

MEDWAYS

Mediterranean blue and green infrastructures for sustainable tourism development

Tourism is a vehicle for the continuous modernization of cities, areas and entire countries; an especially significant tool for the economic development of the countries along the Mediterranean, a region whose coastal areas receive 30% of international tourist arrivals. Tourism triggers and supports intense, rapid processes of change: it incessantly produces constructed tourism landscapes – both in the countryside and the cities. Tourism (re)shapes identity at a national, regional and local level and tends to “freeze” it, producing stereotypes, that operate as recognizable consumer products. The speed of change, urbanization and urban sprawl caused by tourism development most often leads to homogeneity, the blurring or the erasure of particular points of reference, distinctive elements of identity – these processes tend to neutralize the natural or urban landscape as a meaningful environment.

Understanding resilience as the ability of a body to “recover” after a change or a deformation, in the case of the tourism phenomenon, we can comprehend resilience as the ability of a natural or urban landscape or environment to recover after the multi-faceted deformation caused by aggressive tourism development processes. The “recovery” of tourism landscapes, the negation of their homogeneity, can be realized by the introduction of meaningful “slow”, ecological, landscape and cultural infrastructures conceived for fragile territories able to enhance the values and the identities of the Mediterranean coast's social, natural and cultural patrimony. These infrastructures can be understood as networks or “ways”: “Mediterranean blue and green ways” or “Medways”.

Medways are established by sequences of physical elements connected under a common narrative or theme – history, culture, nature, ecology, local produce and crafts etc. Medways can also be understood as sequences of immaterial elements: processes, rules, traditions, protocols, codes etc. Medways are in fact devices for the protection and sustainable tourism development of Mediterranean coastal areas, that could be managed by local communities. Medways come from Greece, Italy, France and Spain; they belong to the south legacies not to the northern development models.