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## Sicilian Protected Areas Among Tourist Exploitation and Environmental Guardianship

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# **Sicilian protected areas among tourist exploitation and environmental guardianship**

*Vito Genna*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

It is more and more diffused opinion among experts and analysts that tourist market represents the true business of the future. From many parts it is hypothesized that, in the temporal arc of a ventennio and with no exceptional events, tourism will become the first source of occupation and income.

The increasing tourist consumption is fortunately accompanied by an equally increasing of environmental sensibility, for which more and more tourists seek a typology of products and services with a high environmental quality.

A clear example of this new environmental sensibility is the increasing question of tourism in that particular territorial sphere constituted by the protected areas.

Consequently, the new typology of tourism that is affirming can be intended as the management of the complex and variegated patrimony constituted by the territory with all of its facets and its contents.

In this scenario the maintenance, the recovery and the exploitation of the environment become important objectives to pursue.

The politics and the strategies addressed in such sense represent some investments to increase the wealth produced by the system, in a way that the growth in value of the territorial patrimony is not motive for conflict, but rather succeeds in reconciling economic development and quality of life.

In this sense, the wealth produced by the system will guarantee elevated profitability and remarkable ability of investment and therefore qualified occupation, not only in the tourist sector but in the whole territorial economy .

The property value of the territory is therefore very elevated and it is able to aspire to the role of flightwheel of the local economic development.

These considerations assume particular importance when they are referred to a territory where the environment and the socio-cultural heritage are the main resources, such as the protected areas.

This process encourages the diffusion of alternative tourism but, at the same time, it needs suitable actions by the local government about environmental public politics aimed to boost the touristic development and the safeguard of the environmental quality.

It is necessary to examine the impacts of the tourist activity, particularly those negative as the water pollution, air pollution, visual pollution and the the problem of the refusals.

It is clear that the main goal of sustainable tourism is to guarantee a tourist activity that assure the maintenance of the resources, also for the next generations.

The present contribution pursues the objective to define the connection between the exploitation of environmental quality in the protected areas and the opportunities of economic development, particularly regarding the politics of territorial tourist development.

## **2. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE PROTECTED AREAS**

To fully appraise the impact of tourism, the environment has to be inclusive in the complete meaning of the term, that includes many different aspects: the natural environment (including the different climate aspects, the ground and the animal population); the human environment (including all the territorial transformations operated by man as the urban and industrial housebuilding, public works, infrastructures); the cultural environment (including dialects, traditions and customs).

So we have economic impacts: costs and benefits that materialize itself in monetary terms as result of the use of good and tourist services; social impacts, alterations produced tourism on social and economic functions of the considered area, which represent the quality of the local population life; environmental impacts, manifested in physical changes and in alterations of the ecosystems; and territorial impacts, constituted by modifications in using ground and in the organization of the space, as well as changes in quantity and quality of the infrastructures in the area.

Sustainable tourism meaning a complex of recreational activities that, while it satisfies the present generation's needs, it also guarantees the same satisfaction to the future generations, since it preserves the resources and the environmental quality time by time.

For these reasons a prudent managerial activity is suggested. Some poor managerial skills in using a territory and the resources of a protected area may have notable consequences for the economy of the area, because of high regeneration costs of the environmental heritage.

In some cases, an environmental degrade may have irreversible consequences. It is therefore fundamental the sustainability of the activities inside a protected area, first of all tourism.

The WTO (World Tourism Organization) defines sustainable tourism as a tourism able to satisfy the demands of today's tourists and local regions, foreseeing and increasing the opportunities for the future.

All the available resources should be managed in a way that economic, social and aesthetical demand can be satisfied maintaining the cultural integrity, the essential ecological processes, the biological difference and the life system of a territory.

Such indications are confirmed by the evolution of the managerial politics for territorial development of the protected areas.

The economic-environmental theory has analyzed the theme of the protected areas considering the protection of the territory as a particular case of public good that the market doesn't guarantee (Giaoutzi and Nijjkamp, 1997).

In this optics, the public subject could intervene to correct such distorsions imposing authoritarially restrictions and objectives.

The consequences of the application of such approach merely brought inevitably to a strict conception of protected areas.

While in the past the protected areas were essentially finalized to protect and to preserve the natural environment, the terrestrial and marine ecosystem, a very important passage that has reconsidered the function of these spaces circumscribed of territory, has happened by now.

In fact, if in a first moment the institution of a reserve involved the unavailability of territories for the local populations, or however the strong limitations to the access and the fruition of the protected territory, now the protected area assumes a different value, placing side by side new touristic finalities to the essential objectives of the environment safeguarding.

Today, the protected areas are considered no more exclusively places to be protected from the deleterious contact with the human activities, but even a real tools of touristic exploitation of particular territories, in order to develop and to manage them in a suitable way.

It is clear that the managerial politics for the development of protected areas necessarily have to keep in mind the trade-off between local development - connected to the necessity to make accessible and fully enjoyable to vast categories of consumers such places - and limits to the sustainability - caused by the excessive resources' consumption.

In this sense is fundamental the ability of planning and the cooperation between the different working actors on the territory (Parks, Regions, Provinces, Commons, resident population etc.), in order to promote social, economic and cultural development in the area, by stimulating compatible activities with the environment and allowing tourist fruition and recreational activities.

The 394/91 Italian law on the protected areas, by which Italy is endowed with an effective legislation for the safeguard, the management and the development of the natural areas, helps the attainment of such objective since it gives a decisive turn to the same conception of natural park, even if with some lacks.

From a protectionist conception of natural beauties that privileges the aesthetical-landscape value, it now passes to an environmental and economic-social conception.

The institution of protected areas aims from a side to the safeguard of the ecological equilibriums and from the other side to promote checked initiatives able to develop local economies according to the requisite of environmental sustainability.

### **3. THE DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS OF THE PROTECTED AREAS**

The conception of the protected areas as real "sustainable tourism products" in degree able to encourage the local development is the result of a slow and gradual process of evolution of the functions that the protected territory has to perform.

The finalities and the objectives about the first concept of protected areas undoubtedly have well few to be divided with the thematic tied up to the local development.

In fact, we can affirm that the overcoming of the classic conception of a protected area has gradually happened time by time; however nowadays there is an awareness that parks and protected area in general have to assume as their center the human ecosystem, also including the economical and social activities.

The local economies that today appear winning are those succeeding in fully valorizing their local identity, the specificity of an area, the quality and therefore the ability of attraction towards other territorial realities, and this perception is warned especially in the protected areas.

The first movements for the guardianship of natural resources in the areas endowed with landscape and naturalistic peculiarity were born in the United States, where idea to escape some parts of territory to the human intervention in order to preserve its resources submitting them to a strict system forced to create the Natural Park of Yellowstone, founded in 1872.

It was a territory of notable extension, characterized by an ample variability of naturalistic aspects, ecological, environmental and from a scarce resident population.

The prevailing motivations about the park institution were aesthetical: they were wanted to protect the panoramic and scenic values of the landscape.

Subsequently, also thanks to the nature science development as ecology, the awareness of the importance of the protected areas developed as places of maintenance and guardianship of the ecosystems and the biodiversity, to pursue with scientific methods.

The adoption of protection tools regarding the resources' fruition in some territories found justification in the principle of collective utility that allowed the intervention of a public authority in order to guarantee the use of some resources considered as public goods.

Such principle allowed to realize in one side the maintenance of the environmental patrimony, so that to guarantee its enjoyment to the future generations; and in the other side tourist and recreational fruition, for the present generations, even though predisposing some limitations to oppose the increasing impact of visitors that risked to cause structural and functional alterations of the ecosystems.

The objective of maintenance with recreational finality was also the main feature for the creation of some natural parks in Europe in the beginnings of the twentieth century.

European reality introduced different connotations in comparison to overseas ones; in fact, despite the natural environment had been being submitted for centuries to a diffused process of modification by the human actions, the transformation of the territory had been gradual during the time and the relationship man-nature had not suffered drastic consequences.

Except some big areas, endowed with notable naturalistic resources and subjected to limited human pressures, many of the European natural parks introduced a heterogeneity of functions, a consistent presence of human installations, a more limited territorial extension and they also presented an ecosystem already altered by human activities.

In Europe, such as in the USA, prevailed a passive guardianship, constituted by a rigid system of prohibitions and restrictions about the fruition of natural resources.

The spirit that, for long time, prevailed was therefore that of a rigid protectionist politics, with the objective to minimize the access, the fruition and the human transformation inside the protected territory.

The philosophy of a rigid maintenance and necessarily pursued with rigid methods found its origin in the opposition between man and nature, so that the increasing processes of urbanization, of industrialization and of technological progress are considered the main features of the industrial age, and it brings an inevitable exploitation of environmental resources.

To the beginning of the 70' the debate on the opportunity to create new types of natural resources guardianship had a fundamental turn, because the objectives of maintenance and fruition of natural goods showed evident limits in front of profound changes of the historical and cultural contexts in the industrialized countries.

Such changes involved the natural awareness in ecologically isolating an area from its territorial context of reference: the protected natural areas could not be closed systems, isolated by the surrounding territory, since the causes of environmental alterations - i.e. acid rains, radioactive contaminations, atmospheric pollutions, etc. - originated out of the protected area, acted on them.

The processes complexity focuses the environmental debate on two formulations: the first one wished a guardianship extension and the exploitation of the whole territory and its resources.

Such politics was accepted by a document of the IUCN (Union of Conservation of Natures and Natural Resources) published in 1980, in which a global approach to the resources management was delineated pursued a plurality of objectives: maintenance of the essential ecological processes and of those necessary for the development and the survival of the man, preservation of the genetic difference, appropriate use of the species and the ecosystems.

This form of protection was realized in few countries, among which Denmark, and the result was a diminution of the founded parks.

The second formulation, departing from the difficulty emerged in the realization of the politics concerning the global resources maintenance, has moved the attention on the utility of the guardianship recovery and the reconstitution of the areas with smaller naturalistic heritage, with a strong human and economic activities presence.

In the institution of these new protected areas there was not more the double native finality but it was tried to satisfy the demands of social development of the territory, more appropriate and more acceptable from the local populations. This new vision has involved a transformation of the guardianship, from a passive meaning to an active one. In such optics, the environment doesn't represent just the "development box" , but it can become an element of the same, that doesn't depend only on the economic structure of the interested areas but also from the linkages between the other surrounding ecosystems.

It therefore appears clear that the overcoming of the dichotomic vision about the relationship between man and natural environment was encouraged by deep sociocultural changes concerning the concept of sustainable development.

These changes have been able to influence the attitudes and the collective behaviors also influencing political decisions regarding the environmental protection.

They can be synthesized in the gradual affirmation, of the "environmental laws", in the revival of local values as part of the territorial patrimony and therefore of the collectivity, in the new attitude towards nature (Gambino, 1996).

Therefore, the protected areas represent privileged tools to the sustainable development.

In this sense, the human interferences don't necessarily have to be considered in terms of negative alterations to the ecosystems, but it can assume the positive aspect of modeling landscape, of notable cultural and historical value, or even actions able to reconstruct some naturalistic values.

Finally, the protected area is not more considered as a negative element for the territorial development, because of its limitations and restrictions to the productive activities; contrarily, it becomes a source of opportunity for the entrepreneurial initiative, for the tourist flows that could derive from this new conception, with positive effects on the occupational sector.

It is evident as this formulation it behaves overcoming the dichotomy between maintenance and development, moreover the guardianship and the exploitation of the environment in restricted territories represent important tools to create new conditions of local development.

#### **4. THE PROTECTED AREAS AS A TOURISTIC RESOURCE**

The protected areas are becoming more and more a point of reference regarding the environmental awareness' growth but also concerning new types and strategies of economic development.

The protected areas, with their territorial heritage, constitute some privileged places where to interact as protagonists in the natural world.

The institution of protected areas represents the necessity to propose a model of sustainable development that conjugates the environmental guardianship with the socioeconomic development, furnishing local alternative sources of revenue to the communities. The present communities in areas of remarkable naturalistic interest introduce, in fact, low levels of economic development, which it is often tried to make forehead with an excessive exploitation of natural resources.

In many situations tourism represents one of the principal resources of alternative income for these areas, but it needs to keep in mind that tourism and environment are two complementary realities. Whatever is the type of attracted tourism, it always needs to resolve the problem of its sustainability, because of some environmental and territorial limits to the expansion of an economic activity.

With the purpose to constitute some linkages that allow an exploitation tourist key of the protected area it is necessary that these synergies are considered not only as places to be protected, but also as tourist places that needs to be developed and to be managed. In fact, it is clear as the

attraction of one "park resource" is not enough to produce notable tourist flows beyond the quotas of spontaneous tourism that represent only a marginal part of potential flows.

Moreover, the lack of an effectiveness planning that also attributes the value of tourist product to the protected area doesn't even allow a compatible ecologically management neither the actual state of flows and tourist activities.

Considering a protected area as a tourist product essentially means handed the double objective to guarantee the economic profitability of touristic initiatives in the area, and to reconcile it with the priority objectives of guardianship.

First of all, tourist planning of a protected area has to contemplate the construction of a touristic product competitive on the market, and therefore able to activate some conditions of success of its own offer. In this sense, it needs to carefully consider two elements of touristic planning, or rather the aspects of competitiveness and the conditions of planning effectiveness.

Regarding competitiveness, the main objective is represented by a need to furnish convincing motivations to touristic demand in the protected area or in its immediate proximities.

It derives of it that an effectiveness planning and management of the park as a touristic destination implies the ability to touristically valorize the elements of identity proper of the protected area, turning at the same time this process of exploitation into such entrepreneurial initiatives to produce income and occupation.

Such a strategy of development often meets the hostility of local populations: the "repressive" aspect of such politics is immediate, since the imposition of ties involves a limitation to the resources' access on which their needs depend; it is not directly perceptible the action of promotion of sustainable development instead.

The problem, in this case, is therefore to highlight some strategies of planning that allow to adapt the two objectives of development and environmental protection in the full respect of the local wishes.

Recent studies (Antonioli Corigliano, 2002) have individualized at least six orders of objectives concerning the strategic and competitive planning of the protected areas:

- growing value;
- sustainability of the initiatives, single and as a whole;
- integration and harmonization of the functions;
- optimization in the use of resources;
- equilibrium of the affairs;
- using economic lever.

The growing value aim to the accomplishment of three fundamental functions of the touristic strategic planning of a park:

- a) the social function or rather the improvement of the residents quality life;
- b) the touristic function, expressed by the improvement of a tourist image as a consequence of the general image of the area;
- c) the economic function, that is a greater profitability of the public and private investments.



The sustainability of the initiatives will be possible only with deeply interconnected aspects as the contemporary presence of a social, cultural, environmental, economic sustainability.

In a planning optic, the integration and the harmonization of the functions has to follow, for each, its own and specific organizational and operational aspects: planning function (concerning strategic choices and operational phases), integrational function (individualizing synergies among the actors), management function (fundamental for the image of a protected area), optimizational function (monitoring activities and results).

The optimization of using resources consists in the analysis of what the best allocation of investment is to effect, also considering that it is tightly correlated with manifold manifested demands and with the entity of possible synergies.

The central component is given by human resources, from which derives the attention to the competence of the professionalisms involved in managing a protected area.

The sharing affairs implicates a diffused sharing of development objectives and competitiveness of a protected area. It results prosecutable in an effective way if it is not linked with a diffused sharing of all the involved actors, public operators, transactors and residents.

The use of the economic lever implicates the recognition of the fact that it represent the flight wheel for initiatives between public and private subjects able to concretely answer to orientations expressed by the territory into effect, and to environmentally direct the choices in an optics of sustainable development.

The real possibility to use in a safe and easy way the environment, the opportunity to enjoy some services or structures, are some means of parks information and to enjoy some experiences, some emotions from nature, constitute a finishing line to reach for the managers of a protected area.

They have to show that the institution of a protected area doesn't represent an obstacle in any field, neither in the economic one.

Very often, the existence of different problems determined by the hostility of the populations towards the anticipated restrictions for the territories submitted to guardianship, normative and administrative lacks, poor endowments of infrastructures, structures and services represent a limit of the protected areas, but their specificity can become an effective tool for the realization of politics of local development.

In fact, it is possible to concretize management politics of natural resources in a sustainable way, through accords and actions orchestrated by the lower part, between economic, social actors and local administrators, so that the protected area a real dynamic district becomes.

The correct organization and management of the activities on a territory has to be realized through interventions that don't limit the realization of infrastructures, but they have to promote the diffusion of a local entrepreneurial system and the creation of new professional competences and, finally, the multiplication of the investments.

## **5. THE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNING**

The 5th World Parks Congress of the IUCN, in Durban, South Africa, has represented an important moment in the definition process of the role and the position of the protected areas within the objectives of sustainable development and the maintenance of the biodiversity.

By choosing the theme "Benefits over confinements", it was identified that the protected areas cannot be isolated from the communities that live in it, or from economic activities; but above all it was underlined the importance of protected areas for the entire world, so it is necessary to cooperate in with all the interested actors.

The protected areas are recognized by now as places in which biological difference is preserved, endowed with an intrinsic value because a public good and resource for local development; contributing to poverty reduction and economic development.

The Congress has celebrated the constitution of a world net of over 100.000 protected areas, whose surface is tripled in the last twenty years.

It is evident as strong worries remains about the future of the protected areas. In fact, out of the protected areas, wild and natural regions have been decreased of about 50% for twenty years to this part.

A great number of protected areas exist above all on the paper, particularly in the developing countries and in marine environment, and often the plans of local development don't too keep in mind the protected areas with the result that they don't have an effective protection and a real management. The development necessities must be harmonized by management and sustainable use of natural resources. Too often the protected areas are kept to the borders of the decisional processes involving the development planning, the use of the ground and the resources management, also in their proximities.

Globally it is not recognized the decisive role of the protected areas in the realization of a sustainable development, while many important interested actors consider the protected areas as an obstacle to their activities and their aspirations. Moreover, costs and advantages of maintaining the protected areas are not fairly distributed.

Local communities, often suffer greater costs in exchange for scarce economic advantages, while the society in its complex picks up ample benefits but it sustains smaller costs.

Globally, the existing protected areas show a lack of financings, without considering the necessary additional resources to extend the systems of protected areas, and in such way, because of the insufficient investments of States, the protected areas are not often able to satisfy their social and maintenance mission.

Many managers of protected areas don't have enough access to technology, to knowledges, to teachings and to models of best practices in order to practice an effective and suitable management. Too often the protected areas are managed without objectives and shared principles.

Moreover, the climatic changes induced by man arise to destroy the old realizations and to put in danger the future efforts.

The protected areas represent an important objectives for development, thanks to the support of wide part of public, community and private sectors.

It needs a definite effort for the involvement of local communities in order to create, institute and manage the protected areas.

It is necessary to introduce innovations in the protected areas management, by introducing collaborative strategies and partnerships. It has to be pursued the economic exploitation of the protected areas by recognizing their importance for local, national and world economy, in order to stimulate investments and the financings growth.

A definite effort is necessary to strength up managerial abilities of the protected areas, particularly with advanced informative services and by transferring technology.

At the same time, a joined effort is desirable to use communication and education to improve and to widen the support to the protected areas.

Finally, without an effective and representative world net of protected areas, the society will lose a large amount of benefits that they can bring, the possibilities to mitigate poverty and patrimony of the future generations will be reduced.

## **6. THE ITALIAN PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM**

During the time Italy has implemented some measures of guardianship for the protected areas with different finality and through very diversified provisions.

This heterogeneity is imputable derives from a lack of a clear legislation, that allowed to face the manifold aspects of protection; only in 1991 Italy has reached the approval of the 394 law, that represents a valid point of normative and programmatic reference for the guardianship of natural heritage.

The evolution in the conception of guardianship of the protected areas allows to individualize three different typologies:

- protected area and landscape guardianship with a predominantly aesthetical conception, in which the park is an area endowed with natural resources of exceptional landscape, with panoramic and historical values to preserve from man's alterations;

- protected area with scientific finality and strictly protectionist, including parks endowed with cultural, natural and anthropological values but above all of scientific values to be preserved, to improve and to protect with rigid restrictions;

- protected area with multiple finality, concern human activities and installations and whose guardianship is not tied up to particular naturalistic peculiarities; in these zones the presence of the man assumes a decisive role for the environmental equilibrium, for the maintenance of a territory, for landscape and cultural enrichment and for an integrated economic development

According to this concep, the protected areas have to assume as really center human ecosystem more than the natural one, and this involves a greater attention to the integration between human activity of consumption and environment, rather than on their rigid opposition.

The classification of the protected areas distinguishes four categories:

- National parks, mainly founded to the beginnings of last century with a protectionist finality; quantitative and qualitative limits have been established for a checked development of tourism development and of other human activities.

- Regional parks, founded following some delegations conferred to Regions in the DPR 616/1977; in this law protection regards the activity of scientific popularization and tourism but above all the objective to pursue the economic-social development of the local populations.

- Natural reserves, integral or orientated ones, especially founded in the 70's with limited extension; they have as prominent finality the protection of natural resources or landscape of particular scientific endowment, also limiting some productive activities, including tourism.

- Other categories of protected areas, that represent very heterogeneous types of guardianship, created by diversified institutions.

The role of the protected areas is notable in Italy, considering that a surface they occupy is gradually increased up to 10% of the national territory, with more than three million hectares of protected surface.

Regarding the amplification of the protected areas the institution has contributed, to the creation of protected areas with multiple finality, which represents around 60% of the national total. Nevertheless, the realization of an effective national and regional system of protection is still largely incomplete.

The delays are imputable to poor financial resources, at national and regional level, to such purpose: the increasing number of protected zones, a greater availability of necessary resources is not recorded for correctly managing the protected areas.

In Italy, the distinction is evident among the coastal zones and the internal ones in which the protected areas are located.

The areas located along the coastal zones are generally characterized by a strong human pressure and by a tourism subject to notable seasonal fluctuations, with the consequent diminution of the open spaces for people.

The internal areas instead maintain their environmental integrity, that represents the greatest tourist attraction, but introduces more serious ineffectiveness in relationship involving the communication networks, the structures and the necessary services for tourists, so that tourist potentialities of the areas result unexpressed.

To confirm that the Italian territory is among the richest, archaeological, historical-architectural and cultural elements that are present in all the national protected areas or in their immediate proximities.

Nevertheless, in many areas the infrastructures' level results inadequate, and this fact confirm the relative territories's marginality.

About protected areas, it needs to also consider their landscape, naturalistic and scientific value, could be threatened if principles of development sustainability will not be followed.

## ***6.1 Managing the Italian protected areas***

In Italy, confrontations and contrasts still oppose so many local populations to the management authorities of the protected areas, enough to show how much few the declared orientations for a virtuous match of conservative politics with those of the local socioeconomic development have succeeded in concrete translating.

The confrontations concerns above all a lack of trust, and it is well known that trust derives from experience.

Also the orientations toward innovative types of governance, based on responsible aid - for how much emphatically declared in the most greater part of the recent experiences - still find some obstacles in a rigid interpretation of the norms fixed by the 394/1991 national law.

The integration of the protected areas in the nets of ecological connection systems as well as the territorial ones often meets heavy obstacles in the effectiveness link among the special planning of parks and the ordinary planning.

Nevertheless, the research of appropriate solutions asks for full awareness about the problems to face is not the anomalies reflex or exceptionality of Italy, but they rather represent the location of common problems, and they must be faces often more and more with common strategies.

In this sense, it seems to be clear that the debates and the reflections about the politics for the protected areas, too often report entirely an inadequate perception of the problem.

Many discussions about institution, planning and managerial orientations of the protected areas often appear imprisoned of stereotyped images and distant from the reality of nature or island distant from populations' life, or conservative options as passive measures of limitation.

The interpretation of nets and systems seems to be difficult to adequately cover all the critical situations as the biodiversity one.

The concept of "system" doesn't seem interpretable only as net of interconnected protected areas, but they should make integral part.

In this direction there have been more than few reflections and proposals that have tried to delineate new approaches based on a convergence of managerial politics of protected areas, in order to realize a real environmental infrastructure for the whole national territory, to create the conditions fore an economic and social development with the nature respect.

This infrastructural system, also respecting the main finalities of the protected areas, also can be proposed more than a simple system of protected areas, because it meets more articulated and diffused demands of guardianship and connects spaces with more diversified resources.

The role of the protected areas therefore results strengthened, becoming a tool of local development also beyond the protected territory, for a general exploitation of the territory and its resources.

It is possible to highlight a whole series of strategic objectives and specific actions finalized to the sustainable development in territories interested by the protected areas.

Following the main objectives and the operational specific actions of the realization of every objective.

***Goal: environment preservation;***

***actions:***

- Disposal and recycling of residues of human activities
- Productive and residential installations with limited environmental impact in terms of pollution and aesthetical (for instance, bio-housebuilding)
- Guardianship of the ground, of the air, of water and of landscape
- Water treatments also in absence of great urban concentrations
- Control of air conditioning
- Adoption of compatible agriculture
- Expansion of mass transportation system rather than the private one, in order to guarantee an easy connection to the area, and promotion of the use of non polluting transportation systems (i.e., bicycle) in the protected areas
- Maintenance of the ecological equilibriums (limitations to the fruition of natural environment and its relative resources)

***Goal: respecting cultural heritage;***

***actions:***

- Respecting local architectural styles and their own materials
- Exploitation of local traditions (demonstrations, typical products)
- Restauration and maintenance of cultural heritage (suburbs, archaeological sites, artistic and architectural heritage)

***Goal: community life preservation;***

***actions:***

- Respecting local population and his traditions
- Investments of added value in the protected area
- Economic advantages for marginalized classes (women, young people, disabled, needy)
- Fair income distribution
- Citizens' health and safety
- Safeguard of local communities toward environment and local cultural heritage (including environmental education in schools)

***Goal: demand and offer of tourist activity;***

***actions:***

- Tourists' safety and health
- Education and information for tourists about the environment and local cultural heritage
- Respect of nature and character of the protected areas (behavior codes)
- Supporting local occupation
- Integrated approach from the lower part, partnership, clear objectives
- Equilibrium among economic, social and environmental demand
- Transparency of touristic activities in terms of price and quality

- Supporting specialized tourism (scholastic, cultural, scientific, naturalistic, ecotourism) with low environmental impact
- Checking tourist flows (regulation and restrictions to fruition, canalization of visitors flow, formation of groups of visitors of number meeting place, giving privilege to tourists rather than to the excursionists)
- Equity in development opportunities of quality projects among local and external operators
- Entrepreneurs and personnel training
- Involvement of environmental and cultural association
- Management and integration of equipments and tourist services
- Receptive structures diversification (agritourism, private houses, rural tourism, etc.)
- Supply of food stuff coming from eco-compatible agriculture
- Creation of supporting structures to tourists, in order to educate them to a responsible tourism.

Really it means an useful tool to the realization of a sustainable tourism as a flightweel for the local development and for the protected areas as well.

## **7. THE PROTECTED AREAS IN SICILY**

Since the second postwar period Sicily has progressively seen destroyed its own environmental heritage. The equilibrium of the principal ecosystems has been altered, sometimes in irreversible way. Despite this, Sicilian territory still results rich of environmental, historical and cultural values.

The 1981 law (art. 7) individualizes two territories' typologies submitted to guardianship and precisely the natural park, for environments' maintenance of preexisting naturalistic value and for social, recreational and cultural fruition; and natural reserve, to protect one or more environmental values.

Natural reserves are particularly distinguished in:

- naturally integrated reserves, for the maintenance of natural environment in its integrity;
- natural directed reserves, where cultural and agricultural interventions are allowed, because they are not in contrast with the maintenance of the natural environment;
- natural special reserves, for particular and delimited assignments of biological and geologic maintenance;
- natural genetic reserves, for maintaining of the genetic patrimony of animal and vegetable populations.

The 1981 law ratified the first Sicilian protected area, the Zingaro natural reserve, and it foresaw other 19 regional natural reserves between 1984 and 1985.

Nowadays the 10,4% of the Sicilian territory is protected. It really represents a meaningful data if compared to the regional demographic density; of around 250.000 hectares submitted to guardianship, 95.000 involve 90 reserves of which 58 already activated; on the remainder protected territory three natural parks are present: the Etna park, the Madonies park and the Nebrodis park, managed by the Regional Provinces, sicilian Azienda Foreste Demaniali, Legambiente, Lipu, WWF, the Rangers.

The characteristics of the island territories submitted to restrictions are very different from zone to zone, showing the peculiarity of Sicily, that sees to also cohabit very distant reality among them for the vastness and nonhomogeneity of physical, economic and social environments.

Regionally, the provinces of Caltanissetta, Enna and Agrigento, as well as some internal zones of the provinces in Palermo, Messina and Syracuse, underline notable infrastructural lacks, difficulty of connection with attractive centers, a weak economic system and a low quality of life; nevertheless, in some of this areas, important environmental and landscape resources are still present.

A second area, that primarily interests the outskirtses in Palermo and Catania, is characterized by a good endowment of services and infrastructures, a good productive activity and a satisfactory presence of tourists, especially in the summer period.

In the west of the island, Trapani province introduces many sites of cultural and naturalistic interest along the coasts (Mazara del Vallo, Marsala, Mothia, Selinunte, S.Vito Lo capo, the Zingaro Reserve, the Salt pans in Trapani) and in its hinterland (Erice, Segesta, the Alcamo wood).

There is a middly enough level of infrastructures, a positive connection system near the Birgi airport, an economy characterized by the presence of typical quality products, such as wine, oil, salt, and fish.

Also in this territory the great potentialities of tourist development are not followed by remarkable performance, as in delimited areas around Palermo, Catania, but also Taormina, where a satisfactory presence of infrastructures and services is recorded as well as a good cultural level and a positive productive activity.

It is also unfortunately present a strong environmental degrade, as pollution and congestion of many urban centers.

It seems to be clear that, according to territorial environmental in which the Sicilian protected areas are situated, they have had - and they still have - different possibilities of development and integration with the external environment.

According to recent studies, the naturalistic tourism in Sicily is mainly composed from Italian tourists, while foreign tourists data set the region in a lower positions then other Italian regions.

Such a situation is certainly inadequate if we consider the notable environmental and cultural heritage in Sicily, and it therefore requires urgent interventions to reverse this tendency.



## **8. TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND PROBLEMATIC OF THE SICILIAN PROTECTED AREAS**

Sicily has confirmed the priority role of that activities directed to preserve and to valorize natural and cultural resources presents in its territories, in order to develop the economic system of the island.

It is important to underline the strong role given to natural resources by the POR Sicilia 2000/2006, the principal regional programmatic document; according to this document about 25% of the total financial resources of the region are reserved to the natural resources.

Especially in areas that present a strong human pressure the main objective is to recover the environmental and cultural patrimony, which implies the control of present activities in the area and of tourist flows, and finally implies the acquisition of a new mentality and a strong cultural evolution.

The interventions and the activities finalized to the promotion of a sustainable tourism in the protected areas have to follow some prior goals, which correspond some specific actions.

The principal ones concern the environment preservation, to get through:

- actions of disposal and recycling;
- realization of productive installations, residential and infrastructures to limit environmental impact (i.e. bioedilizia);
- landscape, ground, air and water guardianship;
- adoption of compatible agriculture;
- promotion of a non polluting transportation system;
- maintenance of the ecological equilibriums.

It appears very important the respect of present cultural heritage in the protected area, to realize through the restauration and the maintenance of cultural and architectural places, by using local materials and exploiting local traditions (demonstrations and typical products).

The initiatives to preserve the local community life include the fair distribution of income; the investment of added value within the protected area; safety and health for local population; the awariness of local community toward environmental and cultural heritage.

Concerning tourist activities, the main initiatives aimed to information and to educate tourists; to realize behavior codes; to support local occupation; to promote touristic activities with a limited environmental impact; to control tourist flows; training entrepreneurs and personnel; diversification of receptive structures; realization of supporting structures to the organization aimed to promote sustainable tourism.

There is no doubt that all the human activities, inclusive those economic, have to safeguard the natural resources, and tourism represents an important element for the attainment of such objective, with particular reference to specific territorial contexts which are the protected areas.

Nevertheless, the realization of appropriate interventions of tourist exploitation within the protected areas has found some limits in the Sicilian areas, especially because of their marginal location.

It is certainly important the delay in taking conscience of the economic value in the Sicilian protected areas, which has hampered the development of a careful strategy of exploitation.

Too often, in fact, it is recorded a scarce sensibility of the populations and the local institutions to preserve the resources of a territory valorizing it for a wise to obtain a durable income time by time.

An educational politics on population and local administrators is needed in order to eradicate and to permit that all the local actors understand the possibility of territorial development offered by the protected areas.

It is necessary to effect the passage from an optics of sectorial development to a territorial one, where territory is intended not only in a physical sense, but also as sedimentation of historical, cultural and traditional values and knowledges.

In order to assure a tourist development in a sustainable way, it is certainly necessary to assure that the using rate of natural resources for products and services to allow them a full reproduction, and to preserve the stock of existing natural capital.

Concerning touristic activities, it means to abdicate the mass tourism of particular periods of the year, and to the perceptions of elevated and immediate profits, considering that such kind of tourism has a limited duration during the time caused by an excessive human pressure for the environment.

A strategy on sustainable tourism, contrarily repays in the middle and long period, and the deriving benefits result dilutes in the time.

A fundamental precondition for developing a sustainable tourism in the Sicilian protected areas is the diffusion of their knowledge as territories full of nature but also full of history, of traditions, of craftsmanship and typical products; it therefore needs to implement the information strategies toward the great public.

Moreover, it is necessary that such areas, together with touristic operators, can be able to furnish a suitable offer, both to satisfy the already existing demand of sustainable tourism and quality, and to address and not to suffer the tourist demand with different motivations to the protected areas.

In such an optics, a presence of qualified operators becomes essential, in order to spread a new environmental conscience, and to promote the shared planning in the protected areas, also by operating for the safeguard of territories from every form of environmental degrade, encouraging at the same time the development of tourist activity with a low environmental impact.

## **9. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The awareness that all the human activities, inclusive the economic one, have to contribute to the natural resources safeguard, consider tourism as an important element for such objective, with particular reference to specific territorial contexts as the protected areas.

Sicilian protected areas involve a territory full of an extraordinary variety and concentration of historical, artistic and environmental resources, so that they represent one of the main tourist attractions of the Island.

Nevertheless, the realization of appropriate interventions of tourist exploitation of the protected areas has found some limits in the Sicilian areas, because of their marginal location, where many natural and cultural resources do not find a suitable exploitation.

Certainly the delay in taking conscience of the economic value in the protected areas has hampered the development of a careful strategy of exploitation.

Too often, in fact, a scarce sensibility of the populations and local institutions towards the demands to preservation of territorial resources is recorded.

An essential issue is, therefore, a politic of education for populations and local administrators, in order to eliminate any doubts and to understand the possibility of territorial development that the protected area can offer.

It is clearly necessary to pass from an optics of sectorial development to a territorial one, where the territory is not only intended in a physical sense, but also as sedimentation of different and complex values, so that it can become the base of all the local politics.

In order to make a sustainable touristic development in these areas, it is certainly necessary to assure that the rate of use of the natural resources for the production of goods and services is such to allow them the full ability of reproduction, and that the environment is able to absorb the produced issues, so that to preserve the stock of existing natural capital.

Concerning tourist activities, this means to abdicate mass tourism, verified in particular periods of the year, and to the perceptions of elevated and immediate profits, considering that such kind of tourism has a limited duration during the time caused by an excessive human pressure, that is a great damage for the environment.

It therefore appears important the necessity of strategies and operational actions, also respecting the autonomies of the involved subjects, in order to give life to compatible and believable initiatives, referable to a clear and unitary logic.

Particularly they must be define the main promoting subject functions of an ecosustainable tourism.

The protected areas have to stimulate the formation of partnerships that involve tour operators, local community subjects and authority, in order to define and to effect the right strategies.

Tourist enterprises assignment must individualize the formalities by which realizing the principles of sustainable tourism for the programmed activities in the area.

Tour operators have finally to highlight the compatibility of their own offer with the objectives of local resources exploitation in the respect of the environment.

It needs to start a process of investments and programmes in order to realize an integration between both the basic aims of environmental safeguard and the promotion of sustainable touristic and economic activities.

It is finally necessary to understand the fundamental role of a sustainable tourism in the Sicilian context, whose peculiar characteristics make it proper to a development process involved an ecosustainability.

In this sense, it will be possible to have concrete tools to build a tourist process and to valorize territories and patrimony constituted by the protected areas effecting a combination of suitable strategies and techniques of planning, marketing and communication.

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