could be useful to recall the principle of edutainment as it combines the two essential aspects of the experience connected to a cultural asset: Entertainment, on the one hand, and learning (education), on the other. Such a combination guarantees the coexistence between the didactic, communicative, and emotional components. If we think that enhancement consists in any activity aimed at improving the conditions of knowledge and conservation of cultural heritage and increasing public enjoyment, we understand how evident the need for integrated action is to reconcile heritage enhancement and local development by assigning a priority role to local communities.

The second part of the course, subsequent to the theoretical investigation of Placetelling® principles and methods, consisted of site visits to the two itineraries created during the project. On the basis of theoretical classes and group discussions, participants were asked to elaborate a product able to guide the tourist through an inclusive experience of the two localities. As a result, the groups outlined two "10 things to do" lists for tourists, as analyzed in the next paragraph.

5. Results and Discussion

The difficulty of guides and tour operators of the Cape Verdean islands where the course was held was to tell the specificity of their culture and to focus on its attractiveness, while trying to direct tourism towards a conscious and experiential use of its territory.

In fact, it must be considered that, differently from Sal and Boa Vista, the islands that welcome 90% of the tourist flow directed to the Cape Verde archipelago, which owe their attraction to their beaches and to the large and well-equipped tourist villages that rise along the coast, Santiago has few beaches, totaling a couple of kilometers, while Santo Antão has no beaches at all.

The Placetelling® course, therefore, worked on identifying the elements of local culture that can take on an attractive value for the tourist and how they can be told so that their attractive value produces its effects on international demand.

The metaphor used was the "cachupa", a traditional food of these islands: A corn and bean stew with meat or fish, a smart combination of elements that brings together all that these islands can offer.

In order to promote experiential tourism, the decision was made to tell this culture starting from the experiences that the tourist must have to feel Cape Verdean: A "to do-list" capable of communicating the richness of Creole culture, what to eat and when, where to go to see the sunset or dawn, when and where to drink grog, how to prepare cachupa, etc.

The two "10 things to do" lists (one for Santo Antão, one for Santiago) (Table 1) were the result of group discussion about what are the most relevant elements that compose the place identities of Santo Antão and Santiago and what kinds of activities can help an outsider to better interpret the spirit of the place. The lists represent an example of bottom-up narrative, whose elaboration required a shared reworking of traditional heritage by the locals (orientative narrative).

The "10 things to do" lists can be delivered both through direct and indirect channels, and their evocative communication mode aims to arouse people's curiosity in investigating, through an immersive experience, the daily, hidden aspects of the two Cape Verdean localities (attractive narrative).

Table 1. The two "10 things to do" lists.

10 Things to Do in Santo Antão	10 Things to Do in Santiago
1 Keep smiling	1 Visit Cidade Velha, the birthplace of Cape Verdean nationality
2 Experience the everyday life of Santo Antão	2 Learn the typical dances of Santiago, Batuque and Funaná
3 Learn to cook Cachupa	3 Live the everyday experience of the rural world
4 Go to the Grogue rum factory and have a go at using the trapiche press	4 Take a sea bath or rain showe
5 Learn to dance contradança and mazurca	5 Join a pilgrimage party
6 See the artisanal manufacture of violins and play violin in Fontainhas village	6 Join the Tabanka party procession
7 See the sunset in Sinagoga	7 Play traditional music in the community
trapiche press8 Make tracks along the mountain trails	8 Listen to traditional storytelling in Santiago
9 Visit the waterfalls of Paul and Caibros	9 Discover the village of Rabelados
10 Go fishing with the local artisan fishermen	10 Try Cachupa, the traditional dish

Although an early Placetelling® experiment, the "things to do" show important differences compared to the mainstream narrative. Every item suggests an activity to achieve, so we can record a significant frequency of verbs like "*learn*", "*make*", "*experience*", "*participate*", and "*know*" that sound like an evocative imperative, implying a direct, experiential involvement of the tourist. Besides stimulating the emotional sphere, most of the identified activities aim to preserve what we can call a "local skill" (e.g., "*learn to cook Cachupa*"): Once learned, the tourist can replicate it after his/her experiential trip.

There are several specific references to the places: toponyms (besides the two localities, *Fontainhas village, Paul and Caibros, Cidade Velha, Rabelados*), food traditions (*Grogue, Cachupa*), celebrations (*pilgrimage parties, Tabanka party procession*), and leisure activities (*dance Batuque and Funanà, playing traditional music, learning to dance contradança and mazurka*) suggest *where to go* and *why*, allowing the tourist to outline an experiential mapping. Moreover, references to local toponyms and cultural features play an evocative function; in contrast, this function in mainstream narrative is played by the large use of adjectives like *stunning, striking* (cf., the paragraph "Identity narratives and islandness"), which are totally absent in Placetelling® narratives. We can conclude that Placetelling® enhances the evocative potential of the place, and evocativeness becomes site specific (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Word cloud generated using the two "10 things to do" lists.

Finally, differences between the mainstream narrative and Placetelling® in Santo Antão and Santiago can also be identified with regard to principles and methods, as summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison between mainstream narratives and Placetelling®.

Aspects	Mainstream Narrative	Placetelling®
Narrative	Attractive, hyperconnective	Orientative/attractive
Attractiveness	Remoteness; sense of exotic	Exploration
Reference to the context	Weak. Many of the items refer to elements which are not unique to Cape Verdean identity. Place mystification/disneyfication.	Strong. Large presence of toponyms, traditional activities and dishes.
Involvement within the hosting context	Limited	Embeddedness

Table 2. *Cont.*

Aspects	Mainstream Narrative	Placetelling®
Narrative forms, techniques and channels	Communication form is mainly evocative, excites desire. Channels are mainly indirect. No diversification of target strategies.	Communication form is mainly evocative, so as to arouse curiosity. Channels can be both direct and indirect. Target diversification.
Governance	Outsiders. Tourist holdings.	Insiders: local community, local stakeholders.
Perspectives	Subjected to the dynamics of mainstream tourism markets.	Spread of Placetelling® experiences in other contexts. Development of a shared bottom-up narrative on which to base new branding strategies.

6. Conclusions

As already stated, the debate on Placetelling® is very recent, and still needs to be further developed. This means that practical applications like the one reported in this essay are useful to spot a number of weaknesses and criticalities, both in the processes and in the results that definitely deserve an in-depth reflection.

It is worth mentioning that besides the limited amount of time, a huge difficulty can be identified in the use of a non-native language, which could lead to misunderstandings in the dissemination and interpretation of symbolic meanings at the base of intangible cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, these experiences are also fundamental to show the potential of Placetelling® as a preparatory action for the enhancement of the cultural heritage of a place, a way to stimulate and direct it.

In other words, it is precisely through narration that the value of a place is created and communicated, because the community is put in a position to recognize it and reclaim it, building its own development project around it [1].

Therefore, it is necessary to know how to increase the appeal, or the charisma of places, through actions capable of stimulating the tourist's emotional imagination, especially given the fact that the tourist is increasingly motivated by the desire to achieve an intense cultural experience [31].

In fact, before travelling, the tourist imagines: So he/she wishes to satisfy an expectation built through the recourse to narratives of various kinds, mostly mediated.

Then it is a true *promesse de bonheur* composed of material elements, but also and above all of the intangible elements (emotions, lived experiences) that play a fundamental role in choosing the destination since the tourist phenomenon sinks its roots in the complex territory of desires [36].

The unique and unrepeatable characteristics of a place that give rise to the desire in the tourist towards that place are, therefore. fundamental elements to start an identity process and a sustainable economic and social development.

On the other hand, the tourist is not the only protagonist of Placetelling® processes: The main actor is the place itself, here considered as the result of symbolic negotiations whose tangible effects are a multiplicity of layers (material infrastructures, stories, celebrations, customs, and habits) through which the place has historically built itself. When dealing with place enhancement, the worst threat to incur is what we can define, to recall the relational approach, a regressive sense of place, namely inspired to an idea of place like something given, fixed, rather than articulated moments in networks [44,45]. This means that every Placetelling® strategy should be implemented avoiding every form of museification or Disneyfication of the place and, consequently, of local community. This also suggests a reflection about the local community's level of empowerment and, more specifically, the narratives about the local people's ability to meet their needs and set up self-determined development trajectories [46,47].

Another final aspect to be investigated is the launch of new projects through the use of narration.

Placetelling®, in fact, using a geographical approach of a prescriptive type, directs the development and growth direction of a place, becomes a harbinger of new projects and, therefore, somehow

reconstructs the place we are describing through the stories that originate from it (maieutic action). In this sense, the debate on cultural sustainability ties in with territorial narratives and also affects the debate on place-making [40], as Placetelling® is here seen as a supporting tool to the implementation of community-based forms of tourism, so that it is able to enhance the symbolic narrative component. More specifically, in the case of Cape Verde, Placetelling® can act as the first step of a shared process for a new territorial branding, different from the one disseminated by the mainstream narrative. Here, territorial branding is seen as a "collective reflection on territorial identity and its representation, contributing to the strengthening of the sense of belonging and creating the basis for a strategic convergence among local actors" [46], and an appropriate territorial narrative can assume the role of "cornerstone" of the subsequent phases (regulation, circulation, exchange, consumption), which, in turn, will strengthen its evocative value and propulsive force [37].

In this way, a new direction for individual and collective behavior is imprinted, through interpretation and work on perceptions—which plays a role of meaning of social behavior.

Placetelling® tells us how to see the future of a place, intercepts potential, and gives a direction to development.

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