



Environment and Ecology in the Mediterranean Region

Edited by

Recep Efe, Munir Öztürk
and Shahina Ghazanfar

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**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

Our consumerist attitude towards natural resources has adversely affected the carrying capacity of our planet, as the global ecological deficit has increased without regeneration. The situation in the Mediterranean Region is no different. Ecosystems there have reached a stage where biological diversity is greatly threatened.

Reclamation of damaged ecosystems needs a thorough understanding of the ecological functions that control them. Although restoration and reclamation efforts are underway, the process of acquiring knowledge and learning is slow. Learning the dynamics of a habitat, the plasticity of individuals in an ecosystem, and the microclimatic features are all integral to any restoration programme. In addition, stresses induced due to global climate change must be taken into consideration while planning restoration so that resulting restoration projects are resilient and self sustaining.

This book, *Environment and Ecology in the Mediterranean Region*, is a result of papers presented at the International Conference on the Mediterranean region held in Edremit, Turkey from 5-7 May 2011. 160 participants from 25 countries attended and presented 170 papers, of which 35 are selected for this publication. Chapters include aspects of environmental ecology, drought, changes in land use/fragmentation, tourism, sea level rise, environmental transformation, climate change, rural development and agriculture, water use, urban ecology, and forest resources/fires. Although much remains to be done, we fervently hope that this book will upgrade the importance of awareness among the public for protecting this fragile environment.

—The Editors

CHAPTER TWENTY

MODELS FOR TERRITORIAL RE-EQUILIBRIUM IN TOURISM SECTOR IN SICILY (ITALY)

SALVATORE CANNIZZARO
AND GIAN LUIGI CORINTO

Introduction

Tourism contributes to deterioration and degradation of environmental resources by using natural capital with direct and indirect impacts both in quantity and quality. Environmental amenities are a resource base for the practice and development of tourism industries and by disrupting the natural functions of ecosystem services, the tourism industry can factually threaten regional and local economies and some very traditional tourism destinations in the Mediterranean region, such as the Sicily Isle.

While the sustainability of tourism is largely included in public declarations (WTO, 1993); there are not yet feasible models of an actual definition of tourism sustainability. Thus, indirect services provided by the environment are used as free goods without payment and as a consequence of that, there is not a positive valuation of social costs caused by private firms in the tourism industry. Nevertheless, preservation is a strong concern as the state of environment of any tourism destination is an important factor influencing tourist demand and for assuring the exploitation and profitability in the long run (Manente, 1999). Quality of the tourist's experience is produced both by the quality of the visit experienced and the perception that the consumer has of the environment where the destination is located or the means by which the visit takes place. On the opposite side, a strict preservation of the resources could negatively affect the preservation itself, as this will not be supported or funded by maintenance actions. Indeed, tourism has to be defined as sustainable only if it can generate real value for the local system, in a

virtuous cycle of development from the environmental, economic, cultural and social points of view.

The purpose of this paper is to bring under discussion the current model of tourism in Sicily and formulate some political proposal of intervention in order to re-equilibrate the spatial inequalities in the distribution of tourism industries and tourism pressure on the environment and the economy. The paper describes the present distribution of tourism in the territory of Sicily Isle focusing on spatial disparities and different gradients of tourism pressure on local society and economy. Traditionally the Sicilian tourism is mainly allocated in coastal areas, with a practically total lack of tourism in the inner and rural areas, which on the contrary can actually contribute to spatial and economic re-equilibrium in the tourism industry.

Tourism: From Elite Activity to Mass Phenomenon

Tourism in Sicily dates back to the 18th century merely as an elite activity with the advent of the Grand Tour (Ruta, 1998 p. 6), although in the following centuries tourism still remained a weak social and economic activity. Tourism had taken the characteristics of a mass phenomenon in the industrialized countries after the Second World War, but in Sicily, due to the persisting conditions of social backwardness and the inadequacy of roads and means of transport, tourism was still an underdeveloped activity at that time. Only in the Sixties some towns started building facilities adequate for mass tourism and later the motorway network was created and the existing infrastructures (highways, airports, railroads, harbours) modernized. Regional, national and international links have been improved, livening up the domestic mobility increasingly directed towards the most well-known cities on the coast (Taormina, Giardini Naxos, Cefalù, San Vito Lo Capo, and Palermo). From that moment on, tourism persistently entered into the regional political debate: the ruling class considers it as a source of income, a factor of local development and hence as a cure-all for the underdeveloped island.

During the last decades other little known places became the most popular destinations for tour operators. The small islands, Eolie, Pelagie, Pantelleria and Ustica, and places rich in historical, artistic and cultural heritage, such as Agrigento, Erice, Siracusa, Selinunte, Segesta, Tindari, and Piazza Armerina, became tourist destinations focused on culture. On the other hand, while thermal tourism has started to spread intensively in all of Europe (Lozato-Giotart, 1994: 12) in Sicily it has remained a niche, despite the existence of several spas.

From the 80s Sicily started the legal extension of protected areas (Regione Sicilia, 1981, 1988, 1991), with 12% of the territory now protected by law, forms of eco-tourism such as visiting natural environments, parks and reserves have added to the traditional patterns.

Rural tourism brought in agri-tourism farms in the early 80s, and Sicily was hit by this new touristic trend and old rural buildings were renovated everywhere, from the inland hills to the seaside.

In addition, there is an immense increase in tourists to the historical towns of the south-east, mainly due to the UNESCO recognition of their baroque monuments as World Heritage Sites. As a matter of fact, Val di Noto has become the symbol of the Sicilian cultural tourist destination. Besides Noto, Ragusa Ibla, Sciacca, Modica, Caltagirone, Palazzolo Acreide, Militello Val di Catania and Catania have a large increase in both tourists and accommodation facilities, with a real boom of bed-and-breakfasts throughout the island. An equally important role in increasing the “quality” touristic flow is played by other sites recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites, in particular the archaeological area of Agrigento, the Roman Villa of Casale, Syracuse and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica and Eolian Islands.

Tourism: Development and Territorial Disequilibrium

The touristic demand directed mainly towards the coasts has contributed to the increase of accommodation facilities near the sea, causing the structure of the territory to be even more unbalanced and increasing the differences between the conditions of the Sicilian inland and the one of the more dynamic coastal strip.

As a matter of fact, in the last decades, along the coasts of the island, the landscape of touristic residential areas and of some towns with accommodation facilities has mixed with agricultural ones. A widespread process of expansion of the service industry has started, spreading from the coast into some valleys that are particularly rich from the architectonic, cultural or environmental points of view. Along several parts of the coast, the line of residential holiday homes is almost uninterrupted. Areas of international touristic appeal have developed due to the building of renowned holiday villages (Valtour, Club Méditerranée, iGV, Going One, etc.) and nowadays there is a large number of big holiday villages and tourist resorts scattered all along the region’s coast.

The analysis of distribution of Tourism Local Labour Systems (TLLSs) in Sicily clearly shows the different distribution between the coastal and inland areas of Sicily (Fig. 20-1). This is due to the fact that

the island naturally offers, besides a mild climate, more than 1400 kilometres of coast and many smaller islands, a vast range of coastal resorts and seashores. Moreover, the majority of the region's towns of art and archaeological sites are placed along the coast or near it, such as Palermo, Mozia, Lilibeo, Segesta, Selinunte, Noto, Ragusa, Scicli, Modica, Tindari, Taormina, Giardini Naxos, Siracusa, Agrigento, Catania, and others. Therefore, the most active and important areas for tourism in Sicily are located mainly along the coast or on the smaller islands.

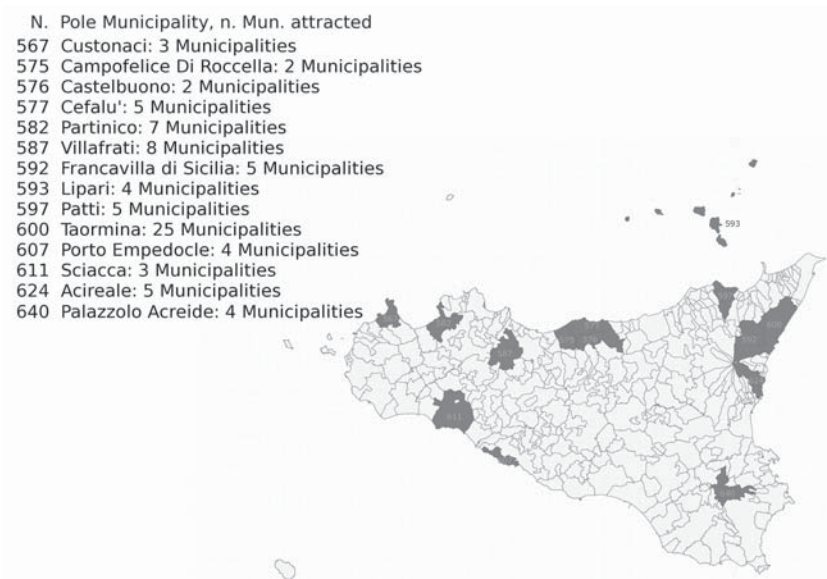


Fig. 20-1: Sicily. Tourism Local Labour Systems, 2001. Source: Regione Sicilia, 2008.

Furthermore, industries, refineries and the most important cities are present along the coast of the island as well as highways and rail. Highways mainly span the outer perimeter of the island, with the sole exception of Catania-Palermo highway A19 and the stretch of the Palermo-Mazara del Vallo A29.

During the decades following the end of the Second World War, motorways and railroads have caused a move of the population from hill-top villages towards the coast, which has doubled the population of old towns, the so called “marinas”. Real holiday towns without basic structures have risen on the Sicilian coasts, often near towns.

Creating regional agencies for tourism development have mainly advantaged the coastal areas, for example, of the 20 Agencies for Tourism (AST, Agenzie di Soggiorno e Turismo), 16 of them are working with coastal cities and have therefore exclusively promoted the seaside resorts of the region¹.

Sicily has always had a dualistic territorial structure (see Fig. 20-2), due to the fundamental characteristics of its landscape: the “Mediterranean garden” and the “large landed estate” (Campione et al., 1992). The Mediterranean garden, as a landscape and in its environment is in great jeopardy due to the concentration of the infrastructural communication system, intensive farming and the presence of petrochemical centres. The inner zone – with the exclusion of the mountain woodlands, the highlands planted with orchards and the hillsides with vineyards, olive, almond and hazel groves – is “the real look of Sicily, for which baroque towns and orange grooves are only unimportant frills” (Tomasi di Lampedusa, 1970). Traditional Sicily, the one of the large landed estates, of farmers and miners, is where time seems to have stopped, because nothing seems to have changed.

The success of the tourism industry, with the development of the related infrastructure, holiday homes, harbours and many seaside resorts, have transformed the coastal landscape. It has affected, often irreversibly so, the environment and modified the traditional social structures of several areas and cities. The up-to-the-shoreline urbanization and the many marine structures, such as breakwater barriers, are some of the factors that have altered the coastal environment. Illegal construction of houses on coasts, mountains, and even in some protected areas of great environmental value along the coast has caused the worst damage.

Although it is true that in many instances tourism has led to economic growth, the negative effects due to the creation of structures, often without planning, and touristic activity itself, have reached a point where the original socio-economic advantages have turned into diseconomies, causing irreversible environmental damage, that, as Lozato-Giotart (1994) said, we have changed from “avidly visited” landscapes to increasingly modified and organized ones and, sometimes, to “consumed environment”.

¹ All the ASTs, with the exception of the ones of Caltagirone, Enna, Piazza Armerina and Nicolosi, are on the coast or have a seaside hamlet: Acireale, Agrigento, Capo d'Orlando, Cefalù, Catania/Acicastello, Erice, Gela, Giardini Naxos, Isole Eolie, Messina, Milazzo, Patti, Palermo/Monreale, Sciacca, Siracusa, Taormina.



Fig. 20-2: Sicily. Urban and Rural Areas, 2007. Source: Regione Sicilia (2009).

Agricultural Multi-functionality for Sustainable Tourism

The European Commission stated the priority of “consolidating the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations” (EC, 2010a) to achieve a common policy on sustainable tourism. The promotion of the joint quality-sustainability of tourism is obviously to be considered in a holistic and integrated approach (Butler, 1980 and 1998). In fact, at local and regional level, managing the tourism sector also refers to the approach of integrated policy of territory, with particular but not sole attention to rural areas.

According to the European Rural Development Policy (RDP) and its evolution for the 2020 perspective (EC, 2010b), the major part of the Sicilian territory is well characterized as a rural area facing a decline in employment, low incomes in farms and market difficulties, and in its search of concrete possibilities to generate alternative and supplementary incomes. Running agri-tourism and rural tourism is a good way to integrate the income of farmers in the framework of a well-defined multi-functionality.

Definitions of multi-functionality of agriculture are many, and specific significances could be various in diverse disciplines (Van Huylenbroeck et al., 2007), but they certainly include rural cohesion and vitality, ambience and development, cultural and historical heritages, regional identity and offering hunting, agri-tourism or entertainment. Agriculture, beyond being a primary supply of food and fibres, provides other non-market outputs to society. The latter are essentially joint-products that have the nature of externalities or public goods, which are the origin of market failure and create theoretical arguments for public intervention (Marangon, Troiano, 2009).

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that in certain cases, the creation of solutions using Non-Governmental Approaches (NGAs), which request only a non-direct presence of government (OECD, 2005), or the promotion of voluntary deals, can provide the correct alternative for sustainable use of environmental services of agriculture. The NGAs are related to the solution proposed by Coase (1960) which argues government intervention should be restricted to the definition of property rights instead of direct payments. The government will only state the legislation framework or dedicated rules and in the case of agri-tourism and more in general of rural tourism, it would be clear that the public intent is to cast a territorial policy both at local and at national level that is also a re-equilibrium in the tourist use of territory.

Tourism Labour Local Systems and Rurality in Sicily

According to the National Development Program, The Sicilian Regional Rural Development Program (2006-2013) identified four types of rural areas, including the entire regional area within the political program. These areas are: A. Urban Areas; B. Rural areas with intensive specialized agriculture; C. Intermediate Rural Areas; D. Rural Areas with difficulties in development.

Great parts of the territory are still characterized by rural features in Urban Areas, because the total farmland surface is equal to 51.5% of total A area surface and similar in percentage to the farmland surface in the B and C areas. Furthermore, the Utilized Agricultural Surface (UAS) in the A area rises up to 81.3% of the Total Agricultural Surface (TAS) and the average amount of TAS per farm is greater (4.8 ha) than those in the rest of the regional territory. In this area, the number of farms with extra agricultural activities is higher than in others, as they represent 2.7% of the total number. The multifunctional propensity of the farms in this area is quite evident since the value indicator does not reach 1% in the three other

Areas. It is arguable that in the urbanized areas agriculture is integrated with some other activities and in coastal zones directly with the tourism industry (Regione Sicilia, 2009).

The CAP towards 2020 (EU, 2010b) recognized the territorial balance and a better equilibrium as a fundamental future challenge, since a growing number of rural areas have become increasingly driven by non-agricultural factors due to diversification of their socio-economic structure. This is true also in Sicily, but agriculture is still a fundamental drive of its rural economy, which demonstrates a sound vitality linked to the presence of a competitive and dynamic farming sector in urban areas which is more sound than in the intermediate ones, and in those with difficulties of development.

This paper adopts the local development approach by following Italian eminent scholars in finding explanations for the local diffusion of industries and their complementary relationships. In the adoption of the theoretical notion of “industrial district”, Italian economists (Becattini, 1989) restored the territory as the versatile integrator of firms, sectors and society localized in the same place in opposition to space. This point of view caused the redirection of geographic and economic perspective by considering the territory as the unit of analysis and classification of economic and social facts, also taking an original historical agro-centric point of interest into account (Becattini, 2002). The territory is the geographical area pertaining to a population that settles therein with all its economic, social and legal structures and in time develops its own sense of territoriality that actually is the society-environment relationship. In this sense, a “place” is the part of a territory to which social groups attribute individuality from which the functions and overall role that it performs in the society’s system of spatial structures are derived. As a consequence, a place is naturally multifunctional because it results from diverse sets of residential and productive settlements, each of which contributes to specific individuality and importance, not simply by adding itself to the others but by exerting a multiplier effect on the whole. Thus, the term “place” can easily be replaced with “local system”. The concept of industrial district in Italian economic geography permits one to rediscover the Marshallian external economies and reevaluate the joint territory-society as the unit of analysis.

Subsequently, Italian economists (Sforzi, 2002) focused their attention on the possibility of measuring – at the national scale – the local borders of such a unit of analysis by considering the concept of “Labour Local Systems” which are defined as aggregations of territorial units within which the labour market is homogeneous, that is to say where labour

supply and demand overlay. Labour Local Systems (LLSs) are non-administrative but territorial aggregations aiming at operating the implementation of local development policies.

The Italian law 144/99 explicitly recognized LLSs as territorial units relevant for the definition of territorial development policies. These policies are particularly important in the Italian “Mezzogiorno” (i.e. the South of Italy, including big islands such as Sardinia and Sicily), and for the central aim of the present paper, in the tourism industry and in its spatial diffusion in urban and rural areas.

Table 20-1: Sicily. Type of areas, TLLSs, Pole Municipality and Number of Municipalities per TLLS, 2008. Source: Regione Sicilia (2008). Our processing

Type of Area	N. TLLS	Pole Municipality	Number of Municipalities
A. Urban Areas	-	-	-
B. Rural areas with intensive specialized agriculture	611	Sciacca	3
C. Intermediate Rural Areas	567	Custonaci	3
	575	Campofelice di Roccella	2
	576	Castelbuono	2
	577	Cefalù	5
	588	Partinico	7
	587	Villafraati	8
	597	Patti	5
	600	Taormina	25
	606	Porto Empedocle	4
D. Rural Areas with developing difficulties	624	Acireale	5
	640	Palazzolo Acreide	4
	592	Francavilla di Sicilia	5
	576	Castelbuono	2

The Italian ISTAT officially surveyed 686 LLSs in Italy and 77 in the Isle of Sicily at the date of official census in 2001. The surveyed Tourism Local Systems (TLLSs) were found to be 259 in Italy and 14 in Sicily (Regione Sicilia, 2008).

A TLLS is defined by the spatial concentration of workers in supplying services for tourism consumers and are considered as such when the concentration ratio is greater than the national average (Sforzi, 2002). The Sicilian TLLSs are shown in Fig. 20-1, while territorial classification between urban and rural areas in Sicily is shown in Fig. 20-2. By

overlaying the two maps and crossing quantitative data on types of area and TLLSs (Tab. 20-1), some important findings can be detected.

The first thing to consider is that almost all the Sicilian TLLSs are located in the coast zone with the sole exception of the system led by Palazzolo Acreide that involves 4 municipalities.

Furthermore, by considering data displayed in preceding the Table 20-1 and Fig. 20-1 and 20-2, it is possible to find that the Sicilian TLLSs are all located out of urban areas and quite exclusively in the C zone, named Intermediate Rural Areas. The system of Sciacca is located in zone B, Rural areas with intensive specialized agriculture and tourism systems of Francavilla di Sicilia and Castelbuono are located in zone D; Rural areas with difficulties in development.

It is possible to affirm for these findings that in Sicily the tourism industry has an utmost particular spatial distribution. Urban areas are actually tourism destinations but tourism is not the main important industry, as tourism concentration indicator is higher in other selected zones. In general, the tourism industry is mainly located in the coast zones and its relationship with rurality is to be deepened.

Table 20-2: Agritourism data per Province 2006. Source: Regione Sicilia (2009)

Province	Farms	Beds	Beds / farm	Farm Camping Grounds	Campers:		Certified Farms	Meal Covers / Farm
					4 people / Camping Ground	Meal Covers		
Agrigento	18	305	17	19	76	439	6	24
Caltanissetta	11	146	13	0	0	415	0	38
Catania	50	636	13	53	212	1242	1	25
Enna	18	193	11	40	160	823	10	46
Messina	86	993	12	50	200	1835	0	21
Palermo	62	1106	18	35	140	5434	2	88
Ragusa	41	440	11	88	352	2290	1	56
Siracusa	66	907	14	28	112	2014	6	31
Trapani	30	414	14	50	200	1204	6	40
TOTAL	382	5140	13	363	1452	15696	32	41

While farms have become more specialized near major Sicilian towns, agriculture is suffering in the inner part of the island and it has not found a new equilibrium by operating the farm with multi-functionality yet. In particular, the development of agri-tourism activity is still late in comparison

to other more developed Italian Regions, such as Trentino Alto Adige, Sud Tirol, Tuscany or Umbria, and the tourism itself cannot yet subsidize or integrate agriculture, handicrafts and industrial SMEs. Especially in the inner rural zones of the island, the agri-food industry productions are still based on traditional models, with low specialization, and low propensity to innovative organization and adoption of new techniques.

Market uncertainty and precariousness characterize the actual economic environment resulting from the enlargement toward Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. Facing these new market complexities, the RDP stated in its 2000-2006 programme an incentive support in farm diversification partially connected to tourism, rural tourism and agri-tourism in the framework of multi-functionality enhancement for farms. Due to a lack of census data and other feasible information, it is not possible to give an analysis at municipality level, but data on agri-tourism per Province are reported in the following Tables 20-1 to 20-2.

The Province of Messina has the greatest number of agri-tourism farms and two of the inner Provinces, Enna and Caltanissetta, have the lowest number of agri-tourism farms, respectively 18 and 11. The rural tourism in Sicily suffers more difficulties in inner parts, but the Intermediate rural areas and rural areas with difficulties in development mostly share farms with agri-tourism services. Notwithstanding, the presence of agri-tourism farms in the Urban Area and in the Rural area with intensive agriculture is highly significant.

Conclusions

The term “sustainable tourism” is used in a broad sense to represent the sum of numerous niche products oriented to maintain economic, social and territorial equilibrium. Actually, the adoption of sustainable patterns of economic behaviour seems to be far off and not realistic, unless public reforms and interventions take place.

The empirical study of tourism space diffusion in a case study regarding the Isle of Sicily demonstrates that socio-economic and historical conditions have caused a rapid increase in the tourism industry, related revenues and employment, but placed environment and landscape in danger of disruption due to lack of respect for sustainability and profiting from natural resource equilibrium. After WWII, during the Sixties, Sicilian tourism industry took great advantage of development of marine tourism, overcrowding coasts and coastal tourism destinations, ignoring inner zones, which have important cultural and tourism potential attractions. The

inner zones now are suffering from the diminishing of the economic importance of agriculture, even if rural life is still fundamental for the conservation of environment, and social and cultural heritage equilibrium.

In the perspective of the 2020 CAP reform, rural tourism and agri-tourism, both as forms of sustainable tourism and agricultural multi-functionality, can contribute to future re-equilibrium to be used in Sicilian territory. Notwithstanding, the real future of rural tourism development depends on the organization of integrated supply of tourism services which will be able to connect natural resources and cultural heritages in Sicily, without distinction between rural areas, coastal, or inner zones.

The entire territory is still used not homogeneously, with tourism attractions located in sole selected zones and with a very high image of the tourism supply in national and international markets. The tourism image of Sicily is more related to “arts and cultural heritage” than “a vacation place” (Regione Sicilia, 2006). Policy makers do know that the Isle is identified more for its history than for its marine coast, even if the tourism demand still prefers marine destinations.

The equilibrated valorisation of Sicilian territory and tourism is an important political challenge that can use the large diffusion of cultural heritage in rural zones and less crowded localities.

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