

Water resources traditional management in small islands as cultural heritage

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Premise - In some small island, traditional water collection solutions are not sufficient to meet the summer season's demands due to the scarcity of rainfall during the year and the loss of traditional knowledge relating to the collection of water.

In the islands, as in general, individual water requirements have increased significantly in quantitative and qualitative terms since the Second World War: Overall, the percentage of water used in domestic use has increased, mainly due to seasonal tourism, leading to local actors having to resolve a number of governance issues, which are otherwise not relevant.

The water in the small islands of the Mediterranean and, in particular, in the island of Ponza is at the heart of this reflection that allows to make a long-term reading in an island territory with a consistent historical sedimentation, which today has become a strong tourist vocation. The aim is to highlight how traditional forms of water resources management could not be useful anymore to provide water, but they and their re-discovering as local cultural heritage could play an important role to promote processes of environmental education, non-marine tourism development and sustain-able governance. A focus will be about islanders actions and perspective joint with exogenous interests.

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Water traditional management in Ponza - The history of the Island of Ponza is based on the alternation of population and depopulation processes during the time and they are in the main demographic context of the Italian tyrrhenian coast, especially the southern part of Lazio and the north of Campania. The insular populations, also, have not been able to take advantage of trade and interdependence relationships built over time between the coastal populations and those of the first inland, that allowed them structuring an integrated economic system, able to balance the resources – human and natural – even during periods of difficulty.

The territorialisation process into the Island of Ponza developed during centuries and the sedimentations still remained constant until today. Especially Roman era original ways of organization of the small and limited insular space are analysed. Another focus is about the transformation produced by Romans, and more over their influence on settlements of XVIII century («new» territorialisation) and of nowadays (re-territorialisation). A specifically dynamic of the territorialisation process is centered on water collecting systems, trying to understand how them influenced on settlements during the times. Hydraulic works were projected and built where roman settlements, and borbonic ones were established.

It's possible to highlight how important were the Roman structures and how they influenced the organization of insular space, then and recently. The overlap of more recent forms on the most ancient wasn't just for the narrowness of the territory, but also, and mostly, for their effectiveness until XVIII century. The persist of ancient water knowledge over the times and its joining to the new ones create an original knowledge system, which values are today called traditional and promote the reterritorialisation processes, now in progress.

Water traditional management as cultural heritage - By making the most of local cultural specificities and natural resources other than the sea available, it is possible to diversify the tourist offer, thus interrupting those dynamics of spatial and temporal concentration and extending the tourist season through that process called deseasonalisation. In an overall framework of stagnation of national and local economies, the enhancement of cultural and environmental assets can represent an element of development or relaunch of tourist and economic activities for all Italian island realities. Similarly, historical hydraulic works and traditional water resources management systems can be counted among cultural heritage - tangible and intangible - for the promotion of an alternative tourism to the marine one.

Fig. 1 – Frontispiece of “Dragonara” Roman cistern guide (2018)

Source: Pro Loco di Ponza, <http://www.prolocodiponza.it/>



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