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THE TOURISTIC LOCAL SYSTEMS AS A MEANS TO RE-BALANCE TERRITORIAL DIFFERENCES IN SICILY*

Abstract

The Italian new law (n.135/2001) about the re-organization of touristic activities of Regions has contributed to re-think all the resources related to touristic valorisation in a systemic view point. In fact according to the new approach, the Local Touristic System (LTS in Italian law) regards not only the naturalistic and the cultural resources and the hotels but also the economic and services activities that can related to tourism. Although Sicilian Region has not instituted its official LTS, in our paper we will try to define the LTS in Sicily in a particular point of view. In fact we will consider not only the touristic areas but also the areas less developed, because the systemic approach allows us to use the touristic activities as a factor of territorial re-balance instead of territorial polarization. We also will consider the principal touristic port related to the LTS, according the point of view of an integration among ports and its surrounding areas. So the ports become a door to the inner areas full of naturalistic and cultural resources.

1. The Etnean Region

Etna's slopes have been inhabited by princes and kings, noblemen and knights. But, most of all, they have always been loved by generations of farmers who have, in the course of the centuries, handed down customs, arts and crafts.

The settlement dates back to the period of the Greek colonization (8th cent. BC) which concerned the most fertile areas of the coast. Other dominations would follow: the Romans (3rd cent. BC), the Byzantines (6th cent.), the Arabs (9th cent.), the Normans (11th cent.). These latter's influence is still

* Although this work is fruit of the combined research of the two writers, the paragraphs 1 and 2 were written by Vittorio Ruggiero, the paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 by Luigi Scrofani.

visible in the great defensive works and in the typical Norman crown-organization of towns, a control belt around the volcano to guard the principal roads leading to northern and central Sicily. Other important subsequent dominations would be the Swabians, the Aragonese, and the Spanish, whose remains would add up to the Greek archaeological finds and myths – we can remember the legend of the shepherd Aci who was killed by Polyphemus for love and jealousy of Galatea. However, the cultural and artistic profile of the little towns surrounding the volcano especially bear witness of two important historical moments: the Norman and the Baroque periods. Several highly interesting monuments in these towns date back to these periods. Their main peculiarity is certainly to be found in the remarkable use of lava rock (Busignani, 1983).

Therefore, if on one side the Normans would scatter the Etnean region with castles (Motta S. Anastasia), massive towers (Paternò and Adrano), fortified houses within urban areas (Randazzo), impregnable fortresses (Maletto and Castiglione), but also with severe “fortress-churches”, the lava flow of 1669, and even more the violent earthquake of 1693 (which destroyed the whole Etnean area), would mark the coming of a new artistic identity, the Baroque. Thanks to this new artistic expression, poor materials would be dignified by the creative fantasy of the forms, and by the new and impressive taste for the spectacular coming both from Spanish culture and from Rome (Guastella, 2000).

The reaction of this corner of Sicily to the above mentioned destructive events was rapid and impressive; in just a few decades several towns were completely removed from the site where the violence of nature had devastated them and rebuilt in the light of new urban strategies. Indeed, the plans of these towns, by privileging large and straight roads, as well as perfectly geometrical urban settings, seem to be meant both to meet earthquake-proof standards and to welcome those solemn processions that are deeply rooted in the traditions of the territory. For example, we could mention the cross-setting characterizing the new Catania, and the chessboard-setting of Belpasso.

The last chapter in the history of this region’s art is rich enough to deserve at least a mention: it includes both the 19th century architecture, which, though characterized by repetition patterns, has produced some original buildings or restorations, such as the Cathedral of Giarre; and the Art Nouveau, which would establish itself in the first years of the 20th century through the works of some genial architects such as Malerba, Lanzerotti and Fichera (Busignani, 1983).

Therefore, we can state that the Etnean Region’s identity and territory specificity are certainly unique. However, it is important to underline that such identity is only partially based on factors connected to the natural environment, and that on many respects it comes from the anthropic, social and economic unity (Di Blasi, 1983).

In fact, the main characteristic of this territory is undoubtedly represented by the old little towns surrounding the volcano, whose features depend on the slope they're on and its history, orography and climate. This fact is to be considered if we want to find, within the area, more or less defined functional and socio-cultural contexts which – by recognising and exploiting their peculiarities in terms of history, traditions, geographic localization, culture and environment – can develop forms of cooperation for the promotion and enhancement of their specificities, aiming at the definition of a local “product” system.

Indeed, the empiric application of our research, which aims at defining potential LTS (Local Tourism Systems) and, if possible, subdividing them into subsystems, has allowed to find three different sub-areas within the wider territorial unity of the Etnean region, each of them endowed with its own identity. They are the following:

- South Etna Simeto
- North Etna – Alcantara Valley
- Ionian-Etnean Coast

2. The Etnean Region's Tourism Systems

These three systems, which result from the assessment of a series of environmental and functional variables, reflect the directions expressed in the territorial negotiated planning instruments which have been implemented in the Etnean area. The concept of cooperation between public and private local interest holders is a factor that lies at the core of a potential LTS and is fundamental in order to achieve a sustainable development of tourism through the sharing of objectives, strategies and instruments. The Etnean towns seem to have well understood this concept. Indeed, they have shown a strong attitude to local development based on negotiation. In particular, the towns that have most actively collaborated to development projects in the south-etnean area, and which belong to the *South Etna System*, are: Adrano, Belpasso, Biancavilla, Paternò, Motta S. Anastasia, Santa Maria di Licodia, Misterbianco, Ragalna, Nicolosi, Camporotondo E., San Pietro Clarenza, Pedara, Trecastagni and Viagrande.

These territorial units belong to a very active internal piedmont area, which a recent study has described as being highly endowed with planning skills (Dematteis, Governa and Vinci, 2003) and aiming at the implementation of a sustainable and integrated local system based on such resources as agriculture, handicraft, and tourism.

Even the *North Etna Territorial System* is characterized by a marked tendency to negotiated planning, and the towns that have taken part in the implementation of local development projects (Bronte, Calatabiano, Castiglione di Sicilia, Francavilla di Sicilia, Gaggi, Graniti, Linguaglossa,

Maletto, Malvagna, Maniace, Moio Alcantara, Motta Camastra, Piedimonte Etneo, Randazzo, Roccella Valdemone, and Santa Domenica Vittoria) have shown a clear interest in the restoration and exploitation of the existing heritage, in order to favour their fruition.

The actors of the Etnean Coast are also particularly active, as far as planning is concerned; the Catania metropolitan area, and all the other towns of the *Ionian Coast* actively work to improve competitiveness of local economy leading sectors, especially tourism, through the strengthening of cohesion and social cooperation.

Important examples of systemic aggregation for tourism development can be found in the Ionian-Etnean, whose planning skills are stable and well-established.

We must say that the systems we're talking about, apart from being characterized by a high degree of planning skill and a strong specialization in the tourism sector, also take part to different projects concerning the whole Etnean Region, as well as more or less extended territorial units based on the following factors:

- environment (for example, the Etna Park, the Etna PIT, the Seam Project and the Rever Medocc, the Volcano's Towns);
- culture (for example, the Lava District, which is part of the Lodis Project, and the Ithaca Project);
- food-and-wine connoisseurship (for example, the "Wine Towns", and the "Oil Routes");
- social issues (Tourism protection and prevention project);
- sport (the Etna Golf Route, the Etna Horse Routes, the Etna Bicycle Route).

In a way, all these projects tend to exploit the common features of the varied landscape and socio-economic heritage of the Etnean area, which is made up by extremely different territorial systems.

Indeed, the Etnean context cannot be defined homogeneous and is characterized by strong demographic and economic concentrations, especially along the coast, where we can find the biggest differences in population and per capita value added. But, although the South Etna system has been characterised by a constant demographic growth for about thirty years (which result from Catania urban de-concentration process, that is the turning of holiday resorts for the town's elites into real dormitory areas of the town), such growth has not been followed by the development of local economies; indeed, the new residents keep on working in the chief town, thus giving place to commuting situations, which are confirmed by the structure of Local Work Systems (LWS).

The demographic trend of the North Etna area has been different. The area has been characterized by a sudden collapse between 1961 and 1991, resulting among other things from the progressive "drifting" of inland people towards the coast. In fact, this phenomenon, which is still taking place though less intensively, has always been present in this area in synergy with the more general and

dramatic one of emigration towards northern Italy or foreign countries. This has resulted in the depopulation of the economically weakest areas, especially mountain areas, characterized by not very fertile soil and insufficient availability of water for irrigation.

The demographic upturn of this area during the last decade seems to be ascribable to the promotion of agro-sylvo-pastoral potentials, the modernization of agricultural and industrial structures, the improvement in vocational training for young people, and the general enhancement of the territory's specificity. Moreover, we must say that the variety of the anthropic habitat characterizing the North Etna area's towns, which is reflected in the complexity of the rural landscape (due to the presence of differentiated cultures according to altimetry and complex forms of rural settlement), instead of being a development factor, stimulating the integration of the different municipal economies, has turned into a braking element. Indeed, no town has ever succeeded in qualifying itself as gathering pole for all the others, so, while each town provides elementary services autonomously, for intermediary and rare services (in the social, commercial, cultural and sanitary fields) the north etnean district depends on external poles.

Our considerations on the purely agricultural nature of the internal, southern and northern areas of the Etnean region, are confirmed by the analysis of the different economic sectors' incidence on per capita value added produced by the territory's Local Work Systems.

The Adrano area, for example, is characterized by an agriculture incidence value which is almost triple (6.13 %) compared to the national average (2.76 %), and remarkably higher values have been reported in Bronte and Randazzo areas, where the incidence of the primary sector reaches almost 18%.

The economic sectors' incidence on per capita value added produced by the territory's Local Work Systems in the Ionian-Etnean Coast is certainly different. In this context, indeed, the secondary and tertiary sectors represent the main source of income, reaching incidence values that are remarkably higher than the national average, while agriculture, especially citrus cultivation, occupies a less significant position, though it is high-quality.

Therefore we can state that agriculture, which is favoured by the volcanic nature of the soil, good bio-climatic conditions, water abundance and also local traditions and millenary culture, has always represented the economic driving force of the small Etnean towns. Indeed, their products have obtained important acknowledgements such as the following trademarks: DOC (appellation contrôlée), IGP (Protected Geographic Indication), and DOP (Protected Origin Mark). They have been attributed to such products as the Etna DOC Wine, which is the result of the Etnean territory's ancient tradition in wine growing and producing and which reflects the extraordinary force and intense warmth of the soil. In particular, the "Etna DOC" trademark has been conferred to the white

wine obtained from Carricante and Cataratto white grapes mixed with Trebbiano and Minnella white grapes; the superior white wine, obtained from grapes exclusively coming from Milo's territory, which has incomparable fragrance and taste; the red and rosé wines produced with grapes from Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Mantellato, and Nerello Cappuccio vines.

Wine growing and production represent a very important sector of the Etnean economy. In fact, the towns of Pedara, Milo, Linguaglossa and Castiglione di Sicilia belong to the "Wine Towns" National Association, together with other 536 Italian towns with remarkable enological vocation. The association was founded in 1987 by towns which give their names to wines produced in their territory, DOC wines, or wines somehow connected to their territories as to history, tradition, and culture (Cittadelvino.it).

The Protected Geographic Indication has been attributed to the blood orange, with its "tarocco", "moro" and "sanguinello" varieties, which has the particular pigmentation and the specific organoleptic features of the fruit produced only in this area. Whereas, the DOP trademark has been given to the "Monte Etna" extra-virgin olive oil produced in the groves, up to 1000 metres above sea level, of a large area extending from south-west to north-east of the volcano, where the "Etna DOP prickly pear" is also produced.

This extraordinary and variegated territory is also enriched by other traditional products such as the Bronte Pistachio, the Maletto Strawberry, the Linguaglossa Cherries, the Zafferana Honey.

These are all excellent cultivations, particularly suitable for the confectionary industry, which is an important sector of local handicraft together with wrought iron, wood and lava stone workings. This latter is artistically modelled by skilful stonecutters and is used as decorative element in the Etnean Towns, representing the symbol of the landscape identity. The black lava stone has always marked the Etna rural landscape as well. Strictly connected with centuries-old local rural traditions, the huge Etnean real estate is made up of ancient and suggestive Sicilian houses, farms and villas, ancient millstones, oil mills and furnaces which, though different in form and structure, represent relevant elements of the landscape and witness the changes in the relationships between society and territory.

We must say that, on the top of Mount Etna, the presence of rural structures is particularly in touch with the landscape, since the rather primitive lava make is well harmonized with the surrounding volcanic environment. If we move downhill, where cultivations are more intensive, the primitive rural houses are replaced by the houses of the landowners, which are numerous on the southern slope in particular, and some big farms. Therefore, there's a striking change from houses that are almost totally integrated with the environment to complex architectonic structures, characterized by the presence of complementary elements (such as wells and cisterns, stores, havens for tools and

animals), usually surrounding a central open courtyard. Despite their huge dimensions, these houses are well integrated with the natural environment thanks to the simple and closed volumetry and their dominating position on a hill or a rise.

The same cannot be said, in most cases, for the new buildings such as villas and holiday houses, which are too small and therefore out of scale with the landscape.

A different relation with the natural environment characterizes the large manors in the north-eastern Etna slope, where the fragmented landed property of the southern slope is replaced by the feudal large landed estates still owned by aristocrat families. In the past, in order to run these estates, large manors were built; they were often surrounded by green areas which could become parks or gardens. These particular structures cannot be found in the southern slope (Sanfilippo, 1970). Such symbols of a disappeared rural economy which, during the years, have been adapted to functions different from those of their origins, are becoming important elements of rural forms of tourism. Indeed such new forms of tourism often exploit these structures, thus stimulating their otherwise impossible restoration and revival and the protection of their historical values, which contribute to enrich the strong cultural and historical identity of the territory (Ruggiero-Scrofani, 2001).

Indeed, if we analyse the different kinds of facilities in the North Etna area, we notice that the number of hotels is quite small and their standards are of middling quality, while there's a remarkable number of rural resorts which are the result of the great feudal manors' restoration. Bed and Breakfast hotels are also more and more widespread, thanks to the recent approval, by the Sicilian Region, of the definitive list of the grant applications concerning the notice of competition as provided for by the law 23.12.2000 n. 32. But, although these facilities are already well established in the North Etna District, the number of beds is not very significant and most of them are in the towns of Calatabiano, Randazzo and Linguaglossa, which have therefore the highest indexes of tourism specialization in the area.

The accommodation capacity in the South Etna District is very similar. Unlike the previous one, here we can find a slightly greater presence of hotels in the towns of Nicolosi, Pedara and Motta Sant'Anastasia.

The accommodation capacity of the Etnean coast is completely different. Here, the presence of hotels is very high, equal to 80% of the whole Etnean Region and it is mainly concentrated in the territory of Catania and in the towns of Acireale and Acicastello. The quality of these structures is medium-high, and most of them have large halls where meetings can be held, thus favouring the development of business tourism. Moreover, a greater presence of other forms of high-quality accommodation facilities characterizes the northern part of the coast.

There are also remarkable differences among the ways of fruition of the different territorial systems of the Etnean Region. Tourists are mainly concentrated on the Ionian coast although there's been a decrease since 2002, also because of the international terrorist attacks and the volcanic eruptions. However, such decrease has certainly been smaller in percentage than in the other Etnean districts. Therefore, the reported data point out the strong tourist vocation of the "Etnean Coast", thanks to a high degree of tourism services expansion and the concentration of accommodation facilities, especially hotels; the latter, in particular, have an average permanence index (i.e., the ratio of the nights spent in the hotel to all the clients who stay there) that is rather stable (2 days), though inferior to the Sicilian average (4 days), while the annual average beds occupation rate shows that these plants are underutilized.

As to the other kinds of accommodation facilities, a decrease of nearly 50 % of the average permanence index has been reported, though it is still remarkably higher than the one reported for hotels, while the annual average beds occupation rate shows a slightly positive trend, though its levels are not very significant. On the other hand the average permanence indexes of the inland districts are slightly higher and constantly growing.

3. Assessment and segmentation of the Etnean Region's tourism offer

The analysis of the tourism offer has been carried out by using instruments that were devised on purpose by our research group in order to catch the peculiar aspects of the Sicilian tourism development. The elaboration of specific indexes and indicators has allowed us to compare three aspects of the etnean sub-systems: the area tourism capacity, the level of the tertiary industry expansion and the degree of the system's integration.

The indicator of "touristicity" was created in order to deepen the analysis of the area accommodation facilities, by comparing it with the analogous data concerning the whole Sicilian Region. In particular, we considered the concentration of the accommodation facilities, the tourism supply capacity, the degree of the structures' utilization and the tourists' permanence in them.

As we can see from the data shown in the table, the Ionian coast has a concentration of accommodation facilities which is quite higher than the other Etnean districts and the whole Sicilian Region (34 structures per 100 km² vs. 7 structures in the inland areas and 5 in the whole Sicily); the same could be said about the concentration of beds, which shows a tendency to privilege the coast as an ideal place to invest on, independently of the degree of attractiveness in terms of tourism resources.

The analysis of the degree of the accommodation facilities utilization shows higher values in the coast area than the inland, but only apparently. Indeed, the values concerning the Etnean inland are

altered by the not very high degree of development of the northern district in terms of facilities, while the South Etna sub-system is capable of maximizing the use of accommodation facilities and its values are higher than the whole Sicily ones. A further negative factor in the coast area is represented by the average permanence in its structures, which is shorter than in the other subsystems.

Indicator of “touristicity”: comparisons among the different sub-areas of the Etnean LTS						
Indicators		South Etna	North Etna	Inland	Coast	Sicily
Accommodation facilities concentration	n.structures/ surface	0.083724	0.059321	0.0716404	0.344154	0.053642
Beds concentration	n. beds/ surface	3.505038	2.751895	3.1321193	27.47651	4.723491
Tourism supply capacity	Beds/n. structures	41.86441	46.39024	43.72	79.83784	88.05584
Accommodation facilities utilization	n. of clients/ beds	112.4364	28.74974	76.029277	88.53974	107.0584
Permanence in the accommodation facilities	n. of clients/arrivals	4.290207	3.393868	4.1115715	2.571522	3.25
Indicator of “touristicity”		5.148556	3.528095	4.470391	14.75768	5

The indicator of “touristicity”, resulting from the addition of the previous indicators which before had been compared to the relevant Sicilian value, allows us to understand the areas’ general capacity of managing tourism fluxes. The Ionian-etnean coast represents the area of the Etna LTS with a very high degree of development, in spite of some problems connected to non-complete structures exploitation and to the incapability to make tourists stay. The potentialities of the south Etna area, however, shouldn’t be underestimated (Scrofani, Arisco, Caponnetto, 2004).

Through the elaboration of the tertiary industry expansion degree we aim at assessing the presence of services that can increase the tourism potentials of the systems, notwithstanding vocational specificities, in order to define the competitive potential advantage of the relevant territorial context in relative terms, that is related to the regional values. In order to create such index we have chosen a set of 27 quantitative variables¹, whose values for each system have been compared with the maximum values of the whole Sicilian island. Then, we tried to deurate the results from the territorial extension.

¹ Farms, cinemas and theatres, car hire agencies, cableways and ski lifts, discos and fun parks, zoological parks, aquariums and reptile houses, restaurants and pizzerias, fast food and self-service restaurants, wine bars, sport training schools, flying schools, diving centres, riding schools, sea resorts, pubs, bars, hotels, campsites, travel agencies, mountains shelters, art galleries, auction sales, antique shops, slow-food restaurants, slow-food associations, souvenir shops (Source: Aci Censis Report, 2001).

From the analyses we carried out, we notice once again the *strength* of the coast, if we compare it both to the inland and to the whole Sicily: the level of structures concentration is four times higher than the South and North Etna sub-systems, and eight times higher than the whole Sicilian territory (see Table).

Degree of tertiary industry expansion					
	Inland	South Etna	North Etna	Coast	Sicily
Degree of tertiary industry expansion	0.1951	0.276	0.1127	0.837	0.105

The integration degree of the system has represented the core of this work, since it allowed us to assess the presence of tourism vocations, their *strength* and even the possibility to integrate the coast, whose tourism is more developed, with the inland. We pointed out seven possible vocations, for each of which we carefully chose quantitative and qualitative indicators, divided according to their importance, that is the contribution they gave in determining the vocation itself.

The results of the analysis show that the system is on the whole very strong and integrated, potentially capable of supplying the so-called “total leisure experience”, which is what the modern tourist wants. The three systems (Coast, South Etna, North Etna) combine very well since they are complementary, but, at the same time they have similar vocational specificities: the Coast is specialized in seasonal sea tourism, while the inland areas are more devoted to sport and naturalistic tourism; all systems have excellent results in cultural, rural and enogastronomic tourism, which can favour business tourism, although this can mainly thrive on the Ionian coast. Moreover, we reported good potentialities in thermal and religious tourism.

4. The LTS as an instrument to re-balance the tourism supply

The necessity to integrate the Etnean coast and the inland in one Local Tourism System has the final purpose of re-balancing the tourism supply through the achievement of some objectives:

- the improvement of the present state of tourism, which is mainly centred on sea fruition, and the exploitation of alternative forms of tourism (health, religious, cultural, rural and business tourism), by trying on one side to supply the widest and most integrated range of products and, on the other side, to meet and satisfy the ever changing needs of tourists. Indeed, as we have learnt from the data obtained through questionnaires, there’s a growing request for a deep experience of the territory’s identity;
- the development and re-qualification of receptivity, by improving it quantitatively in inland or marginal areas and qualitatively where there is a higher concentration of fluxes;

- the enhancement of infrastructures and tourism-related sectors, such as entertainment or agriculture, in order to stimulate economic growth and therefore reduce unemployment and underemployment;
- the search for a higher integration between tourism industries and local actors, especially between coastal and inland areas, in order to create theme routes which at same time stimulate network economies development (exploitation of marginal areas resources, creation of alternative development routes) and the typical districts synergies (cost reduction, improvement of efficiency and visibility in terms of promotion). The development of such interaction processes, therefore, would allow the prevention of supply fragmentation which results from the fact that some marginal localities try to promote their services by themselves: such problem is typical of areas with weak and widespread entrepreneurship and poor capacity of cohesion among towns like Sicily;
- the enhancement of tourism promoting instrument and the creation of a trademark which would allow the identification between product and territory and represent a factor of cohesion within the system.

Therefore, the hypothesis of a LTS including the whole Etnean Region would lead to the devising and implementation of a Strategic Plan for territory-oriented tourism development, which would allow a more synergic and productive organization and management of territorial resources, also taking into account the demand's expectations, in order to elaborate an integrated strategy for the global exploitation of the Etnean context. The Plan should include a stage of cooperation between local public and private actors, and the construction of forms of *governance*; the systemic and multi-centred development of the territory based on network relations, exploiting local culture; the implementation of territorial marketing policies, capable of analyzing resources, opportunities, advantages, critical situations, targets and competitors (*Benchmarking*); the respect of the principles of tourism sustainability and therefore the protection of tourism resources and environment balances; the integration of local systems according to the principle of subsidiarity (Ruggiero, Scrofani, 2004). The presence of an integrated Local Tourism System would therefore result in the creation of synergies leading to the involvement of economically weaker areas. By taking part to a wider context, the latter would take advantage from wider- scale flux of tourism.

What advantages can the LTS give to those areas where economy and tourism are developed? As we have already said, the Ionian Etnean coast represents the most developed area in terms of labour force, investments and tourism. However, the possibility to integrate with differently endowed areas, through the creation of specific theme routes or the supply of different forms of tourism, could lead to the deseasonalization of the typical sea summer tourism, the increase of the average

permanence, and the massive use of accommodation facilities (increase of the average beds occupation rate). In other words, this would lead to a “total leisure experience” supply model, which can help the tourist discover the territory true identity and traditions.

5. The development of the territorial integration of tourism ports: the role of Gesinports project for Sicily and the Etnean Region

In order to diversify the traditional concept of tourism, the exploitation of ports has a strategic importance and gives significant value-added to the tourism supply of the whole Sicilian Region.

Touristic ports

- can become the core of tourism development in costal areas in terms of reorganization of the relations with inland and marginal areas, which often have ancient towns and naturalistic areas;
- contribute to the diversification of the traditional concept of tourism, by increasing the value-added of the whole tourism supply;
- can contribute to the integration with the inland territory, combining the coast resources with the inland artistic, naturalistic and cultural resources;
- can suggest a different “reading” of the Sicilian territory as, rather than reiterating the ancient distinction between coast and inland, they encourage an integrated fruition which can offer a pleasant and culturally significant experience to the traveller;
- become the “entrance” to a world to discover.

Therefore, the basic idea is to promote the integration between port and territory, combining the resources of the coast with the artistic, naturalistic and cultural resources that are present on the territory, and considering the “sea” resource as a continuum with the “nature-culture” resource.

Hence, it is necessary to define the local tourism systems as targets of projects for the protection and safeguard of the historical, artistic and naturalistic heritage. This is true as long as the Sicilian Region applies the national law n. 135 of 2001. This institutional reform attributes strategic functions for the development of Italian tourism to Local Bodies. In particular, the Municipality is given a leading role in the process of creation and management of the LTS, since it is the institutional subject closest to the territory and which answers for the services it provides.

Indeed, according to the law, Local Bodies should integrate with receptive structures, public services, intermediary services, transports and the so-called non-conventional activities, also through innovative forms of *governance* of the LTS, thus favouring the achievement of quality standards.

The LTS, organized and managed according to sustainable strategies, based on the protection of social-economic resources, have the function of re-launching the competitive and attracting capacity of territories within the “Italy in the World Brand”, safeguarding and exploiting the identities, the specificities, the originality, the qualities, and local “trademarks”. Moreover, their task is to favour training and management and they must have information technology and monitoring systems in order to control and assess how local specificities, quality conditions and the charging capacities are preserved but also to define development strategies and measures to manage fluxes of visitors.

The concept of Local Tourism System, as proposed by the general policy law, is rather complex because it implies:

- the identification of the product with the territory, the exploitation of local specificities, the transformation of the territory’s resources into products;
- the presence of forces and abilities of local aggregations, which have their roots in cultural factors, ties with the territory, but also in the common will to start a process of collective growth based on sustainable development, partnership and interaction between public and private subjects;
- competitiveness of the system, which is based on the systemic combination and synergic interaction among
 - a) the subjects (tourism companies, and the complementary and supporting ones, the resident population, and the Local Bodies)
 - b) the elements which constitute the LTS (natural primary attractions, human, cultural resources etc..., and infrastructures which favour their fruition)
 - c) the tourism demand.
- the implementation of process and territorial competition strategies, which should be followed by territorial marketing techniques in order to lead tourism operators towards a continuous adjustment to the market changes;
- the overcoming of the supply fragmentation problems, due to the fact that many places try to promote their images by themselves, thus confining themselves to a marginal position.

The indicators we used to define the LTS, which were elaborated on a municipal base and describe the different aspects of tourism demand and supply, allowed us to assess the attractive and receptive capacities of the different places and therefore, their specific roles within the LTS.

Among these indicators we must remember those ones concerning:

- the environmental and cultural-artistic resources
- the demand and its segmentations

- the forces and capacities of local aggregation (which have their roots in cultural factors, ties with the territory, but also in the common will to start a process of collective growth. In such context, a particular attention was paid to the definition of the local actors' planning abilities, which have been deduced especially from the formulation and implementation of national and European projects – PRUSST, PIT, Territorial Pacts, Leader I and II projects, Urban I and II projects – and from all the other local initiatives, having a significant impact on the territory, a great social and economic value, and stimulating more or less relevant forms of *governance*);
- the territory's functional and hierarchic articulations (which were defined considering the centres for services to companies and medium- level families, and work local systems);
- the territory accessibility (which was assessed considering both the local transport supply, including structures and real and virtual networks junctions, and the infrastructural improvements now in progress);
- the identities, which were defined considering environment, historical and cultural unities.

In Sicily, different LTS have been defined but the ones which have a coastal outlet are:

LTS of Taormina

LTS of Etnean Region

LTS of Syracuse Hyblaeon Mountains

LTS of Ragusa Hyblaeon Mountains

LTS of Caltanissetta province

LTS of the Valley of Temples

LTS of Sciacca

LTS lilibean

LTS of Palermo

LTS of Cefalù and Madonie Mountains

LTS of the Nebrodi Mountains Towns

LTS of the Aeolian Islands.

However, this precise definition of LTSs must consider the features of the active ports in the island. For this purpose, the participation of the Sicilian Region to the Gesinports Project has given a remarkable stimulus to the study of the territorial integration of touristic ports, since the main activity of the recently created observatory is just about this integration.

The transport and communications department of the Sicilian Region has actively participated to the Gesinports EC Project, which is included in the "Interreg. III C – South Areas" Programme, promoting a direct cooperation and the exchange of experiences among regions of the southern

Europe area, thus differing from other programmes based on international cooperation. In particular, Gesinports (that is, Integrated Sustainable Management of Southern Europe Touristic Ports) was created to deepen the knowledge of the role played by ports in tourism and sport activities in partner countries (apart from Sicily, the other partners are: Slovenia, the Spanish Region of Valencia, the Greek Region of Attica, and Liguria). It also points out their weaknesses as to environment safeguard, safety, and employment of the newest information technologies, and proposes training courses for the personnel.

Lastly, Gesinports aims at providing the partners with a common strategy for the management of touristic ports, considering the problems that may arise and their solution. An ambitious objective which will be achieved through the support of a network of observatories, which were created by the different partners in order to deal with the problems concerning the ports.

The studies carried out by the Sicilian observatory have pointed out that the resident people are the principal users of the ports, so that the catchment area is limited to the immediate inland, while non-resident fruiters are rare.

These non-local tourists can leave their boats either in those places left occasionally vacant by members of clubs and associations, or in the few available places in private companies. During the last year, the Sicilian Region has focussed its efforts on providing financial support to the building of new structures or the adjustment of the old ones to cope with the needs of yachting and also to the development of private services to boats. If we compare the above-mentioned LTSs with the ports we find out that the major catchment area of ports are those surrounding the two biggest Sicilian towns, Palermo and Catania. On the contrary, if we consider the number of boats, we find the greatest one in the area of Taormina which attracts the most conspicuous tourists flux of the whole region. However, in this LTS, the yachts landing is not particularly organized. As a consequence, this fact prevents the fruition of the naturalistic and cultural resources.

As to the Etnean Region local tourism system, the most important landing places which can favour the exploitation of its resources are in the following towns: Catania (the old port, the Caito, San Giovanni Li Cuti, Port Ulisse), Acicastello (Acicastello, Acitrezza), Acireale (Capo Mulini, Santa Maria La Scala, Santa Tecla, Stazzo, Pozzillo), Riposto (Torre Archirafi, Riposto-Etna Port). Despite the great number of landing places, the port which nowadays has the most remarkable number of international tourists is Marina di Riposto – Etna Port.

The average permanence of boats in the ports is still very short, showing that an efficacious policy of territorial integration between the services offered in landing places and the tourism resources in the inland still doesn't exist (sometimes a longer stay is due to periodical servicing at the near

dockyard). Therefore, there's much to do as ports can be efficacious instruments to achieve territorial rebalance between the inland and the coastal areas.

Number of boats in Marina di Riposto – Etna Port, in the year 2004	
Flag	Number of boats
Italian	404
French	95
Maltese	71
English	56
German	51
Spanish	17
Cayman Islands	14
Dutch	14
USA	9
Swiss	9
British Virgin Islands	9
Austrian	6
Greek	5
Others	38
Source: Marina di Riposto – Etna Port	

The enhancement of port infrastructures for leisure time can really favour a territorial redistribution within the region of localisation opportunities for economic activities. The completion of the transport infrastructures to access the LTSs and the ports is therefore one of the most important factors for territory layout and to link the regional system with the outside, since it increases its participation to the interregional networks. Transports are once more strategic elements for the rebalance between weak and developed areas in Sicily; by improving the accessibility, the quality of life, the integration in the general territorial context, and also the participation to the regional processes of development will also improve.

At the same time, it's important to implement strong actions for the enhancement of tourism, which

- increase and qualify the presence of tourists in the region, through actions of tourism systems marketing, in order to achieve environmental sustainability and production diversification;
- increase the articulation, the efficiency, and the environmental compatibility of the tourism industry (through the promotion of innovative products, processes, and forms of organization, through quality and environmental certifications, and through the infrastructures availability);
- increase production integration of the tourism system considered as a chain;

- favour the growth of new local productions related to an innovative exploitation of resources, the rediscovery of local identities and cultures, and the diversification and deseasonalization of products in already developed areas;
- favour the internationalization of the Sicilian companies and the promotion of the economic integration in the extra-regional contexts.

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