

PATHS AND ERRATIC EMOTIONS OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: MOBILITY, SLOW FRUITION AND EXPLORATION OF ECONOMIC POTENTIALITY

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***Abstract.** In recent years there is greater awareness of the need to match up the large amount of historical and environmental heritage of the Italian territory with the quality and concentration of cultural heritage and tourist services and put them into a network, through a new system of mobility. Urban and territorial policies should identify strategies and projects favoring the connections and use of sites, the perception of landscapes and the subjective emotions they arouse in the community. This interdisciplinary paper aims to rediscover the values and diversity of natural and cultural landscapes in Sicily by following slow routes immersed in valuable rural and urban areas. The proposed investigation by micro-economic method provides the private and public parties interested with initial useful information on the potentiality of implementing services enabling visitors to enjoy environmental and cultural goods, which often represent the true side of territories.*

***Keywords:** Landscape, mobility, railway tourism, economic potentiality, decision-making, market survey.*

1. Introduction

The landscape has always been a source of inspiration for artists, poets, literati and writers from any population or era. Indeed human beings love contact with nature, considered to be a source of serenity and peace, and have attempted to restore it where it was damaged due to indiscriminate development of urbanization and the advent of industrial civilization. Generally we distinguish three types of landscapes: the natural, human, and built ones. In the first type there are no buildings or works of man, as can be witnessed in high mountain areas, rainforests or savannas. The second type refers to landscapes in which man has intervened on the environment through construction, but with respect for the natural characteristics of the site and in harmony with the territory. In the third type the intervention of man has developed to such an extent that it has completely changed the natural environment, as is the case with the construction of large infrastructures or big cities. In addition to this, the term landscape can have different interpretations and is often associated with adjectives that describe specific and separate concepts, such as the picturesque landscape, cultural landscape, emotional landscape, erratic landscape, etc.

But what is the landscape? The issue is very complex. There are different

schools of thought and scholars who have tried to settle the issue over time. Surely, we can say that the landscape is the result of a set of elements that interact with each other in a dynamic way and are constantly evolving. These elements are closely linked to human action, which affects the landscape and is at the same time conditioned by it. The landscape is not only the land on which to rest your feet, the context in which we spend our lives, or the background of our actions, but is the reference element for cultural roots and values, the meaning and significance attributed to it by the cultural practices of the individual or the group. This leads to an identification connected to society-territory, man-location, which defines a specific membership; a two-way link. Landscapes are also the aesthetic identity of places, the result of the coexistence and interaction of nature, culture and history.

Briefly, for ecologists is the set of things and relationships between them; for historians it is the result of the evolution of nature and human action; for romantic persons is the set of the forms of a place and the relationships between them. The European Landscape Convention (Florence, October 20th, 2000) gives an official definition of the landscape as a certain part of the territory how it is perceived by people, whose character derives from the natural environment and/or from human activities and their interrelations. It is a heritage that deserves to be preserved and handed on to future generations as an expression of local and distinctive cultural identity. This study aims to rediscover the natural and cultural landscapes of Sicily through a slow mobility along paths immersed in territorial and urban areas of particular value. By means of the reuse of the railways abandoned or underused that seep in the territory and connect cities, towns, suburbs, rural villages, archaeological sites, works of art, stations, toll booths etc. (Fig. 1). They are natural and cultural heritages to be protected in their integrity, and value, and in some cases to be converted in new functions. They are sites of excellence, but they are rarely enjoyed now despite their proximity with other elements of attraction.

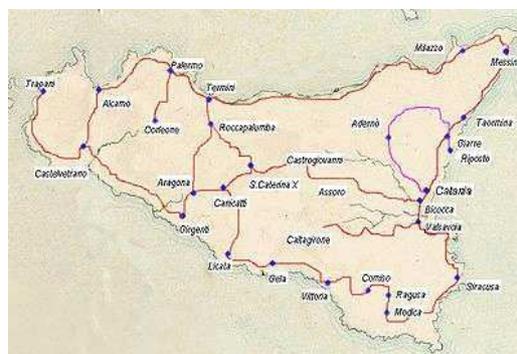


Figure 1. Railways and low-speed paths in Sicily

As said, the landscapes are carrier of a variety of socio-cultural, environmental and economic values (Stephenson, 2008; Tempesta, 2012). But it is recognized that the value of landscapes is perceived in different manner by the various users

as farmers, tourists and local residents (Stephenson, 2007). In particular, in this work we focus on the aesthetical and recreational enjoyment value of landscapes, for its possible contribution to the preservation of the other values and from which may depend in part the extra economic and economic sustainability of territories (Benson & Roe, 2000).

Although tourism is considered a strategic economic resource for the largest Italian island, Sicily, the need to further develop entrepreneurial activities that can stimulate the interest of visitors is recognized. In this regard we recall that, on special occasions, some local cultural associations organize low explorations of the most authentic Sicilian landscape through low-speed paths that become the occasion for the knowledge of the territory, thanks to the culinary itineraries. Since the enjoyment of environmental and cultural values is certainly among the main reasons for traveling (Othman et al, 2015), one wonders if this slow exploration of the territory could become a stable activity over time and be a source of enrichment of the local supply of tourist services and of employment. Investigation by micro-economic method could provide a first response to this question, giving the private and public parties interested useful information on the potentiality of implementing services enabling the visitors to enjoy the aforementioned recreational environmental and cultural goods.

2. The perception and quality of the countryside

The landscape, although is a widely used term in everyday language, and well known to all, can be understood in different ways to vary the scope of discourse and the point of observation, as well as the sensitivity, the training and the specific interests of the beholder or take into account the landscape itself.

For example, the sight of a woodland landscape, a distinguished naturalist plant associations, a forest the species present in the forest, a poet will find inspiration for his verses, an architect it will observe the shape and the relationship with the context , an employee perhaps, he will say only that it is beautiful (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Examples the woodland landscape

The judgment depends very much on the familiar elements that characterize it and by culture. A good landscape produces a sense of well-being, a bad landscape produces malaise. A balanced and orderly landscape produces

calmness, psychological safety and aesthetic enjoyment; a messy landscape produces discomfort. An important aspect of landscapes is their identity.

A landscape is beautiful even when it is recognizable. It is ugly when it contains foreign elements that do not identify as identifications of the place. The ruins can be aesthetically enjoyable because they touch the strings of a romantic vision still present in our culture.

A technological super building can be beautiful as a place of attraction, but disastrous as a place of daily life, because it lacks the own memory elements of our culture (Marangon & Tempesta, 2001).

The quality of the landscape, then, comes in varying degrees depending on the case, from aesthetic aspects, such as the order, the formal balance, the variety and for the scenic and dissonance singular disorder, but also from identity aspects, that is, by forms of a structure that recognize suited to the function of the live, whether they are single or together.

3. The rules, the laws, the strategic plans

The regulatory developments in terms of landscape depart from the law n. 778 of 1922 followed by Law no. 1497, 1939, where the landscape was identified with the overall view, the view, the "natural beauty" (as recited by the legal texts). In 1985, the Law No. 1497/39 was supplemented by the so-called Galasso Law, no. 431/85, which in turn moved the thematic focus on the preservation of natural environment. This has gone from a landscape perceptual-aesthetic concept to an almost exclusively based on physical and objective data. The distinction made later (initially at a theoretical level and then transposed in legislative instruments) between "*landscape*" and "*environment*" helped to define the first one as the work of man in the natural product, in a vision so geared to historicity and also able to recover the aesthetic dimension that in recent years seemed lost.

The Code of cultural heritage and landscape has embraced the most advanced guidance on the definition of landscape, sanctioning the full membership of this cultural heritage. A key reference in the elaboration of the text of the law was the European Landscape Convention (concluded under the Council of Europe), signed in Florence on 20 October 2000, and ratified by Italy in 2006.

The appearance of identity is one of the cardinal points of the Convention.

It is recalled in the Code, paragraph 2, Article 131: "*This code safeguard the landscape with respect to those aspects and characters that make up the material representation and national identity visible, as an expression of cultural values*".

Furthermore, the landscape has an important public function, as well as ecological, environmental and social functions, and constitutes a resource that is favourable to economic development and tourism.

For these reasons, in recent years the Government has placed the promotion of

the tourism economy at the center of national policy planning in order to increase sensitivity on the subject of tourism and culture.

4. The mobility system and the tracks of culture

The city has always been a vital place for meetings, travels, social, cultural and economic exchanges. The future and progress of cities and territories depends on the application of best practices of sustainable development, through new systems of accessibility and mobility, and the implementation of interventions in environmentally friendly transport system (Cilona, 2016).

The use of individual private transport, the very high external costs generated by the private traffic (environmental impact and health of citizens), the lack of resources to counter individual transport with a range of public services adequate quantity and quality, are problematic affecting the most urban contexts in the Mediterranean area and interfere negatively on the use of services and more generally on the quality of life.

The intervention strategies in the field of urban mobility should be based on the integration and coordination between transport planning and the urban through the structural plan.

To encourage citizens to move themselves in a timely and safe manner, whether it be for work or leisure purposes, and to improve quality of life, it is necessary that local, regional and national politics achieve sustainable mobility by following the direction of European strategic planning.

A future in a sustainable way is only possible if you reduce the use of cars. In this scenario, the citizens must be involved and sensitized through alternative proposals capable of stimulating an awareness of the most appropriate choices in getting around town and in neighbouring territories, and the spread of a true culture of sustainable mobility, creating ultimately an opportunity a change of lifestyle.

The first step is to identify slow mobility paths and to encourage the use of trains whether they are used for motives of business or leisure.

In this way, citizens and tourists will be able to use alternative means of transportation to the car, thus generating considerable savings and advantages both for the individual and for the community.

For example, we speak of lesser consumption of land for parking, less deterioration of the road network and a reduction in construction of road infrastructure, increased attractiveness of small towns, fewer traffic jams and more fluid movement of vehicles, gains of both time and money for those who travel, the promotion of a healthier way of life, more cultural exchanges, and the promotion of rail tourism.

In this regard we mention a completely Sicilian initiative born thanks to the collaboration between the Region of Sicily, the Foundation of the State Railways, and Trenitalia.

Three tourist routes along the railways were identified and named the *Tracks of Culture* that allow one to admire and appreciate the historical, artistic, archaeological and scenic beauty of the island.

The first is the route of “*Myth and Magna Grecia*” along the Ionian coast that passes between the sea and Mount Etna and crosses the plain of Catania to Taormina.

The second is that called “*the Baroque*”, dedicated to the discovery of landscapes and architecture of the Valley of Noto between Syracuse, Donnafugata, Comiso, Scicli, Ragusa, Noto and Modica.

The third route (fig. 3), called in “*Praise of Slowness*”, begins from the Palermo train station and runs through the territories of Bagheria, Termini Imerese, Fiumeforto, Roccapalumba/Alia, Cammarata/San Giovanni Gemini, Acquaviva Platani, Comitini, Aragona and arrives in Agrigento, through the heart of the Archaeological Park with majestic Greek temples and the Garden of Kolymbetra, until it arrives in Porto Empedocle and to the picturesque seaside town of the Turkish Steps.

It is upon this third tourist route that we have focused our attention.



Figure 3. The third route

5. An information framework supporting decisions on tourist valorization of Sicilian landscape

5.1 Sicily as a tourist product

Although Sicily is endowed with a great variety of natural and cultural landscapes (Vogiatzakis, Pungetti & Mannion, 2008), as in the rest of Italy, its

inner territories are left out from tourist destinations and well-established ways whose chief protagonists are art cities and seaside resorts (Italian Statistics Office, 2016).

The Sicilian Regional Plan of Tourist Propaganda (Regione siciliana, 2016) bases the tourism development on the valorization of the environmental and cultural heritage, structuring the touristic offer around the Unesco Sites that are considered as attractors and knots of access to Sicily. But recent marketing surveys on tourism carried out for the region councillorship identify as a priority the construction of Sicilian touristic products, rather than the sole touristic promotion of the island. In fact, Sicily is already well known in the touristic market but requires new tourist products capable to offer interesting experiences to every kind of traveler. In any case, the cultural product (visits to museums and to monumental, archaeological and other sites of cultural interest) is more appreciated if integrated to experiences of discovery of the territory through oenogastronomic, naturalistic, thermal, and so on tours (ibidem). In particular, the strategy for the tourist development of the greater Mediterranean Island requires the creation of synergistic networks among the already existing thematic Regional Touristic Districts (ibidem).

In this context, the development of journeys by train on historical passenger coach could be an interesting tourist services linking in a physical manner places belonging to single Touristic Districts or to different Districts, thus creating a charming material link among them. These journeys by train will offer to travelers the possibility to integrate the need of moving from starting places to destinations with the enjoyment of authentic Sicilian landscapes and the contact with genuine Sicilian culture and traditions, which is very appreciate by stranger visitors (Granata & Scavone, 2016).

5.2 Are Sicilian landscapes the object of an explicit demand?

This section of the present study addresses the question if in the Sicilian tourist market there is an explicit demand for the enjoyment of landscapes. If not, a special offer of services concerned with the fruition of rural and coastal landscapes could be useful to stimulate the demand.

The question has a notable operating importance in the short and long terms: in the short period, for private concerns and public utilities that could organize special business for example in the sector of regional transport services; in the long run, for making strategic decisions on possible plans of investment.

In this context a prominent role could be recognized to inner landscapes. European policies promote the conservation and valorization of rural landscapes (European Landscape Convention and European Common Agricultural Policies (CAP) 2014–2020) that are recognized as a mix of environmental and cultural values (Rizzo, 1986; Agnoletti, 2014; Antrop, 2005).

The increase of awareness of cultural and aesthetic values of inner

Mediterranean landscapes could concur to the improvement of non-coastal towns and areas, strengthening the processes of tourist and residential valorization that today are sporadic but promising realities (Granata & Scavone, 2016) and contributing to a deseasonalization of Sicilian tourism, that is now mainly based on cultural and sun and sea tourism (Regione Siciliana, 2016).

At the moment, there are not qualitative or quantitative information on this market. A special survey, designed and carried out to provide relevant information on visitors' awareness of Sicilian landscape value, is here presented.

5.3 Methodology: A market survey to gather information for decision-making

The said object of the present research is gaining some information on the advisability of basing special tourist products on the fruition of Sicilian landscapes. In particular, it could be interesting to understand if an actual or latent interest of potential visitors can be recognized, on which lever to build ad hoc tourist strategies and products. Consequently, the use of typical instruments of market research seems useful in territorial marketing activities as in designing private business. In particular, a market survey gathers information about their preferences directly from consumers and can provide the interested part with insight about the target customers, their willingness to pay for certain types of products, their use of competing products and their interest for new products.

In order to grasp visitors' awareness of Sicilian landscape values a special market survey was conducted. We adopted a bottom-up approach, which is based on data derived from local surveys as it is known that values perceived from visitors going across landscapes have mainly an aesthetic and subjective nature and changes with the territorial context (VanZanten et al., 2016).

As recalled, some Sicilian cultural associations organize occasional slow explorations of the Sicilian landscape through low-speed trips that become the occasion for the knowledge of the territory. The evaluation of the willingness of visitors for the fruition of this recreational service can give an initial response to the question if these slow explorations of the territories on disused railway routes might become permanent tourist services.

In order to obtain a first knowledge on the possible dimension of the market of visual or active fruition of Sicilian landscapes a special sample statistical survey was conducted. The survey is the result of a questionnaire that was administered in May 2016 to the travelers of a slow journey by train from Palermo to the Temples Valley in Agrigento via the Turkish Steps (Scala dei turchi), a famous seaside resort. The sample observed was determined by cluster sampling. It can be reasonably supposed as representative of the interested population, as the travelers are generally organized recruiting the travelers by web social media. The data was gathered by means of a paper and pencil interview conducted during the trip, thus avoiding the possible conditioning by the interviewers.

The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first one concerns the

motivations for the participation to the journey. The second part inquires the interest in the short journey through the isle of Sicily. The last section contains questions on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The core questions have a multiple choice close-ended form.

The passengers were about 200 while the questionnaires filled in and used for the data analysis are 120. It emerged from the examination of the questionnaires given back that all of them were suitable for the data analysis, since there were not inconsistent answers although in a few cases it was found the lack of answer on personal information. The non-answered questions can be attributed to slips during the writing out or an unwillingness of the respondents to give information on some topics.

5.4 The results of the market survey

The participation was an individual one (2.5% of the cases) or in family groups, in groups of friends or in mixed groups (97.5%). The main motivation for the participation to the trip was the visit to the seaside destination (Turkish Steps) (68.33%), the visit to the cultural destination (Temples Valley) (7.5%), the mix of seaside and cultural destinations (22.5%) and the enjoyment of landscape (1.67%). The 5% of travelers that consider as chief attraction the destinations of the trip expressed also a secondary interest in landscape.

The respondents declared their interest in repeating the experience once (9.17%), twice (26.67%) and three times or more (58.33%) a year. The 5.83% of travelers did not answer the question. Further findings concern the availability of respondents to recommend to someone else the slow trip by train (100%) and to take part in similar journeys (100%).

From a socio-demographical point of view, the outcomes are the following ones. The respondents were from Sicilian places of origin (88.33%) and from other Italian (9.17%) and foreign (0.83%) places. The 1.67% of travelers did not declare their provenience.

The percentage of male respondents was 42.5%, while the female ones were the 56.67%. The 0.83% of travelers did not answer this question.

The mix of respondents' age is children up to 12 years old (1.67%), boys from 13 to 17 years old (3.33%), people from 18 to 25 years old (8.33%), from 26 to 45 years old (47.5%), from 46 to 65 years old (30%) and over sixty five years old (8.33%). The 0.83% of travelers did not answer the question.

The analysis of education level of the respondents shows a major participation of diploma holders (41.67%), followed by the graduated (38.33%), lower secondary school qualified (14.17%), and primary school qualified (2.5%). The 3.33% of respondents did not answer the question.

The mix of occupations comprehends office-workers (38.33%), managers (2.5%), students (11.67%), workers (5%), retired persons (3.33%), unemployed (5%) and other occupations (30%). The 7.5% of respondents did not answer this

question. Note that the percentage of retired people is included in the class of other occupations.

5.5 Discussion of the results: Usefulness for decision-making

The study conducted shows a good level of interest in taking part in slow journeys. Likewise, it betrays the existence of a wide basin of possible stranger travelers that are already present on the territory (Italian Statistics Office, 2016). Furthermore, the examination of the results shows that the interest of the passengers is almost exclusively focused on the destinations of the trip, while a few of them (6.67%) declared their interest in landscapes and, however, mainly in a non-prevalent manner (5%). This outcome make it clear the importance of the choice of destinations and legs of excursions, but meanwhile the need for promotion campaigns aimed at increasing the interest of people in Sicilian landscapes. In this promotional context, special marketing campaigns should use the more suitable means of communication according to the different target of possible travelers, since another interesting finding of this first study on tourism market of Sicilian landscape is that the slow journeys by train are able to attract a great variety of people. This offers the possibility of create custom-made occasions of amusement for local and stranger people, through ways and stopping places dedicated to the different classes of travelers, such as sports fan and sportsmen, families with con children, lovers of local gastronomy, etc.

These findings are an initial framework of information for public and private decisions on strategic policies and tourism services supply that could usefully integrate local communities in focused destination marketing. Further studies of the market appear to be useful. In particular, the private economic operators could be interested to a deeper market segmentation of potential visitors that will be the receivers of specific products, such as tours, destinations and activities, and of special marketing strategies. On the contrary, public decision makers could benefit from a broader and general survey aimed at determining what services and facilities domestic and foreign visitors would like to better enjoy the Island. Single projects must also be verified by financial analysis, in order to design them opportunely and avoid possible economic and financial risks (Bellia, Granata & Scavone, 2015).

6. Conclusions

In contemporary urban society, the transportation system is very important as it allows one to gain access to services for various activities of daily life. However, we often tend to think of mobility as only an action necessary to connect one point in space with another but in fact, movement requires resources, skills, and social integration. In this regard, urban and territorial policies should identify strategies and projects that favor the connection and use

of sites, the perception of the landscape, and the subjective emotions they arouse in the community. This interdisciplinary paper aims at rediscover the values and diversity of natural and cultural landscapes through privileged points of view, following routes immersed in rural and urban areas of particular value.

The market information presented in this paper are derived from the initial survey carried on and shows that a tourism market based on Sicilian landscape is a potential one at the moment, as there is not an explicit awareness of an interest for a visual or active fruition of these landscapes. But, at the same time, it gives a cognitive framework having a potentially prescriptive value if the decision maker, whether it is the policy maker or an economic operator, uses it to characterize an advisable and possible scenario and puts into action the necessary strategies to achieve it.

Summary

This study examines the landscape in different forms and typologies, according to different points of view and different types of technical and scientific expertise. Our aim is to raise awareness of the coastal and interior parts of Sicily through slow mobility. Specifically, we encourage the use of the train as the ideal means of locomotion for regular daily movements as well as for touristic reasons, bearing in mind that other means of transport (cars, planes, ships) does not arouse in the commuter-traveler the same feelings and emotions.

Sicily is endowed with a great variety of natural and cultural landscapes, but its inner territories are left out from tourist destinations and well-established ways whose chief protagonists are art cities and seaside resorts. The increase of the fruition of inner and coastal lands by visitors requires the creation of new or even innovative services and customer-oriented packages. An information framework able to support decisions on tourist valorization of Sicilian landscape is then proposed. It is based on the results of a special survey, designed and carried out to provide relevant information on visitors' awareness of Sicilian landscape value. The information derived from this first study offers interesting starting point to steer the analysis, from a private business point of view and from a public concern.

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