

TOURISM EXPANSION AND MODIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE EGADI ISLANDS

Massimo TROTTA

University of Salerno, Italy

1. The historical features of the Archipelago

The Egadi islands are situated a few kilometres from Sicily and have witnessed centuries of Mediterranean civilisation. It has been home to Ancient Greek and Latin civilisations: settlements, historical events and their poetic transfigurations, have accumulated around the island and its Aegean archipelago, perceptions from the classical era that have been rediscovered in the modern age (Mazzetti, 1999).

The Egadi archipelago, with its primitive and effusive stones, skies and waters; its silent, ethereal beauty is measured by the seasons; the rampant call of gulls, the rustle of leaves, the sound of distant flutes always conclude with her absolute tranquillity. Worn men at the top of the hills and along the edge of the sea; these islands are home to strong sailors, possessive custodians of the rugged extremes that make up Sicily, her myths and legends. These unsullied spaces touched only lightly by the hands of man. The Egadi islands leave the ritual incisions of ancient fishermen engraved upon the heart. Saltiness on the skin, a blissful peace in the soul. These same islands where Ulysses would have liked to have returned, with God as a guide, in Hieria di Marettimo, on the cliff of Phorbantia, on the flat Aegusa - "land of goats"- to inhale the warmth of Favignana, cast a glance over the high grounds and cliffs, the strong, beautiful seas which capture the cry of the gulls, essence of the primitive, absolute liberty and wilderness to which we aspire, is here answered to by God (Alaimo, 1990).

On the archipelago lived Palaeolithic and Neolithic man and it is here maybe, between these islands, that the main part of Homer's odyssey took place¹. These ancient settlements have been important testimonies to events in Levanzo and to a lesser extent in Favignana.

More recently traces of the first inhabitants of the island of Marettimo have been unearthed, consequences of the fact that the first two islands have remained connected to Sicily since the last ice-age by a natural bridge. Only in the Neolithic times, when they had learned to sail did the age of maritime begin.

Historians claim that the first inhabitants of Sicily were the Feaci (sailors) and the Lestrigoni (farmers) who came from Epiro (Epirus). They lived in Favignana -probably in caves - where even today, from that mysterious era. traces of an unknown artist are still visible in the Grotta del Pozza. The Shivers Of oxidised and fragmented bones found in Favignana show signs of the dietary of a man who not only lived by the sea and was nourished by fish and molluscs, but also of a man who, by primitive means, integrated himself into his environment. By living in the caves he was able to take on a more sedentary lifestyle, he developed craftsmanship and art, he bred livestock and worked with vegetable and animal fibres. He used arrows and the first rudimentary ceramics. Above all he dug graves in the porous rock, clarified his worship and individualised his own Gods (Novara-Precopi, 1993). In the era called the "epigravittiano evoluto", it seems that of all the islands that surround Sicily, only Levanzo and Favignano were inhabited. These, first ancient inhabitants who left their traces in Favignano are more evident in Levanzo, where the Genoese Cave, with its carvings and paintings, is now a real archeological treasure. The walls of these caves depict different animals of the quaternary, (Cervus elephas, Bos primigenius, Equus hydruntinus), some human figures are wearing bird masks and a second group of figures, coloured in red and in black, show some men, women, mammals and fish, amongst which the tuna that, for centuries, has symbolised the life and the culture of the Egusei. Interestingly, other caves, on the same island (Crollata, di Punta Capperi, di Tramontana) have retained copious materials predominantly from the height of the Paleontological period. On the three islands just a few traces remain in Favignana, a form of Phoenician/Punic settlement bear witness to Thucydides, the remains of a Pale-Christian cemetery, in Marettimo, ruins of a structure dating back to the Romans, and a small church probably from the Norman age.

¹ Homer's Ulysses docked on the deserted island of Capre, Favignana (Aegades).

The first inhabitants landed in Sicily toward 1200BC and legend tells that the Phoenicians arrived later in the Western Mediterranean and joined the established community in Favignana (Katria).

And so, (Diadoro reports) on the beach of the small island, the silent trading of the ceramics came to an end as the inhabitants, thrown together in this match against nature and business, began to speak a common language. Successively, Punic appropriations in Mothia and the strained contact of them with the Elimi and the local population of the oldest settlement determined the inclusion of Favignana and of the Egadi islands under the Etymo-Cartaginesi sphere of influence. This area of western Sicily assumed great importance in the struggle between the Greeks and the Cartaginesi for domination of Sicily. It was also the scene of a huge naval battle between the Cartaginesi and the Romans at the end of the first war and entered history under the name of the Battaglia delle Egadi (Battle of the Egadi -241 BC). After the following victory of those waters by Lutazio Catulo and his fleet, came the conclusion to the Punic war, and the Archipelago, especially Favignana took her place in history. It was in these very waters that they experimented with the use of planks or ship-to-ship bridges with which the amazing Roman army boarded the Cartaginesi ships and fought in the high seas as if they were on dry land (Del Mare, 1993).

Polibio has passed down to us the description of the battle and even if he hasn't described the characteristics of the island, indirectly he has underlined its strategic function. The legend tells that the actual zone of the island Favignana, called Cala Rossa (Red Cave), took its name from the blood of the opposing armies during the gruesome battle and that the Roman commander Lutazio Catulo stopped in Favignana. Along with more notable remains of the Punics, one finds environments and objects more commonly defined as Greek: as regards this period it would be more logical to talk about the "Koinè" Mediterranean, the vivacity of the cultural exchanges and the mobility of the artisans and merchants.

When the Romans established themselves in Sicily - creating the first province of the new rule, a new garrison was established on the Egadi, stationed at strategic points on the islands. Meanwhile, the population still lived in caves and it's from these many caves, that we have been handed down the symbols of the first pagan cults and successively, those of Christians. It would seem that it is on these islands of the Archipelago that the first Christians established themselves. Tired sailors or escaping slaves, spread the good word of the new religion that gave the slave the same rights and dignities as a free man. In the Grotta del Pozzo, where Iside was invoked, there are drawings of Christ's cross on the bare wall; in the Ficara Caves drawings of Tau crosses and a chalice, often in the sepulchres they reuse the same pagan symbols but with a new spirit and new faith. The more interesting of these intricate sepulchres are those of the Grotta degli Archipelago, dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries. Shortly before the fall of the Roman Empire around 440, these lands were devastated by the Barbarians -the Vandals of Genserico and Goti -many inhabitants of Favignana were deported as oarsmen and slaves, maybe in part due to their faith, but more probably for their sailing expertise.

In the following division between Odacre and Genserico, the Egadi remained the only possession of the Vandal empire. At the hands of the Byzantine in 535AD, the Saracens flooded into Sicily. These Muslim Arabs constructed some watch towers. Then, after the expulsion of the Saracens in 1081, the three entire islands, together with the whole of Sicily, came under the sphere of influence of the Roman Eastern Empire. During the Muslim era, Favignana took on the name Al Yabisah (dry) because it lacked fresh water sources. Chronicles written by Arabian, Ibn Gubayr, narrate the story of a hermit that supposedly lived on the summit of Mont Santa Caterina, in a "type of castle" and the myth affirms that the islands only inhabitant was the hermit. It is naturally unthinkable that Favignana was totally deserted due to the fact that there were watch towers, the port was frequented by ships in transit and that they supplied themselves with drinking water evident by the presence of numerous wells.

We can hypothesise that both by the Arab name of the island as by the presence of the wells that the island had only few inhabitants, except around the port area. In the more remote areas there must have been a group of hermits living in solitude maybe due to the habits of the eastern monarchism.

The island was fortified in the Norman-Swabian era; the established presence of garrisons must have helped to develop the first real urban nucleus. The medieval hamlet thus came to be fortified by powerful defences of which, remain today, the ruins of the forts of S. Giacomo and Santa Caterina. Notably interesting in Santa Caterina is the towering presence of a Saracen look-out. Today, conspicuous and suggestive ruins display the strength realised by the Norman King Ruggero.

When also they developed and organised a complex routine of tuna fishing, favoured by sovereigns who considered the area pertaining to state property and outposts for the custody of the coast. The Normans were then followed by the Swabians and Angioini, under whom the island was changed a little, except for the placing in Favignana of the first two tuna fishing nets. Tuna fishing in the Egadi is one of the most anciently established industries, and is still practised today.

The revolt of the Vespers, saw amongst its conspirators, Palmerio Abate, Governor of Favignana castle so that the Angioini place of residence on the island was among the first to be over taken and wiped out in Sicily. The grateful King, Pietro d' Arageona, came to claim his wife Constanza's valuable Swabian heritage and was immediately presented to the Abate family under the authority of Palmerio and the descendents of Favignana's ruling family. During the reign of Maria (1392) however, the provision was revoked as the Abate family was accused of a felony. Afterwards the island passed to the Trapanesi De Carissima and at the end of the family line to the Riccio; and while it continued under Spanish domination they again experienced dramatic incursions by Muslim and Turkish pirates.

The island, particularly Levanzo and Marettimo, were continually visited by Turkish ships looking for refuge and raiding for people to sell in the eastern slave-trade markets. It would seem that no one could match the Muslim arrogance and that no one, however, could or wanted to aid the poor islanders. Only "fata morgana" was once moved to compassion, when the island was attacked by an aggregate of naval enemies, as a warning, this fairy drew, in the sky above Favignana, the arrival of the fleet. The rage of the war of the 15th century brought about, by order of the King, a significant reconstruction and fortification of the coastal towers for the states people and city. In 1637 the Egadi island, with full rights to the tuna fishing nets, were seceded by Philip IV of Spain to Marquess Camillo Pallavicini-Rusconi of Genoa to cover a loan, while Sicily remained in the hands of the Bourbons. After a long period of decadence Pallavicini renationalised and developed a system of agriculture on the islands, and, especially in Favignana, the beginning of the first systematically planned town. Moreover, the construction of the town grid was decentralised in respect to the fortress, so as not to impede the surveillance of the sea and to be out of range of cannon fire. For the local population the fortresses, above all the fort of S. Giacomo, were sources of security. From 1874 the islands belonging to Florio, along with the ancient tuna fishing nets and the built up area of Favignana, achieved great splendour. This era also saw the continuation of the construction of Florio's mansion, an elegant and refined building in Liberty style, and, along the port's Western side the new, big tuna fishing net building, the most important in Sicily.

However, during Bourbon rule they found a new use for the old and sinister forts by transforming them into places of torture and penalty for rebels and political prisoners. With the arrival of the 19th century and Garibaldi, the Egadi faded to little more than landing ports for Marsala. The big wind of liberation, and successively Italy's unification, arrived at the island only for the opening of the gloomy castles of Sant Giacomo and Santa Caterina, whereby the detained politicians exited like shadows. However the Egadi were still destined to be a place of penalty; for example the S. Giacomo in Favignana, remains a secure facility for life imprisonment and therefore the confinement of the some common criminals and Mafiosi. The population has learnt to live with them and many of them have even brought economic benefits to be island. Numerous lifers in open prisons work, especially during the summer period, for the islanders and tourists.

2. A Regional and National Summary or the Egadi Islands

In the course of the year 2000 in Italy, the overall tourist presence (visitors who remained for one night or more) published by Istat amounted to 311,062,000 and the arrivals (day visitors) to 74,683,000. The presence have increased by 3.9% in respect to 1998. The arrivals show an increment of 3.3%. The average tourist length of stay is 4.17 days, the same as in 1998. In the hotel sector, the movement of the Italians registers an increase of 2.9% for the arrivals and of 2.6% for the presence, with 3.5 days the average length of stay, like the preceding year. In the same hotels, the arrivals of foreign tourists registers an increase of 3.1% while the presence has increased markedly (4.4%), with 3.4 days duration. More significant increments are observed in the influx of the Italian presence in the holiday accommodation sector, which have augmented by 3.3% and the arrivals by 3.2%. Foreigners, however, have registered a more noticeable augmentation both in the arrivals (6.9%) and the presence (7.9%)².

In Sicily in the year 2000; the total presence of both Italians tourists and foreigners, amounted to about 12,000,000 and the arrivals to 3,600,000, distinctly higher than those of the previous year; a positive trend that has repeated itself in the last few years and confirmed the vitality of the tourism sector in the Sicilian economy. The average tourist stay is 3.3 days the same as that recorded in 1998. The 2001 edition of the 'First Report on Tourism in Sicily', states that in the hotel sector she is facing a complex increment of 4.82% in the arrivals and 6.43% in the presence, the movement of the Italians registers an increase both in the arrivals, 3.29% and in the presence, 3.60%, with 3 days of average length of stay. The arrival of foreign tourists registers an increase of 7.51% while the presence augments by 11.12%, with the length of stay being 3.3 days. Also, the holiday accommodation sector has registered movements in augmentation 13.87% overall for the arrivals.

The Italian arrivals in the financial year have increased by 9.78% and the Italian presence by 9.83% but with a similiar average length of stay to that registered the previous year. The foreign arrivals note an increase of 21.66% and in the foreign presence of 27.05%. The average length of stay is 4.94 days. The Italian presence in the year 2000 augmented in respect to that of 1999 significantly in the provinces of Trapani (15.02%), Caltanissetta (13.88%), Palermo (9.34%); while Agrigento and Siracusa revealed a decrease (-5% and -0.93%).

The foreign presence has registered more solid increases in Ragusa (23.90%). Palermo (20.72%). Siracusa (17.33%). Catania (16.68%). Trapani (15.56%); a decrease is revealed only in Caltanissetta (-9.10%). Naturally the data are estimated in relation to the receptive capacity of the different provinces, since small increments mostly affect provinces with a small capacity and that had a modest presence the preceding year. According to the data given by 'Aziende', the whole of Sicily registered a 4.66% increase of the Italian presence and a 13.87% increase of foreigners. The total presences distribute themselves in different Sicilian provinces.

The arrivals in the province of Trapani show, the year 2000, an increase of 6.17% in respect to 1999, while still augmenting the arrival of foreign tourists 5.98%. The arrivals have risen by 6.12%. The presences show a significant increase both in those of the Italians 15.02% and foreigners 15.56%, data which is witnessing a strong growth trend in the province of Trapani. In total, the growth of the presence is 15.13%. Comprehensively, the increase of the arrivals of both the Italians and foreigners in the hotel sector in the province of Trapani is 3.99% or 227,491, with a growth of 3.68% of Italians and 4.74% of foreigners. The hotel sector presence of Italians and foreigners (652,108) has grown by 14.55% in respect to 1999 with a 13.89% of Italians and 14.55% of foreigners. The ratio of the tourist movement revealed in 2000 and 1999 in the hotel star system varied and shows how visitors having increased in the presence much more than in the arrivals -particularly in the two and three stars business -have found themselves more gratified in the year 2000 if not in the length of stay, then probably in the numbers received. The holiday accommodation arrivals of Italians and foreigners in the province of Trapani shows an increase of 17.78% or 46,851. The presence, which comprehensively amounts to 211,790 registers an increase of 18.61%. As far as the holiday accommodation structure is concerned, variations register a noticeable

² Data deduced by local office of Favignana, from the local office of Marettimo and of STREMAR agency.

augmentation of the arrival and presence of Italians in 'Campeggi e villaggi turistici', 4,214 arrivals and 28,723 presence, and the foreign presence, 2,942 (information taken from the 'Case date in affitto da privati e imprese iscritti al R.E.C.').

A notably higher number of Italian visitors continue to stay in the province of Trapani in comparison to foreigners. In fact, out of the 680,081 Italian presence of the business received both in the hotel sector and holiday accommodation, 183,817 are foreign, revealing an increase of 15.2% and 15.56% respectively, with regard to the data of the preceding year. The main tourist flow is that which originates from Sicilians themselves. The strong inter-regional movement represents 52.66% of the Italian arrivals and 41.03% of the Italian presence, who represents 78.72% of the overall total of the presence. From this we can deduce that 32.30% of the amount of tourist flow registered in the province of Trapani is generated by the Sicilians themselves, 279,034 of the 63,898 total presence.

After the Sicilians, the highest rate of tourist movement is generated by those from the Lombardy region, who in terms of percentage represent 9.57% of the arrivals and 13.67% of the Italian presence, those from the Lazio region, 7.25% of the arrivals and 7.82% of the presence, the Campania region, 4.33% of the arrivals and 5.57% of the presence, the Piedmont region, 3.80% of the arrivals and 5.94% of the presence. The analysis of the length of stay of foreigners, as always, confirms that the majority comes from Germany. The Germans weigh in at 30.12% of the arrivals, 24.79% of the presence in the hotel sector and 34.46% of the arrivals and 33.96% of the presence in the holiday accommodation sector. The Germans are followed by the French with 3.94% of the arrivals and 24.35% of the presence in the hotel sector and with 21.35% of the arrivals and 19.42% of the presence in the holiday accommodation sector.

The third and fourth places are occupied, respectively, in the hotel sector, by the USA and Switzerland; in the holiday accommodation sector the third place is taken by the Dutch and fourth by the Swiss. The most intense tourist movement is realized by the Italians in the month of August -this flow is 22.23% of the arrivals and 31.45% of the presence -followed by the month of July. The hotel sector confirms that there would be more abundant possibility of success by seasonally adjusting the demand. In fact, 56% of the total presence is realized in the four summer months (June, July, August and September) and 44% in the other months of the year. In the holiday accommodation sector however, this connection changes: 89% of the presence is due to the summer component. The considerable weight of the Italian presence, as always, falls heavily on the seasonal nature and it emerges that the Italian presence is concentrated almost exclusively in the summer period. Such concentration becomes more accentuated in the holiday accommodation sector rather than the hotel sector.

Nevertheless, in the course of the last five years, a new situation has arisen. Still visible in 1999 was the old tendency of concentration of demand in the Easter and summer period, with a fall between the two seasons. From the year 2000, the hotel sector has begun to show the disappearance of this gap to the benefit of a more ordered and growing trend between Easter and the summer season and then between the latter and the Autumn period, thus demonstrating a lengthening of the holiday season.

This implies a better and more stable use of "consumerism" in a larger span of the year and contributes in particular, a quantitative increase in the hotel sector demand in the province of Trapani. The necessary political consideration to provide more immediate answers with respect to the priority of seasonal adjustments based on the hotel sector's capacity are confirmed again, and render this sector strategic for the tourist economy. Together, the months of July and August represent 43.42% of the tourist presence in the province of Trapani. The stimulation of tourist demand in other periods could represent a deterrent for the heavy concentration of demand during the summer months.

3. The indexes of net utilization of the received capacity and the length of stay of tourists

The net index of the received capacity in the hotel sector of the whole province is 37.16%, with a slight increase in respect to 2000 (33.69%) and 1999 (30.93%). The used capacity is expressed in terms of the potential bed spaces available throughout the year, region by region. The bathing resorts of Favignana and Pantelleria present the most evident disproportion between the effective presence (used capacity) and potential presence (total capacity). The utilisation of the received capacity is analysed, region by region, in a method that favours the

immediate perception of the phenomenon obtained by comparing the amount of annual presence in the hotels of the regions in the province of Trapani to the number of beds available, as the following statement shows.

Tab. 1. Real and potential bed days for commune in a year

COMMUNES	USED	UNUSED
Castellammare	25.000	80.000
Castelvetrano	80.000	295.000
Erice	75.000	290.000
Favignana	35.000	225.000
Marsala	50.000	190.000
Pantelleria	49.000	350.000
S. Vito	37.000	124.000
Trapani	52.000	192.000
Valderice	26.000	100.000
Altri comuni	27.000	190.000

Source: Self governing provincial company for tourist increase of Trapani's province

This information provides useful information as to the reading of the tourist phenomenon in the different localities of the province, immediately allowing comparisons between tourist bathing resorts (Favignana, Pantelleria, San Vito...) and resorts with a natural tendency towards the cultural, historical/artistic, health and business (Selinute, Marsala, Erice, Trapani...).

The data provided on the marked "stagionalità" (used capacity during the summer months) of the presence is always correlated to an unequal distribution or the presence in the course of a whole year, and therefore, to an insufficient use of the available capacity.

In terms of days/years, the effective use of the hotel sector and the low index usage is apparent, as the following statement 2 shows, with marked differences between one resort and another. A minimum of 68.04 days in Favignana to a maximum of 167.40 days in Marsala, which reconfirms its place at the top of the group as in the previous year, when it enjoyed 141.98% of the presence, with Trapani at 119.41% and Erice at 119.98%. In 2001 the average, annual length of stay in the hotel sector of the province for both Italians and foreigners came to 2.87 days -which is slightly higher than that registered in the previous year, 2.61 and in 1999, 2.55 days -with a maximum of 5.98 days in Pantelleria. In the holiday accommodation sector the average length of stay is 4.52 days (similar to that recorded in 2001), with a maximum of 5.76 days in Favignana and a minimum in Marsala of 2.70. This data presents a substantial increase in the direction of tourist demand in the province.

Tab. n. 2- Effective utilization in days/year for commune since 1999 until 2001.

COMMUNES	1999	2000	2001
Castellammare	113,15	111,04	120,30
Castelvetrano	125	119,97	135,87
Erice	111,45	121,75	139,98
Favignana	30,81	69,69	69,04
Marsala	123,61	141,99	167,40
Pantelleria	67,03	70,94	69,01
S. Vito	89,44	91,67	98,85
Trapani	109,00	120,11	159,41
Valderice	89,95	94,39	112,45
Altri comuni	64,90	78,59	77,37

Source: Self governing provincial company for tourist increase of Trapani's province

The interest from the market operators and from tourists in general towards this zone, has witnessed a positive trend which started in 1999. It's very important to underline that the tourist increase has yielded from different components: entrepreneurial, public and territorial. In fact, more recent studies of the sector conclude that tourist development has resulted from a huge effort of all the subjects that operate within a region. The public and private sectors must heartily work towards the realization and the betterment of ways of communication, means of transport (fundamentally important considering the position of Sicily, penalised in respect to the rest of Italy, in her foreign affairs), of infrastructure (almost always absent) and of services (which are of a modest quality).

It's important to evaluate all the strengths of the province, in particular, the upgrading and protection of cultural attractions that, in conjunction with its holiday and bathing resorts, constitute a characteristic aspect of the proposal.

In order to put seasonal adjustment into operation adequate encouragement of conferences, tourism of both the young and elderly, and the religious in the areas with abundant churches is essential. It is also important rural, sporting and thermal tourism and all that could be taken advantage of in the island's wonderful climate to attract a flow of wealthy tourists.

The creation of emerging itineraries integrating various package offers is useless if not used in conjunction with this project, not only on a regional and contemporary level, but also on a provincial one. This existing project is already over-exerted to guarantee first its existence, and then the quality of the services offered by the tourist and cultural sites of the Trapani province, that is the hotels, catering, service centres and local tourist transport. The project should take into account, on one hand, the vocation of each area of the province, and on the other hand, tourist demands. The basic principles of the reception and the fruition of the tourist circuits, which link main sites and traffic, would benefit not only the infrastructure and public services useful to the civic centre, but also its suitability for habitation.

In fact, if the strengthening of the proposal is an essential condition for entering the tourist flow system then the increment of the tourist movement in the province of Trapani still doesn't have an efficient structure compared to that of the market~ especially regarding the integration of the induced activity (area produce, transport and tourist services) and the natural and cultural resources of the territory.

The growing demand, therefore, could represent a good forecast for the proceeding years. But a lot remains to be done for this great opportunity to turn itself into sustainable tourist development. It's vital to pay particular attention to the care of the environment, the professionalism of the operators, involvement of all the participants and resources in an integrated tourist system. There are many scientific, technical and legislative organisations used today by the 'the district centre', amongst which are SLOT (Local System of Tourist Supply) and STL (Local Tourist System).

To avoid a structural explosion that could deteriorate or harm the environment the planners shouldn't lose sight of this opportunity and its planned investments. Conservation, today, is perceived in the same way as history, to preserve and protect for future generations. It gives us the opportunity to evaluate the affect of human activity on the environment and invests in precious heritage of the past and enormous potential for the future.

4. Environmental Risks

Many island communities exceed the limit of their resources many times in the course of the year and nearly all of them show consistently elevated tourist numbers. This obviously signals a relatively serious problem, which indicates an eventual decline in tourism if it's not dealt with in the correct way. The damage caused by excessive tourist crowding is irreversible, not allowing a posteriori remedies but simply requesting preventive defensive actions.

So there is a decision to be made: is it more convenient to give the incentive of a final development of tourist offers and if so which offer is compatible with a clever utilisation of the local resources, as well as with a life-line of environmental conditions, or is it better to stop at the actual threshold thus conserving the results gained, improving and stabilising them to the new rising demands?

Certainly the local resources aren't inexhaustible, and with time signs of overuse could be shown.

Attention needs to be paid as the islands run the risk, through the excessive tourist load and the considerable use of the territory, of distorting the potential of their natural resources and of losing the original images of the traditional villages.

All of the Archipelago is subject to wind and sea erosion. In this part of the Mediterranean the most prominent winds come from the North and South-East. The Mistral winds (North-West) hit the Northern coast, causing higher and more aggressive tidal erosion. On the South island the Libeccio winds (South-West) whirl breaking up the sandy dunes, which are fragile. Serious erosion on the Egadi islands, however, hasn't been recorded. This includes the landslides of some years ago which have completely filled in some sub-terranean zones.

For a brief period the beginning of a process of abusive building has been recorded. If this expansive push of wild building continues, considering that as many houses have been built along the coast and beaches as have been built in the hills and promontories, the pine forests will be reduced, the woods in the medium and high hills will be depleted and the terraced vines will quickly vanish. Some results can be seen along the coast where the rocky walls made of a clay formation, have crumbled in a myriad of landslides. No less worrying is the reduction of, and change to, the sandy beaches caused by coastal currents created by rocks. With time, if the environmental alterations worsen, it could start a vicious circle leading to devaluation of resources. In reality tourism has two sides; on one hand it demands a peaceful and uncontaminated environment, on the other hand it's a source of pollution and alteration. That's why it seems necessary to put into action, with extreme urgency, political programmes to save the environment. This requires two indispensable conditions: private and public collaboration, local political intervention, without which the deterioration of the environment seems inevitable. The private body is driven by a logic which responds to the stimulus of the market and tends to increase profits while spending as little as possible to preserve the environment.

In fact it doesn't concern itself with preserving some of its unique environmental values such as eco-systems, special villages and archaeological sites and monuments, ignoring them in favour of tourism.

The role of the public body must consider the conservation of the resources of the tourist industry, so it assures the protection of the sandy beaches, which are a major tourist attraction, and the development of villages -which are major tourist requirements, particularly when Sicily has such a warm, friendly and welcoming reputation.

Another ecological problem is that which presents itself in the summer season. The three islands came under the assault of tourists and holiday makers who, used to living in run-down cities where there is no respect for the environment, believe that they can behave themselves in the same way in these places as well. The majority of these tourists harm and dirty not only the beaches and the coast but also the sea. This represents one of the biggest threats, as floating on the otherwise clear water is refuse like bottles or plastic bags which, abandoned to the waves and the current, washes up on the shores and coasts, which is not what the islanders want.

Other threats come from hydro-carbons in the form of tar, that deposits itself on the rocks. Some state laws in force should have allowed for continual surveillance in the shape of the port captain but they still haven't been given the naval and personnel resources necessary to undertake such important and delicate duties.

A serious problem for the three Egadi islands (and also for the whole of Sicily) is the lack of water. The average rain-fall is 70 days per year. The presence of the drought is felt more than the lack of rain as the population is augmented with the influx of tourists which then increases the consumption of water. At this point the stratum is used for drinking water which, is polluted itself by organic refuse. So the islands, unable to use the wells, make use of an aqueduct which is connected to Trapani but it is insufficient especially during the summer months. In fact, if in winter it manages to meet the needs of the approximate 4500 inhabitants, in summer, when the population swells dizzily, the situation becomes alarming and they have to resort to using ships to transport water supplies.

In the 1970s UNESCO predisposed a project for the usage of the smaller islands of the Mediterranean, in a way that was compatible with ecological requirements.

In the natural marine areas, where all activities which provoke environmental risks have been prohibited, it has been observed that the attitude adapted on a national and regional scale has encountered hostility on the part of the island's population; the inhabitants at times openly oppose the marine national parks in their waters: island administration and communities, in general don't tolerate, the obligations imposed on their land. Moreover, small islands which have often been mismanaged by the state, have formed action groups in order to express their strong opinion.

The mayors or the smaller islands have formed a political movement vigorously urging for the attention of state or regional powers with demands for water and energy provisions, increased communication during the winter months, sanitation officers and scholastic equipment. But these requests vary from island to island, archipelago to archipelago, depending on their needs. The insular condition, isolation, lack of structure and proximity to the terra firma play a minor role for the larger islands. But all of these islands for all their summer vitality, in the winter months have acquired worrying characteristics in that at the end of the summer; the seas are no longer dotted with dozens of boats, there is no longer the frenzied arrival and departure of the ferries, hotels; bed and breakfasts; restaurants, bathing establishments and craft shops close. The inhabitants who the summer sees transformed into waiters, shop assistants and boatmen, return to the ancient activities of agriculture and fishing; holiday villages and 'second homes' are deserted, for months they remain 'ghost towns'.

Most of the island communities express the desire to preserve costumes, tradition and, in general, everything that gives them their insular individualities. However, the search for well-being, for the customs and lifestyles characteristic of a metropolis -particularly on the part of the young people- the major frequency of exchanges with the terra firma, the continuing presence of Italian and foreign holiday makers, the elevation of scholastic levels have led to a progressive toning down of the sense of belonging to an insular community.

REFERENCES

- Alaimo F., 1990, *Egadi, Sicilia Tourist Service*, Palermo.
- Barbieri G., Ganigiani F., Cassi L., 1991, *Geografia e ambiente*, Torino, Utet Libreria.
- Bertolino F. Pulso I. C., 1999, *La Riserva Naturale Marina delle Isole Egadi*, Capitaneria di Porto Guardia Costiera di Trapani, Trapani, Ente gestore della Riserva, pp. 3-5.
- Cataudella M., 2000, *Gli ambienti del pianeta*, Cava dei Terreni, Gentile.
- Cundari G., 1998, *Ambiente e territorio: lo sviluppo sostenibile dalla teoria alla realtà*, Torino.
- Cusenza V., 2001, *La sacra, Meridiani, Sicila e isole*, ed. Domus, Rozzano, anno XIII, n. 89.
- Del Mare N., 1983, *Al di là della leggenda, Nuovo Geodes, La terra che vive*, Bergamo, Edizione Purana, anno V, n. 7 Luglio-Agosto, p. 11.
- Formica C., 2001, *Geografia, La soglia del carico turistico*, Roma, anno XXIV, n. 3-4.
- Istat, 2001, *Commerci, alberghi e pubblici esercizi, Imprese e unità locali*, VII Censimento Generale dell'Industria e dei Servizi.
- Lunardi C., 2002, *Morettimo*, Gardenia, ed. Giorgio Mondatori, Milano, n. 216, Aprile.
- Mautone M., 2000, *Turismo e impatto ambientale, Un quaderno per l'ambiente*, n. 4, Associazione Italiana Insegnanti di Geografia, Napoli.
- Mazzetti E., 1999, *Capri, Ischia e Procida*, Napoli, Electa.
- Monti S., 2000, (ed.), *Ischia nello sviluppo sostenibile*, Napoli, Loffredo.
- Novara L., Precoci A, Lombardo A., 1993, *Egadi*, Marsala, La Medusa Editrice.
- Racheli Gin, 1979, *Egadi, vita e mare*, Milano, Mursia.
- Guida dell'ospitalità nella provincia 2002, *Trapani Hotels*, Azienda Autonoma Provinciale per l'incremento turistico di Trapani.
- Sandoz L., Catania G., 2000, *Indagine sul movimento turistico nella provincia di Trapani*, Trapani, Azienda Provinciale Turismo, pp. 5-17.

Tumbarelli D., 2003, *Relazione consuntiva relativa al turismo*, Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti, Ufficio locale marittimo, Guardia Costiera di Marittimo.

“Italia nostra” has gathered in 1993 in a “Exercise-book” the results of a “Study Commission for the Minor Islands” work. Have been here reported some considerations