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THE COAST-INLAND RELATIONSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is more and more often acknowledged that intervention on coasts has been carried out so heavily that it almost seems that there are no more possibilities for local intervention aiming at a solution within the coastal area. Only by involving a wider territory, especially the territory lying behind it, we can think of having some chance to re-balance the alterations.

Furthermore, such practice may be considered correct both from a social and economic point of view, with respect to the populations of the inland areas, and from an environmental point of view, because it would be possible to give new enhancement to exchanges between the sea and inland. Such exchange is today almost blocked by buildings and by the coastal and marine infra structuring. On the other hand, with such practice the sea too would be able to return to its specific function of ecological exchanger, together with the coast itself and with the small archipelagos present in front of the coast, in a renewed continuity between sea and land, between coast and inland.

In Tuscany and other regions of Italy these problems have already begun to be studied with reference to the above-mentioned object: we could therefore show some examples, besides setting up a workshop on the same subject with reference to Turkey.

The project of applied research already drafted, is available in order to evaluate its possible uses

2. ECOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE RE-QUALIFICATION OF THE COAST

It is notoriously possible from an ecological point of view to consider the coast as the interface between two systems, classically called *ecotone*.

Considering the relevance and the complexity of the two blending systems, the land and the sea, we may conclude that the ambit of their meeting area (a wide belt, terrestrial and marine at the same time - in other words the coast itself) emerges as a territorial and environmental structure of great vitality. Such structure is characterised by natural bio-diversities, by landscape and anthropic eco-diversities, all very strategically important both for the land and sea system. But the structure itself is at the same time very fragile from both a natural point of view, and from the point of view of the "historically built environments", for the rarity and the specificity of the different possibilities of mutual exchange, extraordinary and delicate at the same time.

As regards the "coastal" phenomena the object of our study we can therefore take into consideration a concept not referring only to purely linear coasts, but rather to a whole system: in this case we consider the system made of all the relations existing between the sea and the land. Therefore such system has a geo/ecological ambit wide enough to make possible the evaluation of the mutual inter-system relations, sometimes in the shape of definite local systems (lagoons, deltas, and estuaries), that sometimes have to be studied in wider and more complex contexts (sea slopes, river basins, archipelagos, and promontories, etc.).

In any case, the system we refer to is a system of relations, which we suggest evaluating both in its spatial dimension and configuration, and in its ecological and time dynamics.

Within such a statement, it could be extremely interesting to make reference to the "result" of the above-mentioned dynamics and to the territory structures, in other words to the "landscape" itself. By this latter we mean here not only the cultural and aesthetic phenomenon, but also mainly the complex ecological phenomenon (the human and natural phenomenon), as a consequence of the relation between society and environment, between man and nature, considered in their correlated and retrospective being.

So, since we consider the coasts as “structures of relation”, they acquire a peculiar meaning for what concerns the Mediterranean Sea, this being the case of a “sea surrounded by lands”, where obviously the coastal system becomes a very important element, especially if it is to be considered as a structure of relations.

In Europe there are two different systems of “seas surrounded by lands”, the first is in the North (the Baltic Sea and the North Sea), and the second in the South, the Mediterranean Sea. This latter, besides being our main interest is also much more complex than the other system, because the coasts of three continents face it. Coasts, lands, mountains, islands, inner seas, rivers, and continental inland, constitute in the Mediterranean a complex relational system, an intercontinental relational structure, a great ecotone set in the middle of three continents.

This peculiar condition has notoriously made the relational structure extremely vital and active, since for centuries a multiplicity of relations and relationships have had the opportunity to develop in many directions and in different ways, within very different environments, societies, and cultures, yet all interwoven one with the other.

We know that nowadays this system has entered a phase of profound alterations, so that the change effect has almost the personal characteristics of a “mutation”, of a real “metamorphosis” both of the territory (specifically the coastal territory) and of the relational structure considered in its complexity, in other words, including environment, society and culture.

All the relational ambits have been practically involved in phenomena of accelerated and inappropriate transformations. In primis the coast has been more and more built, infra structured, manipulated, dredged, and polluted.

All the contact relations (the osmotic relations) between the sea and the land have been altered, and subsequently and progressively, all their subordinate mutual relations have undergone changes and have ended up generating always-new alterations. So doing, a relational retro process has begun to permeate the whole relational system, the whole ecotone, and to provoke an alteration in the system relations, already damaged by more specific alterations (urban, industrial, agricultural ones in the land system, and pollution ones in the marine system).

In such a context, a chain of further retroactions has occurred, and has provoked the effects of ecological and territorial metamorphosis, which we have already mentioned above.

One of the direct consequences is the inevitable alteration of the Mediterranean landscapes, as well as the change of the “information” heritage they used to contain. This is paradoxically due to tourism, in other words the activity which should take advantage of the historical and natural information belonging to the Mediterranean places, and therefore to the coastal systems. But, on the contrary, it has become the primary reason for this alteration.

Thus all the relational levels have been compromised, from the local and directly correlated ones to the more specific system ones, from the information ones to the aesthetic one, and even to those belonging to the social and cultural heritage. But the alteration represents also heavy economic and social damage, because it alters the primary resources and does not allow to see clearly enough the real purposes of the population, while promoting on the other hand absolutely “not sustainable” models of development. Facing this situation, any hypothesis of intervention can plainly be neither sectoral nor specialistic, but we have to make reference to the specific systemic logic.

Our hypothesis suggests “acting on relations”, in order to try to reopen the re-qualification processes of transformation, both for what concerns the environment, and social, cultural processes within sustainability.

Thus we could draft a program of actions aiming at rebuilding and re-qualifying the relations and mutual exchanges between the land and the sea which occur on the coast, and we could influence the factors of synthesis relations, especially what we consider the synthetic factor for excellence, the landscape.

From Tuscany, within the western Mediterranean sea, with references and comparison with the whole Mediterranean basin and with the European coastal systems, especially the area of the “seas of the northern lands”, we suggest setting up a model of “experiments on the re-opening of sustainable

ecological and economic relations, within and by the coasts". Such a model will become the basis for the construction of a web of experiments and mutual assessments for other regional coasts within the above mentioned relations. This will provide the involved regions with information useful for territorial politics of competence, but it should mostly permit, in Europe and in the Mediterranean basin, to have real feasibility tests of a possible real alternative and of reversal tendencies for what concerns the growing alterations of the coastal environmental system and of nearby territories.

3. MODEL OF THE RELATIONAL EXPERIMENT: OPERATIVE PROCEDURE SCHEME

Follows a short scheme of what could be the Cognitive, Evaluation, and Project Activities planned for the experiment . The Operation modalities will have to be realised in function of the realities of the different experiment contexts, on the basis of needs and local availability, that will result after having carried out all the required evaluations.

A. Cognitive Actions

A.1. Structural reading, which aims at determining the following:

- Coastal systems and sub-systems (local and wide systems).
- Recent models of settlement (from the metropolis to parks, to mixed settlement continuum).
- Assessment of bio-diversities, eco-diversities, alterations and fractures of the system and relations (the landscape considered as ecological indicator).

A.2. Process reading, which aims at determining the following:

- Dynamics of formation as time passes (formation of landscapes).
- Recent dynamics of alteration (mutation, metamorphosis).
- Present tendencies (Plans and Programs of intervention, their contradictions, and the expectations of everybody's imaginary, environmental involutions retroactions, and still present evolutionary dynamics).

B. Evaluation Actions

B.1. Evaluation of residual dynamics of the system.

B.2. Evaluation of the possibility of re-opening relational and evolutionary processes.

B.3. Evaluation of the possible uses of the landscape, taking into account the monitoring of transformations, the interpretation of processes, and the foreshadowing of the project.

C. Project Actions

C.1. Experimental construction of coastal territorial samples, in contextual diversified conditions, on the basis of the re-organisation of economic and ecological relations, scheduled from the very beginning in order to allow a chance of self-assessment both for the process and for the results of the experiment. They should be already arranged in order to be inserted on the web and so planned to allow evaluation of web results by the actors of the experiments.

C.2. Accomplishment of the dialogue between inhabitants and environment.

Experimental actions of social learning and re-staking of the information involved in the environment and in the social culture - the inhabitants are considered as "full time participants" in the life of the environment, with variable times of permanence, linked to the modalities of their settlement or to their "visit" in the involved area.

C.3. Re-construction of value systems through practices of social ecology.

Determination of the latent values which could emerge from the inhabitants and environmental context, and their relative "active custody" within projects and events pre-arranged and socially brought to life in "samples" of territory or when using local itineraries, "chosen and acknowledged" as significant in both cases.

C.4. Experiments of shared values and participation to the landscape.

Significant activities of direct participation in events which include social involvement in the transformations or uses of the landscape.

D. Lines for sustainability criteria to be considered as preliminary choices for the above-mentioned actions, and to be evaluated later on within the biennial activities of the Program.

D.1. Sustainability criteria to put into effect with Strategies on a large scale, and with Localised Experiments (in time and in space).

- Do not further damage the residual coastal stretches.
- Vice-versa, satisfy all new needs by regaining the recent alterations, and by obtaining a double synergetic effect.
- Re-open cycles and rhythms with the environment and its resources, adjusting in this way seasonal relations (seasonal tourism, biological stop, agricultural production for the city of tourism, health and prevention cycles, social teaching,).
- Re-start the values of local exchanges, (such as the relations country-sea, city-sea, sea-water cycle, etc.).
- Re-open relations with the “inland” systems nearby; draft a hypothesis of right of veto with regard to coastal activities that may greatly damage it (checking all the unbalances at the same time).
- Activate again in the Mediterranean basin relations among regional systems, directly with the bilateral relations among regions, until it is possible to accomplish an exchange area, differentiated from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, rather than purely from a monetary, quantitative and uniform point of view.
- Open system “processes” through activation of new relations, based on local experiments. Then it should be the turn for acting through the landscape pre-figuration and the active participation of the involved populations.