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Strategic Intelligence for Sacred Sites

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The polysemous aspect of pilgrimage constitutes a very old human activity, sometimes religious and alternatively secular, make it a complex matter to approach and handle. The exact number of pilgrims visiting sacred sites remains undetermined, and ranges, according to sources, between 200 and 400 million people yearly (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Pilgrimages are often associated with tourism and generate, in several countries, comfortable amounts of revenue. Public or private companies manage sacred sites and at the same time, areas of services for pilgrims and accompanying persons, and an intense network of shops, places for food and accommodation, grow, sometimes haphazardly. Very often, competition takes place between destinations resulting in an accrued and largely documented need for proper management, marketing strategy, and customised communications. This is particularly important as some have discussed the manner in which host countries may consider pilgrimage as a support to regional development (Raj & Griffin, 2015).

In recent years, authors – using Strategic Intelligence – have shown how pandemics could lead to collapses in financial, economic, political, social, cultural and environment fields. In such circumstances, an approach such as Strategic Intelligence could be a support to foresight (Fournié *et al.*, 2020). Geopolitical, technical and environment issues may also be detrimental to religious practises and pilgrimages. They may also affect the peaceful development of sacred sites. Neither empirically nor epistemically, is Strategic Intelligence usually associated with pilgrimages. The current paper examines how, by taking benefit from its more recent developments, Strategic Intelligence may allow the strong and balanced evolution of a sacred place, and insert it into the regional and national economy. It may boost the creation of jobs, the identification and growth of related industries and added-valued services (Dou *et al.*, 2018). Strategic Intelligence will also support, if necessary, the conditions for peace-building and preparation for resilience.

We intend to examine here how Strategic Intelligence may offer an innovative, transversal and holistic framework to support the ‘pilgrimage phenomenon’ wondering if it may become a way to resilience. A path, definitely necessary, to bypass human generated conflicts, environmental changes, natural phenomena or pandemics.

Key Words: pilgrimage, religious tourism, Strategic Intelligence, territorial development, social cohesion, peace-building, prospective, environmental changes

Introduction

For Mircea Eliade (1957:183),

road and walking can be transfigured into religious values, for every road can symbolize the ‘Road of Life’ and any walk, a ‘pilgrimage’, a peregrination to the Centre of the World.

In recent years, the world has been constantly changing. It faces increasing acceleration and complexity due to the permanent pressure of Geopolitics (G), Environmental Issues (E), Technology (T) and Social Control (S) that we will summarise as G.E.T.S.

Strategic Intelligence takes its roots in Wilensky’s thinking that defines Intelligence as

the problem of gathering, processing, interpreting and communicating the technical and political information needed in the decision-making process (Wilensky, 1967).

Initially developed in the United States in the nineteen eighties to surpass competitors (Sassi *et al.*, 2015), Strategic Intelligence has evolved since then. Called ‘Economic Intelligence’ or ‘Strategic Intelligence’ in France, it aims at mastering information and by

doing so intends to project its applications to national, territorial or enterprise levels (Dou et al., 2018). In a holistic framework, it relates to the concepts of national cohesion, territorial development, cultural influence, and global security (Fournié & Dou, 2020; Carayon, 2003; Commissariat Général au Plan, 1994). More recently, Strategic Intelligence has been redesigned to encompass and sustain disruptive and prospective thinking.

In a world disturbed by ‘Gaia Rebellion’, wars, pandemics as well as economic, social, and religious threats, all subjects require a transversal analysis. In a world of complexity, ‘taking action is a bet’, therefore, we need to practice what Marcel Bolle de Bal calls ‘reliance’ (from ‘relier’: linking), and assert, following Edgar Morin (1977, 387) that

Simplified thinking has become the barbarity of science. It is the specific barbarity of our civilization.

Any human action will generate a set of inter-actions and retro-actions that may affect it and modify the ongoing action itself.

Today people are facing a ‘predicament’ (Dou et al., 2018; Fournié & Dou, 2020) in a way that may affect pilgrimages. Fortunately, scientific and philosophical approaches may support the idea that the ‘roads to the centre of the World’ are not yet closed. As shown by Maturana and Varela (1928), who developed the concept of ‘autopoiesis’, systems may evolve and modify themselves as a reaction or adaptation to their environment. More, human and animal living machines have the imperative concern to adapt. If not, they will perish.

The living machine is capable of strategy, that is to say, to invent its behaviors to face uncertainty and the unknown (Morin, 1993:118 in Moulin, 2015).

Across the World, some regions largely depend on the revenue derived from religious tourism and pilgrimage. Any disruption in those activities may endanger their economic and social equilibrium. Strategic Intelligence for Sacred Sites (S.I.S.S.) is a model that intends to support the analysis of existing realities, conduct prospective studies, and prepare local economies and people for resilience. It will constitute a (new) transversal approach and multi-faceted tool for regional and local authorities,

and companies involved in said activities as well for the pilgrim or simple traveler and a path to resilience.

Derived from the latin ‘*resiliere*’ that means ‘to bounce back’, resilience is used in various fields such as ecology, materials science, psychology, economics and engineering. Specific definitions exist depending on the field of expertise (Hosseini et al., 2016). In this paper we consider resilience as

the capability to predict risk, restrict adverse consequences, and return rapidly through survival, adaptability, and growth in the face of turbulent changes.

Resilience is supported by several pillars: Environmental Scanning, Cultural Intelligence, Technological Intelligence and Legal Watch which can be used to assess all GETS-related dimensions. As such, S.I.S.S. is a new comprehensive field to be developed with little scientific literature currently available.

Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages as a Key to Regional Development

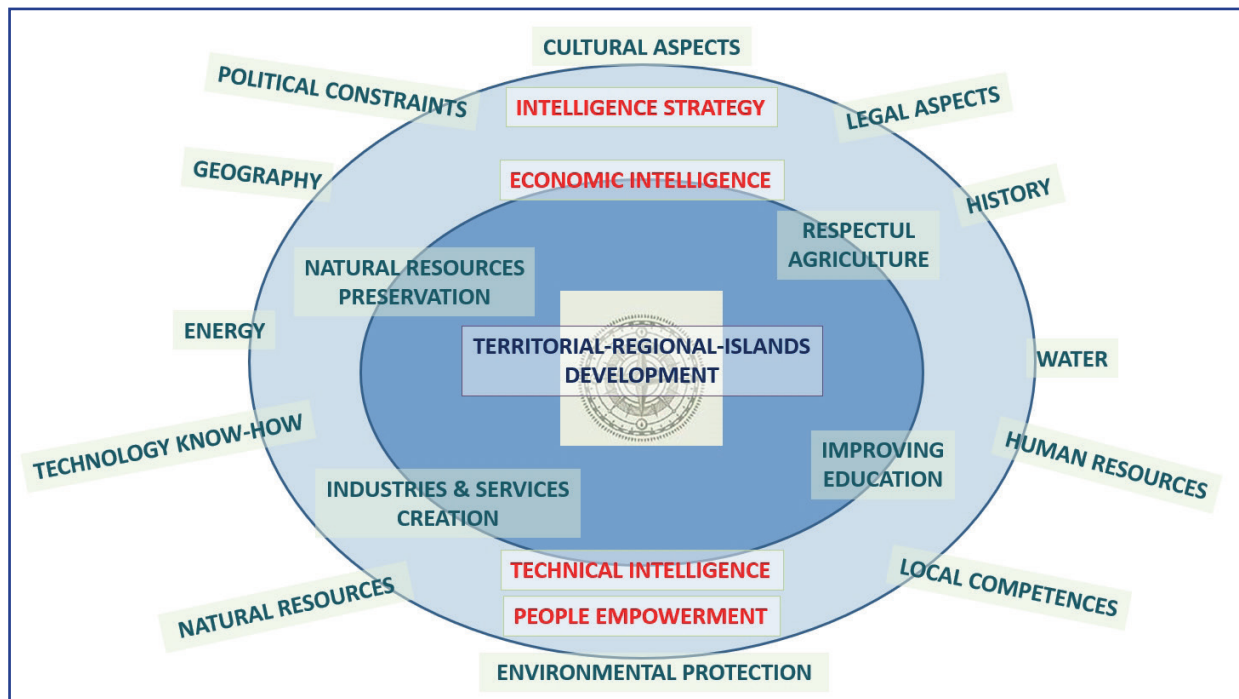
Regional Development is a complex matter that takes into account many parameters. The existence of religious buildings, treasures, pilgrimages, or traditions within a specific territory is part of them. Thus, the development of economic activities around religion are not considered as a niche but as part of a global and integrated effort and strategy to boost the regional economy. Figure 1, introduces the parameters that shall be considered to do so. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be respected at every step and local people empowerment is included as a key objective (Figure 1).

From a Strategic Intelligence point of view, using religious history to support regional development has been well documented in Indonesia (Fournié, 2019a; Fournié, 2019b; Fournié & Dou, 2018) and France (Fournié, 2020).

Structuring Strategic Intelligence for Sacred Sites (S.I.S.S.)

For centuries, religions across the world have been guiding people in structuring their daily life, and are often offered an anchor when setting-up societal rules.

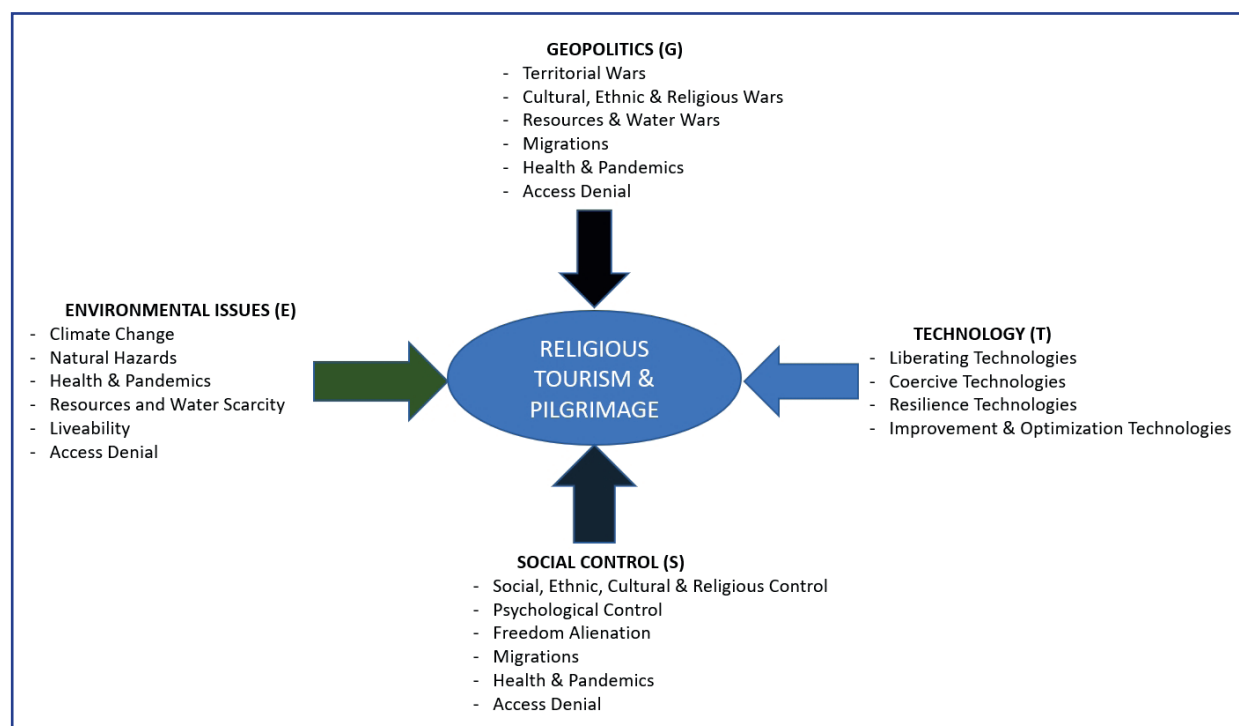
Figure 1: The Keys to Territorial – Regional and Islands Development



Source: Courtesy of Suffren International (2017)

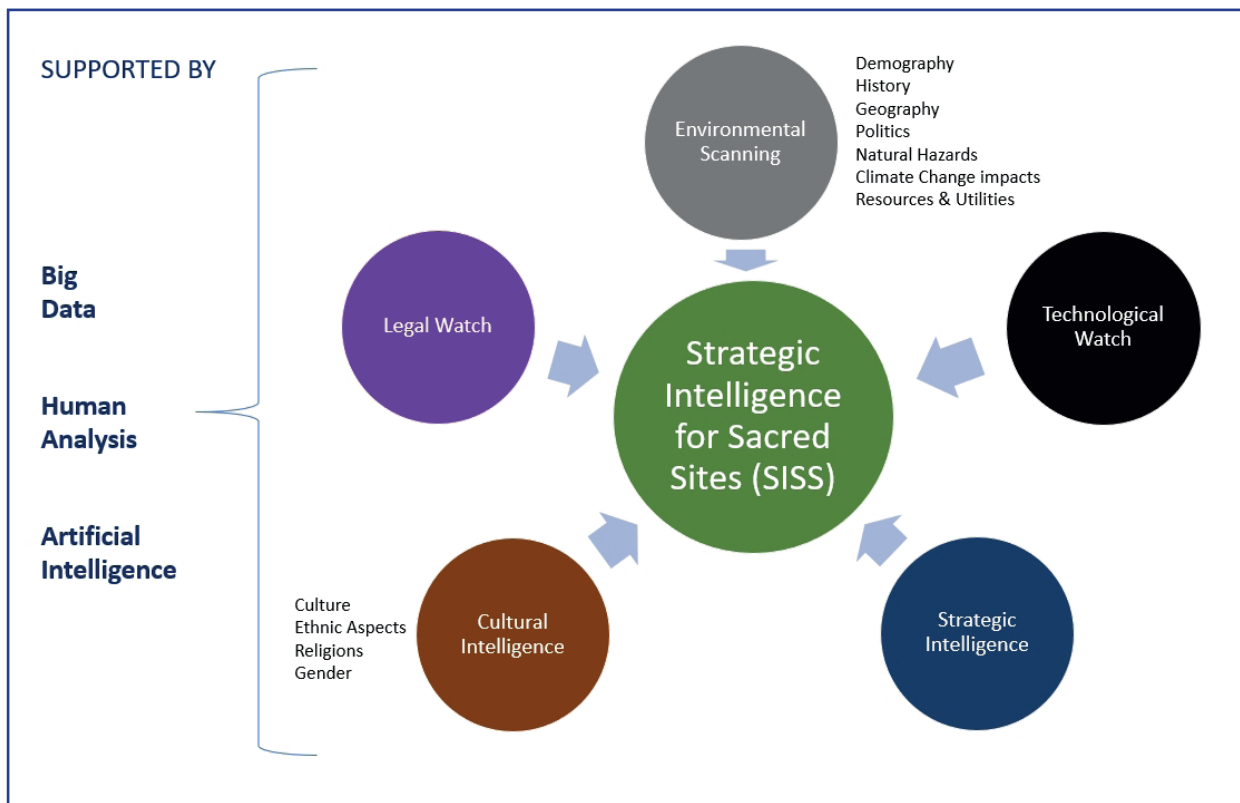
Religious fact has been scientifically approached from two sides: the ‘demand’, through secularisation theory, and ‘the supply’ approach or a mix of both (Gaskins *et al.*, 2013). Secularisation theory, long perceived as ‘the dominant paradigm’, predicted that ‘religions will decline as societies develop’ (Dhima & Golder 2021).

Figure 2: The G.E.T.S. Forces on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages



Source: Author based on personal research and fieldwork

Figure 3: Structuring Strategic Intelligence for Sacred Sites (S.I.S.S.)



Source: Author based on personal research and fieldwork

One could evaluate this theory, but it is not the purpose of the current article to demonstrate its accuracy. Notwithstanding that this, the predicament we are facing at present time and the forces liberated by G.E.T.S, may open ‘a new era for religion’ in a certain way a ‘religion rebirth’. A paradoxical effect may appear: at the same time, the pandemic and wars make it impossible for tourists and pilgrims to travel to certain destinations, and the need to do so becomes more and more acute to preserve psychological and mental health. Tomorrow, environmental issues, social control, or coercive technologies may dramatically impact religious tourism, increase pressure on visitors and de-structure the related industries and economies. Figure 2 introduces the different types of G.E.T.S forces that have already started to put stress on religious tourism and pilgrimage (Figure 2).

To study their protean impacts and prepare for resilience, S.I.S.S. shall be structured as described in Figure 3. It will also freely be inspired by work on the concepts of ‘Regional Prospective’ (Gonot & Loinger, 1994) and

‘Territorial Vulnerability’ (D’Ercole & Metzger, 2009). S.I.S.S. will use the classical ‘Intelligence Cycle’ to acquire, analyse and distribute information (Dou *et al.*, 2018). Classical tools might be supported by Big Data and Artificial Intelligence, without neglecting Human Analysis / intelligence (Figure 3).

Think the Unthinkable

Pilgrimages have been seen across the centuries as a link between cultures and as an economic development tool. Within a short period, ‘the unthinkable’ could appear (Kahn, 1964) . If not anticipated, it would damage the local economies and destroy jobs. The responsibility of regional institutions or private interests might be legally and financially called out. Table 1 illustrate a typology of risks and their direct consequences.

Political leaders at international, national, and regional levels have the responsibility to prepare for the unexpected. Their analysis can be supported by existing data extracted and analysed using S.I.S.S. This would constitute the first level of resilience. We will, hereinafter,

Table 1: Think the Unthinkable

Type	Warning Signs	Risks	Impacts (1 st Level)	Impacts (2 nd Level)	Impacts (3 rd Level)
Environmental Issue	Sea Elevation Climate Change Water Scarcity Water Eutrophication Pollution	Access Denial Change in Flora & Fauna Liveability Physical Risks for Visitors Health Risks for Visitors	Loss of Visitors Increased Maintenance Costs Religious Site Closure	Economic Fallout Job Loss Death of Pilgrims	Psychological Impacts Social Unrest Increased Violence (within or outside family circle) Impact on Image
Natural Hazard	Earthquakes and Volcanoes Tsunamis Floods Fires	Access Denial Liveability Physical Risks for Visitors Health Risks for Visitors	Loss of Visitors Increased Maintenance Costs Religious Site Closure Destruction of Religious Sites	Economic Fallout Job Loss Death of Pilgrims	Psychological Impacts Social Unrest Increased Violence (within or outside family circle) Impact on Image
Pandemic	Pandemics	Access Denial Liveability Health Risks for Visitors	Loss of Visitors Religious Site Closure	Economic Fallout Job Loss Death of Pilgrims	Psychological Impacts Social Unrest Increased Violence (within or outside family circle) Impact on Image
Geopolitics	Territorial Wars Cultural, Ethnic & Religious Wars Resources & Water Wars	Access denial Liveability Attacks of Pilgrims Death Risks for Visitors	Loss of Visitors Religious Site Closure Destruction of Religious Sites	Economic Fallout Job Loss Death of Pilgrims	Psychological Impacts Increased Violence (within or outside family circle) Impact on Image
Economic Predation	Privatisation Real Estate Development	Access Denial Destruction of Sites	Destruction of Religious Economy	Economic Fallout Job Loss	Psychological Impacts Increased Violence (within or outside family circle) Impact on Image

Source: Author based on personal research and fieldwork

take the example of France to illustrate such a vision by using a few (non-exhaustive) examples.

Water Scarcity

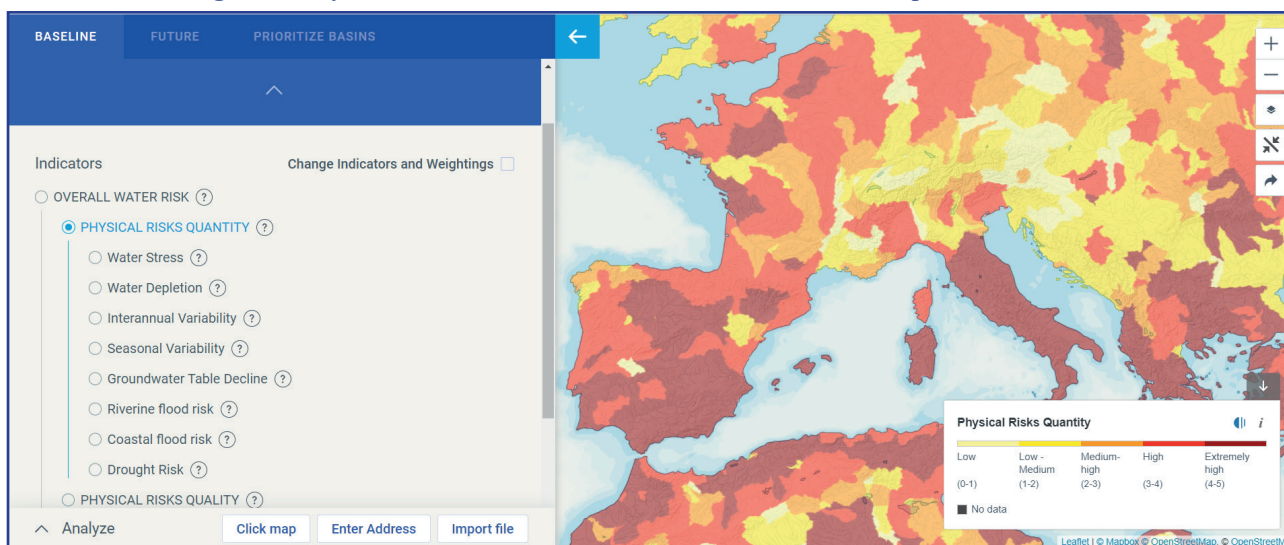
No pilgrim can walk along the *Camino de Santiago* without access to drinkable water. In some remote rural areas, where shops are scarce, fountains are not apparent, one must ask local inhabitants, the sole available source of water. Unfortunately, locals are sometimes difficult to find and water sources are often not indicated. What if, tomorrow, water becomes rarer and rarer? Will it be the end of the *Way to Santiago*? Figure 4 illustrates the

physical risks associated with water in Europe mainly related to water stress and drought risks. It describes the current situation. Figure 5 compares a 'Business as Usual' scenario based on the current predicted evolution of water stress compared to the baseline. Water stress is defined as

an indicator of competition for water resources and is defined informally as the ratio of demand for water by a human society divided by available water (WRI, 2022).

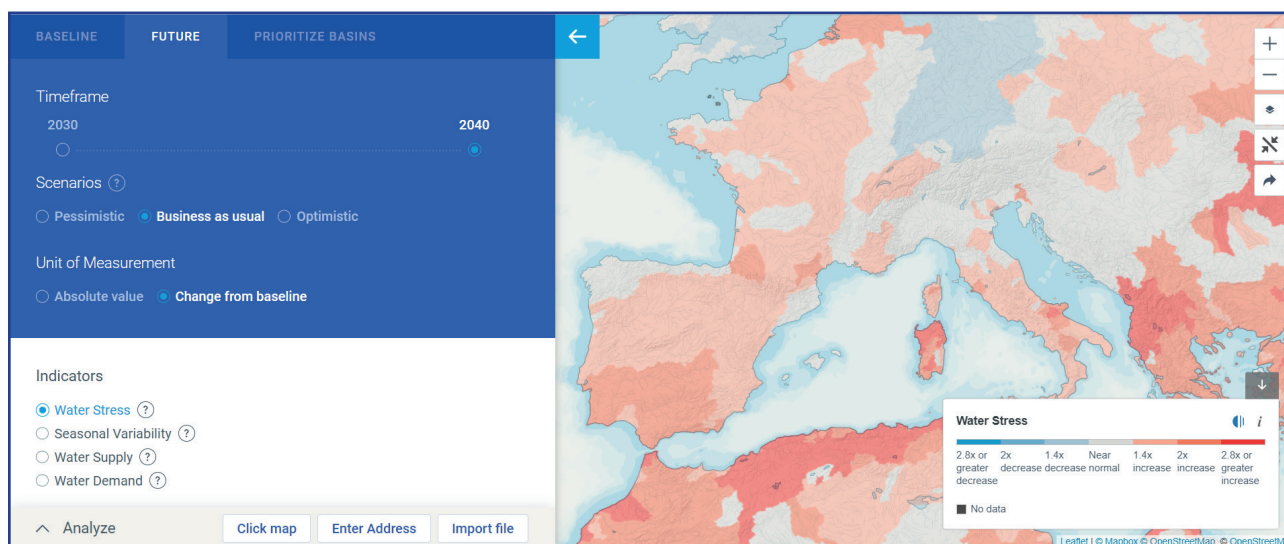
To safely continue the future development of pilgrimage routes in Europe (and elsewhere) such as the Camino, a set

Figure 4: Physical risks associated with water in Southern Europe Current status



Source: Water Risks Atlas – WRI, Beta version – retrieved 15/10/2022 <https://www.wri.org/applications/aqueduct/water-risk-atlas/>

Figure 5: Water stress change from baseline in Southern Europe– 2040 horizon



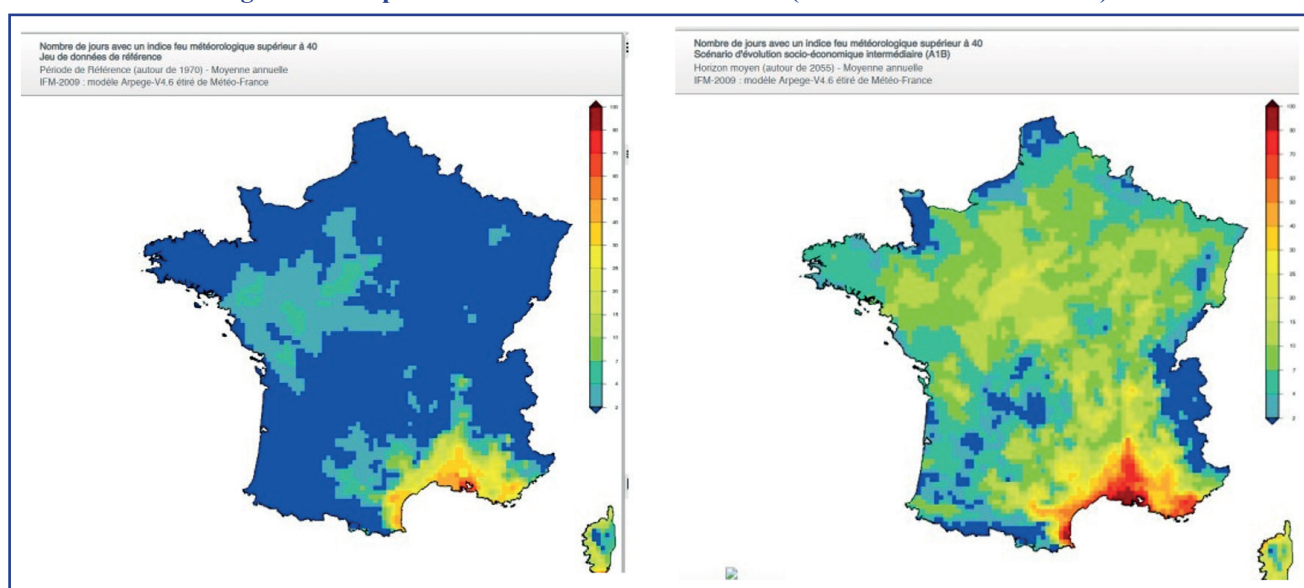
Source: Water Risks Atlas – WRI, Beta version – retrieved 15/10/2022 <https://www.wri.org/applications/aqueduct/water-risk-atlas/>

of resolutions must be undertaken without delay by local authorities. They include, between others, the mapping, maintenance and preservation of fountains all along the trails / Camino. General information on drought risks and water supply solutions should be made available in each village. Alternatively, the statistical monitoring of water levels should be coordinated, provided technological connections exists, should be developed. Additionally, without denying the pilgrim their freedom, they should be monitored, just as other risks are - such as fires or heat bubbles - to avoid endangering their lives (see Figure 4 & Figure 5).

Fires

European pilgrims often follow trails across forests, Mediterranean landscapes or scrublands. These hiking paths are extremely vulnerable and often ravaged by flames. Each year, in France, fires occur further north by about 40 kilometres¹. Figure 6 presents a Forest Fire Weather Index (FFWI), comparing a reference period (around 1970) with a projection for around 2055. Developed in the seventies, FFWI is computed based on six components:

1 Personal data obtained by the author from ENSOSP (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Officiers de Sapeurs-Pompiers) - Aix en Provence- France

Figure 6: Comparison 1970-2055 for an FFWI>40 (Forest Fire Weather Index)

Source: Projet DRIAS, projections climatiques régionalisées et analyses des implications ou 'Le futur des climats' du Ministère de la Transition Écologique - <http://www.drias-climat.fr/>

Calculation of the components is based on consecutive daily observations of temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and 24-hour precipitation. The six standard components provide numeric ratings of relative potential for wildland fire (Government of Canada, 2022).

The relevant data are extracted from the DRIAS tool, developed using the Arpège V-4 Model, by the French Ministry of Ecologic Transition (Figure 6).

We can observe that in the Centre and South of France, regions largely crossed by the Camino, the number of fires will dramatically increase in the future. Thus, responsibility for the pilgrim from a legal point of view, the structural adaptation of the emergency and fire services and the financial aspects of the rescue mission will have to be examined. Would this issue impact on visitation levels? Probably. The complex reactions and retro-actions require a complete S.I.S.S. approach.

One should keep in mind that in the USA, a new direction is under scrutiny as regards wildland fire management. Whereas the dominant paradigm was 'war on fire', the new approach will be based on a 'work with the flow'. Communities will have to adapt and become more 'fire-resilient'. They will have to learn to 'live with fire on fire-adapted landscapes' (USDA, 2015). What if, tomorrow, such a doctrine becomes the dominant paradigm across the world?

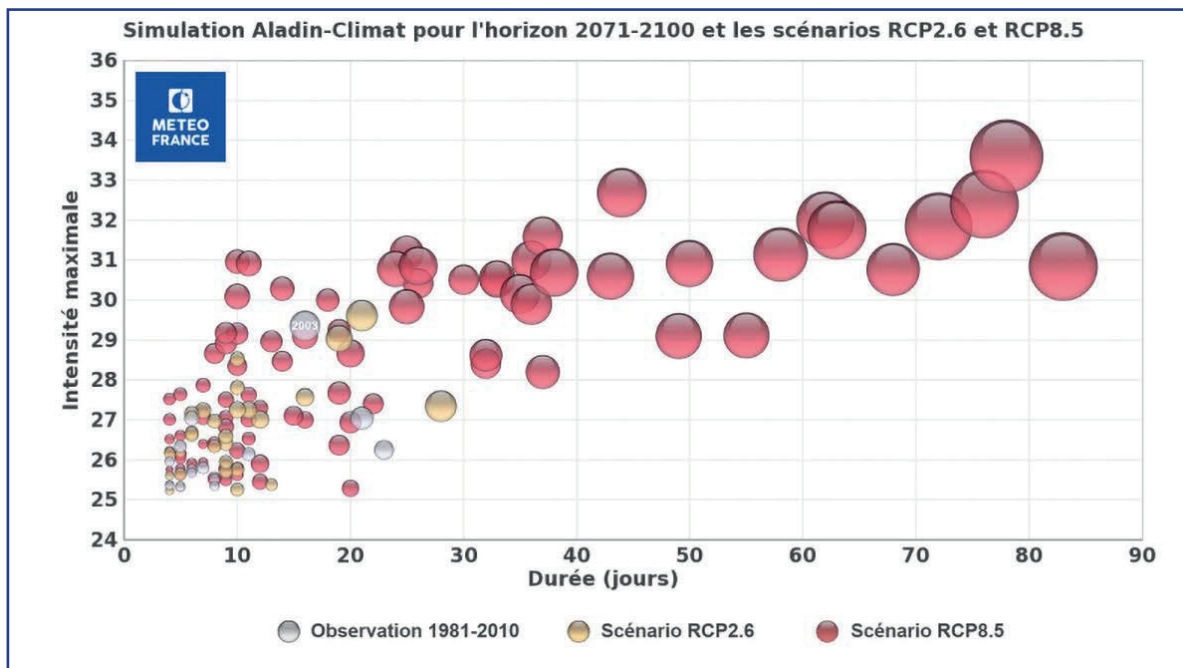
Heat Bubbles

The spring and summer of 2022² were extremely hot and dry. Severe temperatures were registered in many countries. Heat waves severely impact the human body and heat-related deaths, while difficult to quantify, have become common. In India alone, such fatalities could reach 740,000 people annually (Jain, 2022). In France, between June 1st and August 31st, 2022, over 155,000 heat related deaths were registered. This constitutes a dramatic increase compared to previous years: 2021 (+8,486 deaths or 5.8%) and 2019 (+13,446 deaths or 9.5%) (Berrod, 2022). Such an increase is partially related to heat. This is a situation that may impact on religious tourism and pilgrimage all around the world in the future.

Figure 7 presents a simulation of heat bubbles in France for the period 2071-2100 under scenarios RCP2.6 and RCP8.5. The length and intensity of the heat bubbles will make it difficult for pilgrims to maintain their activities unless necessary adaptations take place in relation to infrastructure, equipment and training.

² Editor's note - As this paper is being prepared for publication, countries across Europe have experienced their warmest June (2023) temperatures ever. While France did not experience any heat waves in June, temperatures were about 2.5°C higher on average throughout the month..

Figure 7: Heat bubbles simulation in France under scenarios RCP2.6 and RCP8.5



Source: Meteo France- Aladin

Conflicts

All over the world, pilgrims are denied access to worship places. Worse, in countries where major wars are raging, religious buildings and places of worship are destroyed as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen among others.

Preparing for Resilience

Changes are inevitable. As in the case of mountainous areas affected by major changes in snow conditions, territories that welcome religious tourism and pilgrimage have the necessity and the responsibility to prepare and structure public services, alert private companies and educate people to prepare for the necessary adaptations. In some areas, a total reorientation of the economy might be required. These actions need time and adequate budgets to percolate throughout society, but, they constitute the first level of resilience for religious tourism and pilgrimage activities: shock absorption (Hosseini *et al.*, 2016).

Conclusion

The XXIst century world is governed by complexities and is subjected to Geopolitics (G), Environmental (E), Technological (T) and Social pressures (S), G.E.T.S.

In such a fast-changing world, information is the key and that is what Strategic Intelligence is about: dealing with information. In other words, Strategic Intelligence encompasses the techniques that will allow the collection, analysis and spreading of information. However, developing this subject to the full would take several books - some have already been cited (i.e. Dou *et al.*, 2018). This concept of Strategic Intelligence must be understood as a pillar of territorial development.

Areas that welcome religious tourism and pilgrimage must consider these activities not only as a niche market but as parameters of structured regional development. Areas also have to prepare for adaptation and resilience as the forces described will transform said activities. Strategic Intelligence for Sacred Sites (S.I.S.S.) intends, through a holistic and data-driven approach, to support economic development and planning. Taking into account the concept of 'Global Security' will allow the preparation of realistic scenarios and thus, sustainable growth in the mid-long term (Dou *et al.*, 2019; Clerc, 2021). To conclude we stress that, in the current article, we are talking about a totally new field that, up to now, Strategic Intelligence did not look at. Due to G.E.T.S, it cannot be ignored any longer. Saying so, I hope the current article is the first of many such investigations.

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