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THE RESTORATION OF AGRONOMIC AND CULTURAL BIODIVERSITY AS A STRATEGY OF TOURISTIC SUSTAINABILITY IN CILENTO

1. Towards a new touristic culture

In the field of the general debate about the limits of development, the awareness that touristic development is not unlimited is becoming more and more disseminated. First of all, this is because policies highlighting tourism as a strategy for development often prefer public intervention offering immediate economic advantages, but do not provide global and long term stability in the territory. Such strategies also often involve wild exploitation of environmental resources and not their protection.

In the long term, the consequences of these choices are more and more dangerous and sometimes tragic, also from an economic point of view. It is well recognized that very often environmental assets, both natural

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and cultural are non-renewable resources, destined to be exhausted if consumed and excessively exploited. On the other hand, tourism is a social phenomenon in continuous evolution including: the needs and desires of tourists, the quality of supply, the relationship with a wider economic and cultural context. The flexibility and variability of demand could mean that the model for touristic promotion that has enabled the progress of the whole Mediterranean area is not functional anymore, but even may represent obstacles to enhancing the attractiveness of areas.

The present growing demand for environmental quality and cultural use, could not be satisfied in damaged coastal areas due to the fact that tourism would cause ever weakening ecosystems and landscape, neither in areas where a lack of interest has erased local history and culture.

The satisfaction of present demand has enabled earning a lot of revenue in the short term, but has also led to the homologation of supply. Today, touristic areas have to compete not only by increasing supply, but by presenting a unique selling point. The possibility of change is inhibited by present infrastructure and the persistence of an image perviously built to promote and publicize a resort or area.

2. From sustainable tourism to environmental tourism

The positive effects of tourism are economic effects and the development of links between people from different countries and cultures. But tourism also has an environmental impact that is very dangerous. In fact in the Mediterranean, above all in Italy, tourism means over-exploitation of coastal land, uncontrolled building, hyper-production of waste in coastal areas, woods, lakes and rivers, together with pollution and also has consequences for human relationships, loss of historical and cultural identity, above all for small communities, full of their own history and culture.

The fast development of tourism was determined not only by high revenue, but also from growing mobility.

A large number of tourists each year visit the Mediterranean coast, which is a major cause of environmental damage. So, coastal towns and small fishing villages are losing their cultural identity, becoming touristic villages and losing their identity due to the impact of touristic infrastructure, which compromises the natural landscape and fragile ecosystems. The Mediterranean represents a geo-economical area in which a large part of international tourism has developed. We can also find cross-modal historical, archaeological and architectural potential for cultural tourism.

Tourism, within the innovative concept of environmental protection, could generate employment for young people, keep residents in an area, either in areas which are major tourist centres or in surrounding inland areas, where new possibilities of employment are possible. Furthermore, the consolidation of real touristic development could bring a seasonal flow of population to southern regions, creating an opportunity for economic development in the whole of southern Italy.

We speak increasingly often about territorial systems in the sustainable development of a region. By this term we mean a new mode of territorial management using a broad approach, that is to say an integrated approach that finds the key to development in the natural and cultural peculiarities of a territory, in conjunction with environmental compatibility [Aloj, 2001].

3. A non-destroying tourism: sustainable environmental tourism

Some regions, due to their natural conditions, history and human presence, stress the importance of a sustainable model for tourism. Sustainable tourism means forms of development, management and touristic activities that respect and protect natural, cultural, economic and social resources in the long term. This is a form of tourism that does not exploit the natural and socio-human potential within the general context of the environment [Aloj, 2001].

Tourism is a social and economic activity strongly linked to environmental quality: the Mediterranean region is particularly fragile and vulnerable, because its social and economic structures cannot sustain the present high impact of tourism. According to the actual needs of an economic system, tourism orientated to the global valorisation of a territory and its cultural heritage needs a global approach. Such an approach should preserve and develop the anthropological, archaeological and historical aspects of a region, its naturalistic characteristics and traditional activities.

An innovation in tourism management at the beginning of third millennium is that the importance of sustainable (also called lifelong or environmental) tourism is being underlined. So, environmental tourism is born in perfect accordance with sustainable development and comprehends each form of development of touristic activities that protects natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a balanced and positive way to the economic development and well-being of people that live and work in these areas. Environmental tourism has a general goal of

discovering natural and human biodiversity from the point of view of environmental culture, as a synthesis of all the natural, sociological, economic and anthropological aspects and, in this sense, is a major economic activity in terms of sustainable development. It is an integrated approach to development that implies growth in the field of environmental consciousness and new forms of empowerment among all the subjects dealing with touristic activities such as tour operators, agencies, local communities, Park agencies, environmental associations, the scientific and academic community. This new form of tourism has to generate economic benefits for the local people through the capillary effect of the economic development of small and medium-sized companies, together with social development.

Integrated tourism is sustainable when it satisfies the needs of tourists and of the development of tourist areas without damaging the potential and naturalistic peculiarities that gave the territory the same touristic vocation and allowed touristic development, preserving its heritage in its natural and cultural aspect and considering the new dimension of biological and cultural biodiversity.

Only a new culture of tourism could offer new resorts to realize the integration of the various social and economical components that characterizes tourism and assure the sustainability of the environment.

4. The case study of Cilento.

A new touristic model of sustainability

Cilento is a geographical territory at the southern extremity of the Salerno Gulf and delimited in the north by the Sele River, in the East by Vallo di Diano, in the South by the Policastro Gulf and in the West by the Tirreno Sea (Figure 1 and 2). Cilento is well known for its coastline from Agropoli to the mouth of Bussento River and the best known areas are "Marina di Camerota, Capo Palinuro, Marina di Ascea, S. Maria di Castellabate".

Since 1991, the area have been protected by the institution of a National Park. The National Park of Cilento e Vallo di Diano (181.048 hectares) is the second largest Italian protected area. The size of the Park entails the simultaneous presence of different natural and environmental features of high value. The presence of historical and cultural heritage, such as the archaeological area of Paestum and Certosa of Padula, numerous castles and historic buildings, as well as other areas of high environmental value, create great opportunities for tourism.

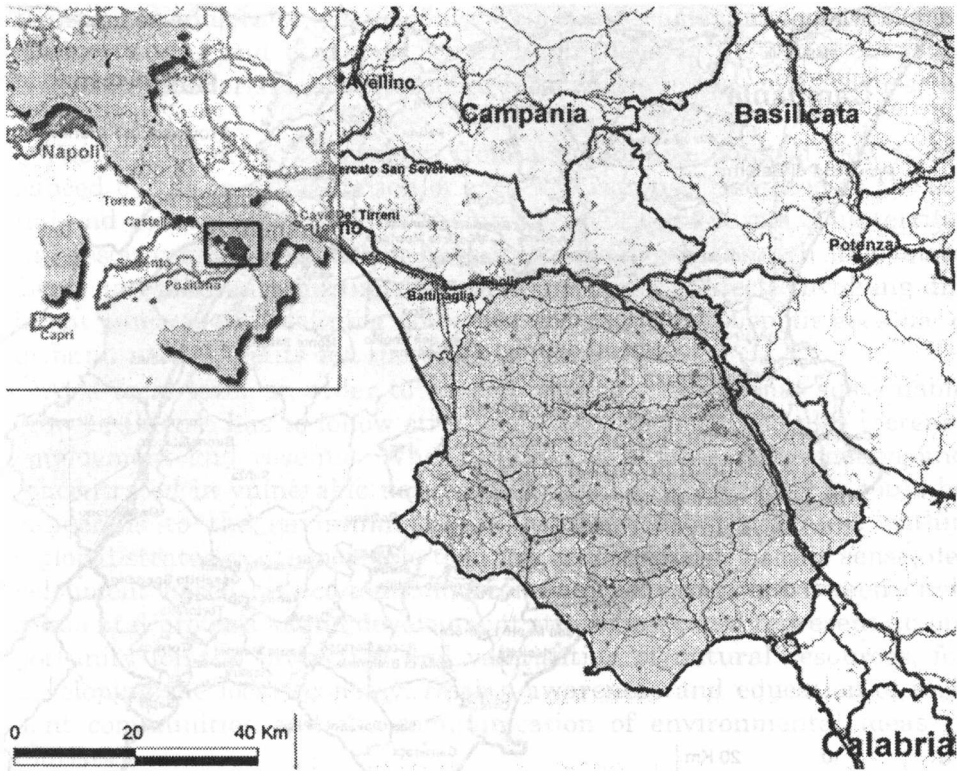


Fig. 1. The Cilento region

Source: Celata, 2002.

The landscape in inland areas, rich in environmental and cultural value, is the expression of a strong integration between nature, architecture and preservation of the ecological system, in the structure of cultivation, organisation of routes, network of towns and traditional characteristics. In these areas, even in the presence of deterioration caused by a lack of maintenance, the conservation of the character of towns is assured by limited change, due to the absence of economic resources and opportune processes of development. The coastline, on the contrary, characterized by touristic development that has started up processes of extensive transformation, exploitation of the soil and resources, is very compromised in the conservation of its identity [Caterina, 2001]. In 1998 the National Park of Cilento and Vallo of Diano, together with the archeological areas of Paestum and Velia was added to the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

The institution of the park should be a factor of active valorisation and instrument of management and dynamic conservation for these

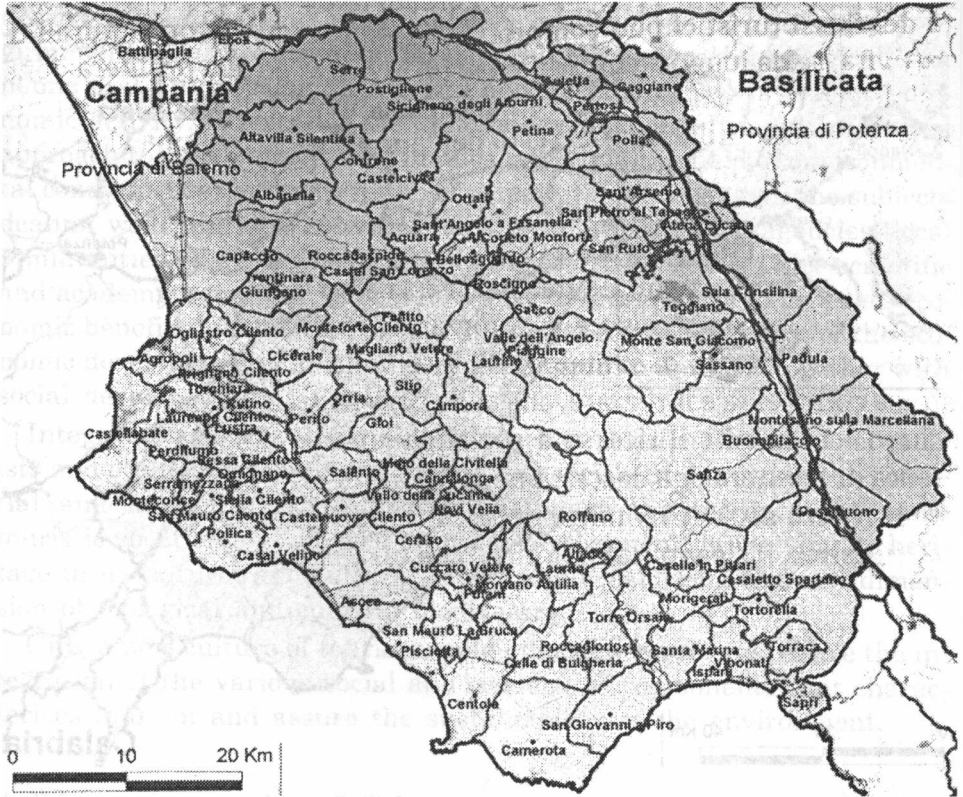


Fig. 2. The Cilento region – a closer view

Source: Celata, 2002.

towns by way of using the opportunities the park creates for the development of local economies [Caterina, 2001].

Tourists in Cilento have a diversified choice among the different offers of various areas, as a result of the integration between the coastline and inland regions. However, we suggest strategies to increase the value of inland areas, which will also help to stop the uncontrolled coastal development. But the inland areas have to be competitive and promote tourism efficiently through an integrated and systemic valorisation at the supply side. Cilento is rich in history, culture, nature, landscape and tradition that expresses itself through artistic heritage, folklore, a traditional local products. All this has to be seen from a marketing point of view linked to the quality of touristic services and to the satisfaction of tourists.

Each territory, and hence Cilento, has to refer to quality standards in term of touristic supply: above all the environment, safety of the infra-

structure, handicrafts, gastronomy. Tourism becomes an instrument to promote social and economic resources, to develop historical, artistic, landscape, folkloristic assets and so recover the values and richness of traditions.

The promotion of the territory from a sustainable point of view is enhanced by the implementation of each programme orientated to the social and economical growth of Cilento through eco-tourism. The territorial resources for eco-tourism have to be developed through innovative forms and policies of partnership, with the positive effects involving different subjects and defining goals in which economic benefit goes hand in hand with benefits for the whole community.

At a local level, in order to develop economic and social sustainable growth, Cilento has to follow strategies of eco-tourism and also increase employment and revenue. When tourism is a mass phenomenon and concentrated in vulnerable natural and rural environments, it could be dangerous to the environment, but it could also be positive within a global strategy of responsible territory management. In this sense, development based on eco-tourism, promoting integration between environmental protection and development strategies, could represent an opportunity for the protection and valorisation of natural resources, for developing the local economy, raising awareness and education of resident communities and the communication of environmental ideas to tourists.

A model of development based on eco-tourism could also represent the joint satisfaction of goals of conservation, valorisation of natural and cultural heritage and goals of economic development. Eco-tourism encourages activities linked to welcoming tourists (e.g. hotels and gastronomy), promotes activities linked to local production that is an expression of traditions and the professional peculiarities of the territory (handicraft, production of traditional products), satisfies environmentally-minded tourists interested in gaining knowledge of nature and local culture.

Considering all this we present integrated strategies for the territory of Cilento to develop its uniqueness. In this way tourism, as a social and economic field, combines with the environment, promoting the territory as an economic value in itself, but also implements sustainable development, supporting above all quality of life. This form of development assumes a major role for rural communities, such as the Cilento community, in which there is a low population density and strong rural traditions and vocation. But also, if we consider Cilento as an *environmental unicuum*, a *symbolic ecosystem* [Aloj, 2001], we well know that the capacity of resilience and environmental restoration are intact and implicit.

Our proposals are:

– **The creation of an Eco-museum:** in the context of a new culture of sustainability, such a museum would be oriented towards the realization of an open regional museum, but, above all, would be an instrument for new economic development and social recovery. An open air museum does not enclose its exhibits, but tells the story of a community, its evolution, its rules, its opportunities also in economical and employment terms that are offered by the environmental culture and by sustainable development. Landscape, arts, professions and gastronomy of an ancient tradition become present day and an object of territorial restoration and in the case of Cilento also of alimentary restoration. The protection of landscape, of material culture and of the *genius loci* of a territory is protection in productive and dynamic terms. In this cultural *scenario* the realisation of an open air museum is very interesting. For Cilento, it is not only a local museum, but also an integrated system of the various peculiarities of the region, managed in a productive way for the responsible utilization of a territory. The realisation of an Eco-Museum is a form of integration of the national Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano. Eco-Museum means *cultural mediator* [Aloj, 2004] of material and environmental culture, enabling tourists to understand the identity of local populations. Through such an Eco-Museum Cilento becomes a *unicuum*, because all the resources are networked.

– **Eco-management of welcoming and gastronomic structures:** in Cilento quality standards could be introduced in order to increase tourist satisfaction. If organisations apply these standards they may gain a star-value. The management of a welcoming structure (hotels, restaurants, hostels) is a complex phenomenon of the interaction of different services and involves various people (guests, employers, suppliers, local people). The European systems EMAS and ISO 14000 for the certification of the environmental quality of companies could be applied in this field, but we could also propose integrated certification systems that represent certification of quality, safety and environmental protection. Furthermore, we propose the adoption of the Quality Chart, which is a promotional document that establishes the role of the structure and the right of its customers regarding standards of service. This document is a guarantee of service standards and communicates them to public opinion giving useful information on forwarding proposals, claims, requirements. This document is orientated at communicating the environmental values of the company. The positive effects will be in terms of the company's image, reduction of negative effects, improvement of customer relationship and increasing productiveness. In particular, considering gastronomy we could create innovative *routes of alimentary quality* as

a new model of territory management that are an evolution of the *routes of taste*. If by routes of taste *humankind returns to re-live history through ancient tastes, colours and smells of dishes, which are traditional products of the territory* [Cantarelli, 2003], by routes of alimentary quality we recognize the engagement of gastronomy to produce and distribute such food while respecting safety and quality standards, protecting agronomic biodiversity, as well as cultural and human biodiversity, thanks to the restoration of the heritage of local culture.

– **Communication on Environmental Matters:** communication on environmental matters is becoming a management instrument of social and economic territorial agencies for development plans and to implement a *trait d'union* between the environment and political decision processes. Communication on environmental matters could contribute to comprehending the environment in its natural and human complexity.

– **Realization of Agenda 21** to identify a system of useful indicators for planning and programming a model of sustainable development to stimulate the socio-economical vitality of the area through the dissemination of models of endogenous development which are integrated and sustainable and also promote the territory and its resources. This refers to a commitment by the local communities to make the environment a basis of economic, social, cultural and touristic development orientated at satisfying not only the needs of the present generation, but also of future generations, to attain a better quality of life and a greater equity within the present generation in compatibility with the need to preserve a satisfactory level of conservation of natural resources. A local Agenda 21 project could be considered as a new local project, but inserted into an integrated strategy at national, European, international level to stimulate the socio-economic vitality of the Cilento region through the diffusion of a model of endogenous, integrated and sustainable development could well promote the region and its resources.

– **Improvement of the transport system** to satisfy the main needs for mobility of residents, being at the same time an instrument of touristic sustainability. When we think about the environmental effects of transport, we often associate this with highly populated areas with an overloaded communication infrastructure. But the effects of transport are also visible in areas with a low population density, in particular in the rural areas of Cilento, where environmental protection is essential for the socio-economical valorisation of the region. The satisfaction of residents' needs for mobility is a determinant of the quality of life and, consequentially, of the identity of small rural towns. The transport system, when it is orientated to the protection of natural resources, to the respect of the character of rural towns and landscapes, could be a motor

of sustainable development in a rural territory, overcoming the social marginality and disadvantages of rural areas which have poor links with the rest of territory. All this is of greater importance in view of a model of territorial development treating sustainable tourism as an opportunity for the protection of the landscape, as well as cultural and environmental assets. All sectors of the economy (such as transport) are to be sustainable in such a project. In the local context of Cilento, there are definitely some problems linked to the mobility generated by tourism. The flow of tourists is concentrated in time (seasonal peaks) and space (areas of high appeal are concentrated on the coastline). Also, tourists use private transport and this provokes congestion, traffic jams, lack of parking, interference of resident's travel plans. The most congested roads go through areas of environmental value. Another problem is the lack of studies and research assessing the carrying capacity of the territory with a traditional transport system, the lack of information on traffic flow in the area of Cilento and, above all, the lack of a monitoring system. The lack of information requires a methodological approach that determines opportunities for the area to promote sustainable mobility:

1) initiatives of informing and raising awareness on the relationship between transport and the environment: An Information Centre on Sustainable Mobility to acquire information about accessibility, public transport, etc. Information campaigns to promote sustainable behaviour during the periods of highest tourist activity.

2) initiatives in the field of intermodal transport: the use of vehicles in a more integrated way. All this requires the optimal utilization of railways, buses, car, electric bikes, thanks to improvements in connections between different forms of transport. To avoid the damaging effects of tourist flow, such intermodality could restrict cars from travelling into areas of environmental value and attractive to tourists and guarantee transport on electrical buses, thus reducing traffic.

3) Initiatives regarding the railway system: restoration of disused tracks, opening of abandoned stations as tourist information centres.

4) A "greenway system" of paths, channels, old river courses, railway tracks to give recreational, ecological, historical and cultural benefit to pedestrians and cyclists. Greenways represent a system of trails dedicated to non-motorized movement to connect people with the natural, historical and landscape resources of a territory.

- **Innovative touristic routes:** the plan for sustainable tourism in Cilento proposes an integrated system of routes or circuits for pedestrians and cyclists in areas in which the minimization of the impact from tourism is important. Mapping is central to the development of sustainable tourism, due to the need for detailed identification of areas of envi-

ronmental value, their touristic potential and their functioning. Such routes could be an interesting proposition to tourists giving them the satisfying experience of discovering the natural landscape without damaging environmental resources. Cross-functionality could realize a new relationship between agriculture, the environment and tourism promoting an integrated approach that finds the key to territory development in the peculiarities of the natural and cultural landscape and in the functioning of environmental compatibility.

1. Route of religious pilgrimage
2. Route of local folk traditions
3. Route of hypogeal biodiversity
4. Route of archaeological sites
5. Route of castles
6. Route of historical centres
7. Route of typical products (wine, oil, milk and milk products, wheat and wheat products)
8. Route of mills
9. Route of material culture
10. Route of ceramic and terracotta
11. Route of forged iron
12. Route of limestone
13. Route of basket and wood handicraft
14. Route of embroidery handicraft
15. Routes of history, literature and philosophy (the suggestions of G.B. Vico are Elea's school, Parmenide and Zenone, Virgilio suggests – Palinuro).
16. Routes for physical activity in the environment (walking, trekking, cycling, caves, horse riding, rafting, fishing, birdwatching, snorkelling, diving).

5. Conclusions

Tourism has a strategic role for the economic growth of the Cilento region. In marginalised areas that have an undeveloped economy, tourism, when integration between the different fields of economy (agriculture, construction building, transport, etc.) can be achieved, has a positive effect. But it would be a mistake to only focus on the coastal tourism that is very seasonal and developed: it would be more advantageous to develop *target forms of tourism*: e.g. natural, cultural and rural tourism. These target forms of tourism make use of environmental resources, the supply of accomodation and gastronomic sector. Together with the ac-

companying economic benefits, this represents the empowerment of a territory.

The peculiarity of Mediterranean ecosystems has as one of its characteristics a strict and continuous relation between natural systems and humankind. The cultural evolution, as one may think of this co-evolution, between the history of humankind and these ecosystems has resulted in a continuous modelling of the landscape.

These conditions have also resulted in continuous impact from humans on the environment. Thus, we could speak of the *imprinting* of humankind on Mediterranean ecosystems and of the dependence of the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity on the political and managerial capabilities of the Mediterranean population.

Such a new proposal for a politico-managerial model for the functioning of socio-economic sustainable development could ensure the preservation of the character of the Mediterranean region not only in simple environmental terms, but above all in social, political and ethical terms that could be empowered only in a framework of international and European cooperation.

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