

## **TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: A CASE-STUDY OF SICILY**

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This article deals with a tourist monographic essay, both in its form and in its content, with the clear objective to become a claim for a model of Mediterranean tourism, that may not need reinvention nor innovation for its success. The island of Sicily is the study case chosen as a model because it presents some characteristics that blend the traditional sun and sand with the new ecotourism, and cultural and sports tourism. Despite to benefit of the same resources as many other regions of the Mediterranean, its insularity and main magnitudes could afford resources enough to reinforces its elements of attraction, its location in the very centre of the Mediterranean, its contrasted natural landscapes, and its complex historical, urban and artistic heritage.

The article is organized in fifth different parts. First of all, there is a general discussion on the role of innovation in relation to culture, economy and policies, it is to tourist activities. Besides to this discussion there is the definition of the different variables that allow to present the Sicily island as a sustainable model of tourist offer. After this introductory part, a real tourist monographic study on the rich heritage of the island is developed, based on a fieldwork of the authors done in 2008. In this framework, the second part, analyzes the diversity of the natural landscapes that includes vast mountainous and volcanic regions and Mediterranean beaches or fertile traditional agricultural plains. The third part, presents a big selection of the vast historical and artistic Sicilian Heritage that matches with the diversity of cultures and civilizations that have colonized the island along centuries which remains are exceptional. The fourth part, describes the major and more significative cities that are the engines of the Sicilian economy, where the biggest part of the social life of the island is concentrated. Finally, the fifth part, advances some conclusions on the study case as a model that could be applied to other tourist Mediterranean regions.

In addition to the discussion of the fact that the success in the contemporary tourism doesn't necessarily pass by technological innovations, and that the maintenance of a successful tradition could be more fruitful, the article assumes other purposes. The knowledge society that progressively defines the Globalization at the very beginning of the XXIst Century overvalues innovation; Globalization that signifies the unicity of

technique all around the world, as has been pointed out by the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos. In fact, the pre-eminence of the technological culture imposes a rapid rhythm of succession of innovations that seems to infect almost de whole aspects of society, culture, economy and politics. The first argument against this interpretation is the fact that innovation, the search for the new, for the differentiation through innovation has been inherent to all the human beings all along the History, as explained by the French sociologist Gilles Lypovetsky in his essay on the Empire of the ephemeral. Each generation, each artistic or cultural movement tries to become totally new in regard with all the precedents, and new as a qualifying definition lasts less of their own generation; renaissances and revivals continuously appear as negative definition in respect of the other conceptions. The famous sentence of the Marx and Engels Communist Party Manifest, write in 1848, and that intitulates the essay of Marshall Berman, is one of the all possible demonstration.

In this direction, the vindication of the traditional model of Mediterranean tourism, summarized on the Sicily case, tries to underline that innovation don't necessarily be a new invention. To use the traditional successful strategies could be the best resource to local development. Sometimes the traditional formula could help to solve the new problems; traditional Mediterranean tourism, like the Sicilian, planned and regulated, could better survive the contemporary crisis and changes.

The tourism monograph presented in this article is base on the long chorographic tradition of the classical Geography, since the classical Greeks or the medieval Arabs, today almost forgotten and left on the hands of journalists. These kind of monographies have obtained scientific category with the methodology of the French regionalist geographers, started by Raoul Blanchard. The "new" Geography developed on the 1960's mainly by the Anglo-Saxons, the quantitative revolution, has devaluated this methodology, that in some way is also vindicated.

The Mediterranean islands constitute an excellent study case because their relative isolation in regard to many external variables. Sicily is the biggest of the Mediterranean islands and demonstrates an equilibrium in the exploitation of its tourist resources, that combines accessibility with the maintenance of its traditional attraction. There is not a monoculture of sun and sand tourism, like in many other Mediterranean regions, that had destroyed other resources, like landscape, Heritage or environment.

Sicily is a triangular island open to all the Mediterranean fluxes, that centricly presides as a sort of *plaza Mayor*. For this reason is like an alive museum that accumulates a unique historical Heritage coming from many different people that had colonized the island since almost the last three thousand years. Today it is possible to find remains from the Hellenic, the Carthaginian, the Roman, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Normans, the Swedish, the Catalans or the Spanish. Sicily adhered to the Italian unity very soon, escaping from the independentist movements; the first allied Lansing has been in Sicily, in July 1943, at the very end of the Second World War. At the same time has been the birthplace of many great artists, writers, philosophers, composers, and has inspired many foreing travellers, because was the last stage of the famous British Grand Tour, when the Mediterranean was not anymore the geopolitical centre of the world.

Because its dimensions, that convert Sicily in a sort of the older sister of the other Mediterranean islands, becomes a real macrocosms, meanwhile Malta, Lesbos or Minorca could be microcosms. For the same reason its natural framework is very diversified and original, with many contrasts, between mountains and plains, between littoral and interior, between country and cities. All the moving colours of the Mediterranean are remarked by the dark mass of the Etna, the highest active volcano of Europe, with its black coulees arriving to the sea, contrasting with the white snow of its winter heights. A quiet island of emigration to every coin of the World with masses of tourist all around the year; a conflictive island between mafia and *omertà* and modernization.

