



SEASIDE TOURISM MONOCULTURE *VERSUS* SUSTAINABILITY. The erosion of the social contract in the Rimini model.

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Abstract

Mass tourism is related to the industrial society and to the emerging of the fordist production system. It becomes a settled activity, based on large scale consumption standardization and is insensitive to environmental priorities. Our objective is to discover if it is possible, how to reconsider the development model of a mass coastal tourism destination, according to sustainable development.

The case study chosen is the Rimini region. The area has 2714 accommodating facilities (2002), 126.585 beds (1999) and 144.390 conference tourism participants (1999). A economic system based on family firms and middle size companies with a long tradition in accommodation services (since 1843) .

Since 1989, after an environmental disaster involving extraordinary mucilage growth through pollution, new approaches in planning policies were devised. Sustainability strategies applied in integrated planning policies were confronted with environmental priorities and socio-economic instability as a result of the decline of the traditional development model of coastal destinations. In order to transform from a traditional seaside resort to a new tourist destination, new development areas (like the trade fair, funfair and water themes parks other then a new centrality for cultural and congress tourism) were planned in combination with new strategic infrastructures (a new marina, car parks, cycle lanes), diversifying the tourist offer.

A UE LIFE project, in collaboration with Calvia, Spain and other Mediterranean destinations, was promoted in order to inform tourists, citizens and tourist operators of environmental concerns. Guidelines for hotels regarding green purchasing and incentives on sustainable bathing establishments were promoted. To stimulate larger actor participation, the Agenda 21 decision process was also activated.

The strategic reflection on the development model and the consequent planning actions, has also created new conflict areas, e.g. the emergence of anti-tourist attitudes and conflicts between

economic stakeholders.

Using the Rimini case study we can analyse the elements which characterize the evolution from mass tourism to a sustainable tourism destination.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism; Governance and Urban-Environmental planning; Seaside tourism; Mass tourism; Tourism monoculture; Rimini; Agenda 21; Antitourism.

1. SEASIDE TOURISM MONOCULTURE versus SUSTAINABILITY?

The Mediterranean Sea keeps being, even in the first months of this year 2004, the most important tourist region in the world, accounting for 30% of the worldwide tourist traffic. In 1990, 135 million tourists have chosen the Mediterranean Sea (EEA, 2003). The European Environment Agency forecasts for the year 2025 between 235 and 350 million tourists. The coasts bear the greatest tourist burden and the increase also involves the eastern countries of the Mediterranean, that are close to regions involved in international conflicts (WTO, 2004). If we consider, then, the Emilia - Romagna region in Italy, we notice that in 2003 there were about 43,5 million tourists in the *Riviera Adriatica* out of a regional total of about 53,1 million (Regione Emilia - Romagna, 2004).



Graph 1: Rimini, the geographical location in Italy.

Therefore we are facing a tourist traffic strongly unbalanced towards the coastal tourism. It seems appropriate to define this phenomenon as a seaside tourism monoculture for the leading role that the tourism assumes in the productive system. Such a type of destination is characterized by a mass tourism originating an economic system characterized by tourism monoculture. In Italy, ever since the early fifties, the growth of the industrial system, the greater availability of cars, and the more organized job structure, within the Fordist productive model, allowed a greater number of individuals to enjoy

their summer holidays (Conti and Pasini, 2000; Ioannides and Debbage, 1998). The age of the mass paid leaves was then introduced and the most successful destination in Italy became the tourist resorts of the Adriatic Coast Riviera. Rimini accounted over one million tourist presences back in 1951 (Dall'Ara 2002). The bathing vacations boom involves in different times all the Mediterranean. In addition to sociological and anthropological researches on tourism, the academic reflection has been focusing on the study of tourism as a product; it is not by chance that perhaps the most famous model in the evolution of tourist destinations, the life cycle model (Buttler, 1980; Agarwal, 2002), has been drawn from studies on the production cycle.

During the eighties worldwide achievement of the principles of Sustainable Development and, consequently, of the inevitability of an integrated analysis between environmental, economical and social aspects came about. (World Commission on Environmental Development, 1987). The reflection on sustainability applied to tourism has increased in the last twenty years as well as the evolution of the constant debate around it (Clarke, 1997), until the reaching of positions that question the compatibility of the principles of sustainability with the present mass tourism industry (Sharpley, 2000).

This analysis aims to underline the evolution and new conflict areas within a mass tourism destination typified by a seaside tourism monoculture. An outline of the Rimini model will be attempted, which characteristics mark a certain type of Mediterranean seaside resort, identified by a remarkable complexity of relations and, often, by strong conflicts. The history of these destinations has produced a number of stratified interests, either private or public, so that they constitute a strong spur for the modernization and diversification of the tourist system itself. Multipolar destinations, thus, according to a geographical interpretation (Lozato - Giotart, 1999). In the particular case of Rimini, the seaside monoculture has created the paradox of delaying the evolution of the destination from unipolar to multipolar, crystallizing for about one hundred and fifty years the Rimini tourism system and preventing a really sustainable development, in the sense of an environmental, economical and social equity.

At present, with the change of the tourist demand and with the end of the univocal consent on the predominance of the seaside tourism model, Rimini finds itself to face important conflicts. Those conflicts reveal the characteristics of the tourist system in question: the marginal role of the Tour Operator, a small or medium sized enterprise as the drive of development and a entrepreneurial class with a poor propensity to innovation. The articulation of local societies, the variety of visions about the future of the destination itself has opened a wide –ranging debate on the development strategies. A very different picture from that described by Putnam in his essay on the civil society in Italy (Putnam, 1993); There he seems to exalt a civic force historically constituted, homogeneously widespread, while a very little importance, is attributed to the role of the political factor as force of social aggregation, but also of hard contraposition and social conflict¹. Rimini presents a strong complexity in the social organization (Bagnasco, 1988; Mackun, 1998) and that has found, in the Communist Party, an important plug in the definition of a long-lasting social contract. Today Rimini faces conflicts strictly connected with the redefinition of the balance of the state power and, above all, with the risk of defining the future tourist system, after the flaking of the two historical bases of its own model of development, the political - ideological belonging and the summer touristic season.

2. THE RIMINI MODEL: SPECIFICITY, STORY AND CONFLICTS.

2.1. The town and the seaside tourism monoculture formation: unearned income *versus* profit.

The evolution of Rimini from small town with an established economy based on agriculture and

handicraft, to European capital of summer seaside tourism, has occurred through a series of phases that have determined the town's present structure. The analysis of this evolution enables us to emphasize the causes of the evolution of the Rimini system, by means of the formation, consolidation and crisis of the tourist system based on the seaside tourism monoculture. This system has determined until today the evolution of the Riminese territory, going through different political phases almost undamaged whose only crisis broke out during the eighties. The seaside tourism monoculture crisis and the overcoming of the derived model still seems to be the unsolved problem.

The first nucleus of the future tourist industry was born in 1843 with the opening of the *Stabilimento Privilegiato dei Bagni Marittimi*, twenty years after the establishment in Viareggio, Italy's first seaside resort. Rimini in those years accounted for about 30.000 inhabitants. It was situated in the *Stato Pontificio*, under the Pope's dominion, in a backward economic reality based on agricultural incomes. Its strategic geographical position and its healthy coast – free from malaria- led some members of the rising urban middle class of the town to undertake the venture, with the support of some progressive nobles. It was basically a therapeutic tourism resort. The idea of opening the public baths initially met with the determined opposition of the notable men of the town, and that of the municipality they represented: the new middle class drive disagreed with an unaltered economic system of the time, based on agricultural estate incomes.

The completion of the Bologna - Ancona railway line in 1860 and the intuition of future profits induced the municipality to buy the baths in 1869, the year when a travelling expedition set out on a cruise in the Mediterranean sea (Tuscany, Liguria and the French Riviera) to visit and learn from the most developed tourist destinations in Mediterranean sea. The appearance of the public management marks the transition from a pioneering phase - fostered by private industries- to the development of a seaside building sector which paralysed the newborn tourist industry: the policy of investing money in the baths, in therapeutic tourism and in hotels was given up in favour of an economic development based on land revenue incomes. In 1873 the *Società Anonima Edificatrice Riminese* was established, subsidized by the local bank, the *Cassa di Risparmio* that represented the interests of estate ventures and promoted the building of detached houses, of the Kursaal, and of the new hydrotherapeutic resort. A concept of holiday was born, and with it the littoral town marked by detached houses. (Conti and Pasini, 2000).

In 1908 the municipality sold the management of the littoral to private individuals (not Riminese by origin) and the Grand Hotel saw the light, but the main economic urge still remained that of the building speculation. The visitor's tax, instituted in 1910 (and abolished in 1989) assured great investments on tourism as well as on the urban quality for more than eighty years, but gave rise also to a long-lasting quarrel and a harsh political contrast over the destination of the resources. In 1912 the first town-planning scheme was brought into existence with a promenade provided with its already definite structure. Such scheme restricted itself in order to rationalize a posteriori the spontaneous littoral urban expansion. After the First World War all factories of foreign property were forced to close. The debate over the choice between a seaside-estate economy or the industrial development as axis of priority development, let the interests of real estate incomes prevail. The final closing of the *Stabilimento Idroterapico* (Hydrotherapeutic Resort) in 1920 confirmed the monocultural orientation of the destination development.

In 1922 Rimini was under Fascist control, but the change of regime did not invert the direction of the seaside-estate development. It was a period of very high taxation levels. In the early thirties one third of the inhabitants fed themselves on the town soup-kitchen (Conti and Pasini, 2000). The fragility of the monoculture had reached its apex: most industries were nearly abolished, the tourist season was short and, in spite of the increased number of people who went on holiday, only a few benefited from the tourist industry.

As the *Azienda di Cura, Soggiorno e Turismo* (Tourist Office) was established in 1926, all the

decision-makers represented the regime as well as its interests. The control over the municipality and the Azienda di Cura by the same individual, the Fascist *Podestà*, symbolically represented the apex of the seaside tourism monoculture. Mussolini spent his holidays in Riccione and the Adriatic Riviera becomes the favourite beach of Fascism. In order to make the habit of going on holiday popular, the popular trains (De Grazia, 1981) and the seaside camps were created. Touring had been given a boost together with boarding houses and hotels suitable for both the middle and working class.

2.2. The Rimini model: mass tourism and social contract.

After the Second World War, Rimini had lost more than eighty per cent of its buildings because of the bombings (Fabbri, 1992), but it quickly took back its role as Italy's chief town of seaside tourism. The Italian Communist Party, that had won the 1946 elections with 37,5% of the preferences, strategically decided not to interfere with the recovery of the country - by ruling, for instance, over the building boom by means of urbanistic instruments- whereas the choice was that of stimulating particular investments without an urbanistic planning. In 1951 tourists exceeded the million presences (Dall'Ara, 2002). In 1954 a number of foreign Tour Operators arrived: in fifteen years' time they succeeded in making the city famous throughout Europe. However, the transformation into mass destination took place in coincidence with the agricultural reform in the first half of the fifties. As a result, the families of inland metayers and craftsmen constituted the basis for the newlyborn Riminese tourist industry. That was the beginning of the Rimini model, with hundreds of boarding houses and small family hotels which, though even improvised, bore up to seven millions tourists per year. Those were the sold out seasons that allowed the development of an extemporary industry supported by huge incomes concentrated in the summer season, that covered the debts contracted by bills, the only resource for a poor entrepreneurial class. Those were the years when the paradoxical plan of the Communist Party was consolidated, that sponsored the development of mass tourism at a local level as well as by means of national laws, and the private industry, as grounds for the social contract that led to the growth of the Rimini model². A centralist party ideologically adverse to the private enterprise, that practically pushes for a widespread entrepreneurial class, with a strong innovating thrust. For example, one of the first Italian water treatment system was built and in the early fifties the first awakening campaigns for a clean sea began. The consent to the development model was such that during the 1957 elections Rimini becomes a national case, as one of the few Italian places where the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 had not implied the fall but rather the rise of votes for the PCI³. In 1961, there were 1.466 hotel establishments in Rimini.

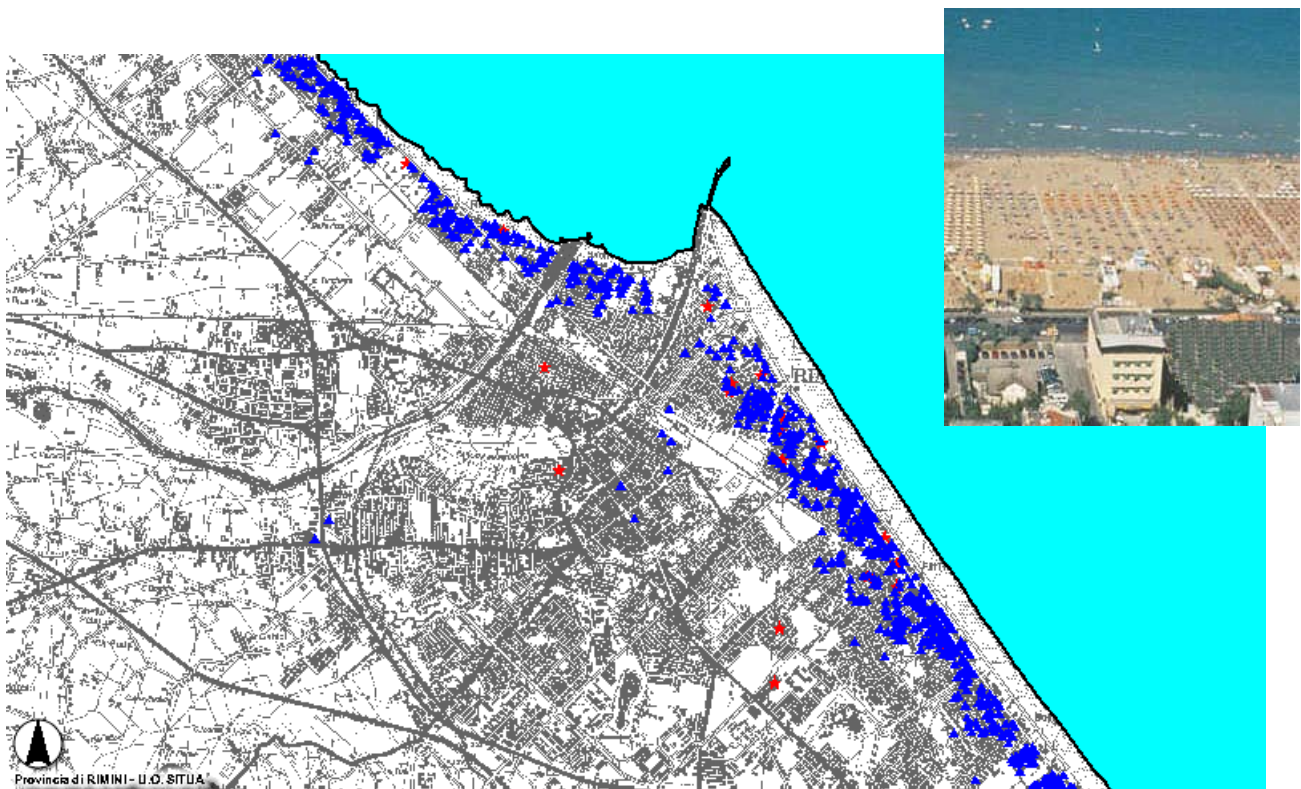
The seaside-estate model had reached its apex, was shared by all actors, in spite of the political conflicts that were for the first time protagonists of the Rimini history. A polarization was then created between municipality (either Socialist or Communist) and *Azienda di Soggiorno* (Tourism Office) of liberal orientation, led by the Central Government of the centre-right wing. The contraposition will end only in 1974 with the election of a member of the PCI to the guide of the *Azienda di Soggiorno*. Also different opinions about the highest tourist target were being expressed. The municipality and the hoteliers chose to stimulate a more popular tourism while the Azienda di Soggiorno supported the elite tourism⁴ and, indirectly, the Government too, not supporting mass tourism in this phase. This attitude toward popular tourism found a big supporter in the Communist Party, that became a unifying force for the development model of the seaside tourism monoculture, in which the working class and the new popular riminese entrepreneurial class met (Zaghini, 1999). We are talking about that political phase

known as of *Bipolarismo Imperfetto* (Galli, 1966), in which the Communist Party, not legitimated by the political forces as possible alternative for the government on a national scale, made itself known as government force in the local institutions. In those years, in the electoral results emerged a predominance of the Christian Democrat Party in the national political elections and that of the PCI in the administrative elections in the so-called *Regioni Rosse* of Central Italy.

1946	37,47%
1951	31,16%
1956	33,18%
1957	35,23%
1961	38,05%
1965	43,22%
1970	36,25%
1975	44,07%
1980	42,41%
1985	39,89%
1990	33,62%

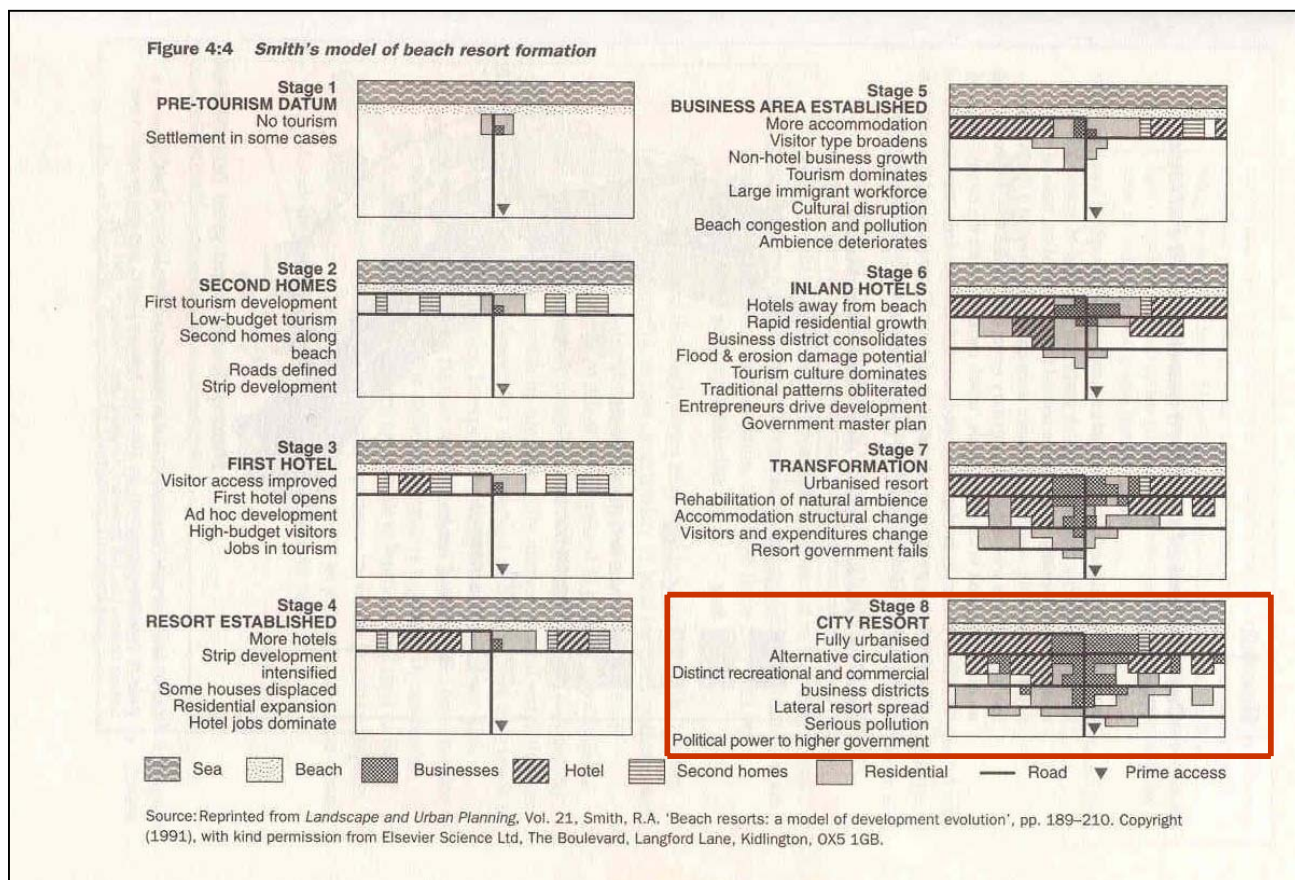
Table.1: Rimini, The Italian Communist Party (P.C.I.), local elections results 1946 – 1990.
Source: Adapted from Zaghini, 1999

In the first half of the sixties, while several Spanish and Greek mass tourism destinations were given birth, the model took its distinctive character. 1965 is the year in which the *Piano Regolatore Generale* (General Town-Planing scheme) was discussed. For the first time was decided a reconversion of the receptive structures toward a greater quality of the services, blocking the quantity increase of the build environment, that is to say, the growth core factor in the postwar period. The expectations of the PRG had to be partly disappointed; consequently, the opportunity to invert the upcoming crisis of the following decades was missed (Fabbri, 1992). In 1967, the airport of Miramare 3.494 airplanes had landed carrying 204.438 travellers. The political conflict still remained the same but new ones were created in the Riminese productive system. The Tour Operators began to choose other destinations, because many local hoteliers refused to change the management model. The little family business was not able to ensure quantitative standards appropriate to the supply of Tour Operators. Domestic tourism replaced the foreign one, while the supply was more often based on receptive structures of the family business type that offered full board, while the so-called second houses and campings were marginal. The popular board with one or two stars became the drive of the system but every single operator carried out an individual policy that much diversified the demand and, at the same time, weakened the possibility of a unique tourist promotion for its destination.



Picture 1: Rimini, Tourism Accomodations, Urban Localization (blue color)
 Source: Provincia di Rimini, SITUA, Sistema Informativo Territoriale Urbanistico e Ambientale.

The beach and the full board still guaranteed the surviving of the Rimini model, but they did not stimulate the innovation or else a coherent policy on a large scale, both from the point of view of the management and from that of the receptive structures. On the contrary, the left-wing municipality maintained a conservative attitude, and pushed to the pursuit of the monoculture model to exploit the diffused consent, the nearly total adhesion to the Rimini system. A new political subject supported the model; it was the moment of the expansion of the cooperative societies, historically less strong in Rimini than in the rest of Emilia – Romagna, and characterized by a strong ideological adherence, both Catholic and of the centre-left wing. They also represented the attempt to create coalitions between the economical operators, and became instrument of consent. The active receptive activity in the city of Rimini in 1976 is 1.670; it was the moment of maximum expansion of the Riminese tourist history. In 1977 the air traffic toward the airport of Miramare fell to 1.800 airplanes during the year, but the model resisted thanks to the increase of the tourists coming from the centre and south of Italy.



Graph.2: Smith's Model of Beach Resort Formation (red box added)
Source: Williams, 1998.

It was exactly in the model's own moment of maximum expansion that the idea of a necessary diversification started making its way. New autonomous realities different from the seaside tourist model emerged in the Riminese scene for the first time⁵. The realization of the new fair in 1968 launched the season of diversification and, at the same time, the operators, adopted the first experiences of the staff and structure requalification. The hoteliers began to consider the possible alternatives to the single seaside monoculture, chasing the market of congresses, fairs and events. The left-winged *Enti Locali* (Local Agencies) launched the social tourism, addressed especially to old people and they allowed diversifying the hotels' clientele. Such an experiment turned out to be unsuccessful. The monolithic adhesion to a single social group of tourism operators started deteriorating and they began to organize themselves in corporations so as to occupy the new market categories.

Since the early 1980's it was universally evident that the model was stagnant: several economic operators denounced the stagnation of the model and the necessity of an established structural renewal based on important economic investments. Rimini's mayor Chicchi (Dall'Ara, 2002), since the first half of the eighties invited to a renewal and to a structural investment, which had to be partly realized with the remodernization of small hotels since 1994. Those were also years in which the birth of the *centoturismi* (hundreds of tourisms) could be detected, a kind of tourism related with sport, health, old people tourism and generally with the *loisir* (Conti, 1986). The fair consolidated its own position, and

in 1985 400.000 visitors were attested. In 1987 the first Italian Aquatic Park was created in Riccione. The Aquafan strengthened the process leading to the constitution of a real Riminese district of the thematic and recreational parks. In 1988 the tourist tax was abolished on which the local tourism system had depended for eighty years and which opened a new crisis front in a system that shifted from stagnation to crisis. Those years preceded the turning point.

2.3. The monoculture crisis. The birth of *centoturismi* (hundreds of tourisms) and the environmental emergency.

The environmental and mass media crisis of 1989 (Agertur, 1989) accelerated a process in act for a decade⁶. But 1989, symbolically, was also the year of the collapse of the Socialist regimes of East Europe. In Rimini, as well as in the rest of the *red* Emilia Romagna, there changed the local political equilibriums, and the leadership of the Communist Party faded away in favour of local centre-right wing governments for a short time. In 1991, the Italian Communist Party chose Rimini to celebrate the passage from the old PCI to the new Partito Democratico di Sinistra. Political equilibriums had to be reinvented and the social freeze of hoteliers and of tourism operators, no longer supported by a contemporary adhesion to a shared ideology and to the model of the seaside tourism monoculture, started wavering. The conditions for a readjustment and a reflection on the Rimini model were created. After ten years of reflections on the Rimini model, and on the opportunities of promoting and diversificating tourism, tourism monoculture was discussed for the first time. The block of hotel operators, until then a united front around a single product and a single high season, started slicing, in the pursuit of the diversification of Riminese tourism.

This phase implied a new competition for the access to a new type of clientele, to a new managerial class, and even to conflicts in the destination about public resources, no longer focused on seaside tourism but on broader sectors of the tourist market, which had arisen before the 1989 crisis, and which never constituted a sound alternative to the traditional model. The new development poles became the fair, the conventions, the nautical development, the most important events, and the promotion of the inland. This required an effort of strategic reflection on the local system and not only of the littoral area or, else, on the necessity of an integrated promotion. Some sectors, such the amusement tourism, strictly connected with the discotheques in the Adriatic Riviera, enjoyed a boom in the nineties, with 90-100 thousand visitors each weekend, but lost their importance at the end of the decade.

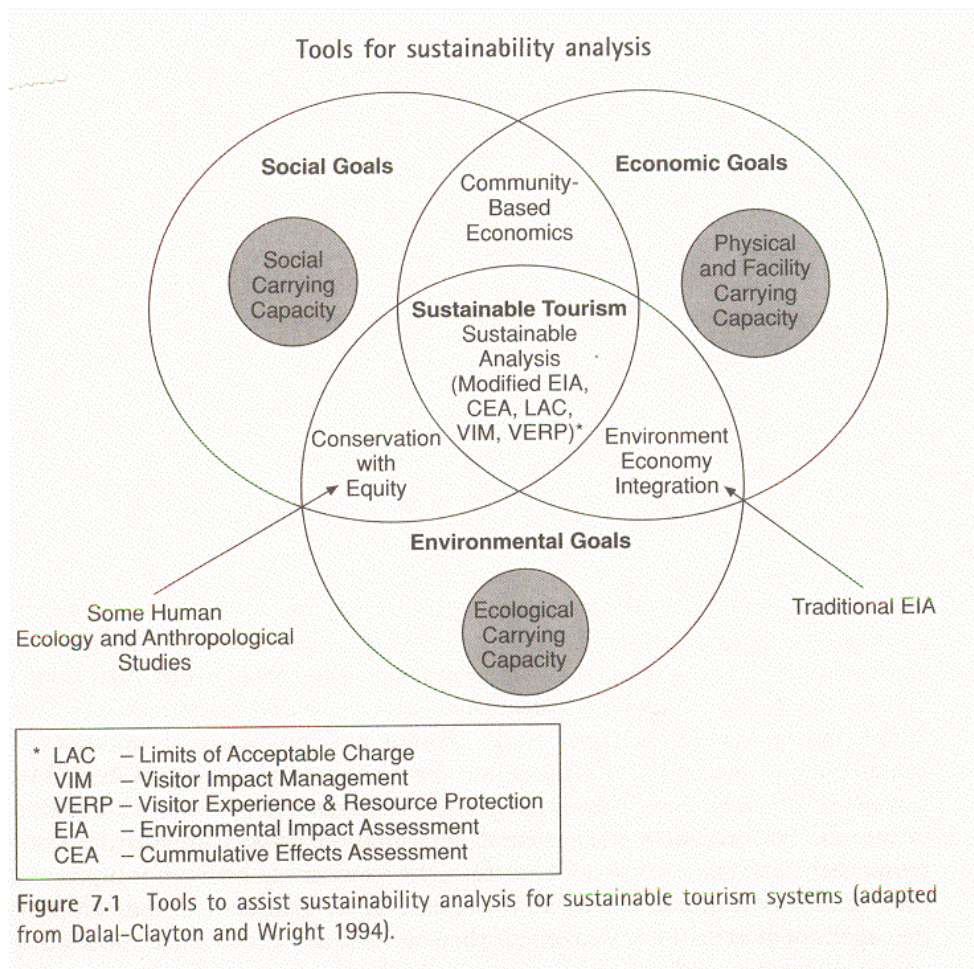
The entrepreneurial class delayed to adopt the radical transformation of the tourist demand, uncertain between the old development model and the appearance of unconventional forms of tourism. The institutional actors, instead, were often much more willing to a strategic reflection than the economic operators, when, for example, they chose to aim at education, creating a seat of the Università of Bologna in Rimini, with a course on Tourism Economy in 1992. Moreover the Province⁷, by means of a tourist promotion and a sustainable planning, carved out an important range of action for itself. From a reactive reflection, caused by the stagnation of international tourism, all interests shifted to the planning of the future area, so that Rimini had to readapt its shape from capital of seaside tourism to modern tourist town. This necessary evolution was slowed down by the inertia of the Riminese system that accounts today for about 1500 hotels and a tradition of seaside tourism monoculture that weighs on both analysis and decisions.

This reflection concerns first of all Rimini and its peculiar model of tourist industry. Small entrepreneurs, without a capital of their own, once farmers and then heirs of a productive system

(sharecropping) based on self exploitation of the family and on seasonal indebtedness, improvised themselves as hoteliers and builders, giving life to one of the most important tourist districts in the Mediterranean. This development model preceded somehow that of the industrial districts of the Third Italy (Bagnasco 1977, 1988) that will explode in the years of the consolidation of the Riminese tourist industry. The common characteristics were the family business of the undertaking, the low starting capital, a great flexibility in the organization of the work that also implied average working hours of 8-14 hours a day without a weekly rest, salaries 40% below the standard contract, and half of the employees working illegally (Benini and Savelli 1976; Mackun, 1998).

This productive model applied to tourism implied a personalized supply for the tourist, based on gentlemen's relations and on a regular clientele. (Benini and Savelli, 1976; Bonini, 2003). This characteristic is the strength and at the same times the weakness of the model. On the one hand, it offers a highly personalized service and a perfectly suited holiday, so that the Riminese mass tourism supply has never been rigidly standardized according to the Fordist production model, such as, for example, the case of Tour Operators mass tourism (Ioannides and Debbage, 1998). On the other hand, the model is not stimulated to the innovation or to the acquisition of new customers, or else to conduct the undertaking in a managerial way.

It is possible to identify 1989 as the year in which this tendency started inverting itself, the slow passage from the old tourist model of the seaside tourism monoculture to the tourist town and to the Local Touristic System. What accelerated this process, which had already begun during the eighties, was an assumed environmental crisis such as that of the mucilage. This was a typical example of the paradox of our mass media society that attracted the attention of Europe and provoked, besides the hysteric reactions of those who had decreed the death of the Adriatic Sea, a general acknowledgement of the untenability of the Riminese tourist mode. An analysis of this passage through the lens of the three constitutive elements of the idea of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social sustainability), would suggest the necessity of change in the tourist model.



Graph. 3: A Sustainable Tourism Framework.

Source: Hall and Lew, 1998.

From the point of view of the environmental impact, real or alleged, the mucillage crisis marked a point of no return on the perception, on behalf of observers, of the psychological and physical destination carrying capacity (Inskeep, 1991). In fact, although tourist presences collapsed and went back to the levels reached before 1989 only in the last few years, the bathers began to use the beach again from the summer 1990. Yet the idea of environmental risk started playing a part in the debate on the future of the destination. All problems related to the administration of water purifiers and of the cleaning of the swimming water have become a priority and the matter of environmental decay generally fed to a large extent the first antitourism demonstrations in the nineties (Dall'Ara, 2002). At the same time, a seasonal and often irregular employment, with fewer prospects of winter job, with the stagnation of arrivals and the consequent cut in profits for the operators, marked a change in the perception of the economic and social sustainability of the tourist model. The 1989 crisis, then, marks a kind of epochal passage, "The alphas of this Summer 1989 – says the Mayor Luciano Chicchi - have only accelerated the process, by putting everyone with his back to the wall and compelling to a reaction, to a choice. From audience of a dragged agony, we need to become actors of a new development phase" (originally in Italian) (Dall'Ara, 2002).

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	MAIN ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS
Fair Tourism	New Trade Fair District
Congress Tourism	New Congress Palace
Marine Tourism	New Marina
Theme Park	
Cultural Tourism	
Event Tourism	
Nightlife and Discotheque	
Old Town Regeneration	

Table 2.: New Tourism strategies after 1989 mucilage environmental crisis.

2.4. Which development strategy? The erosion of the traditional social contract.

The crucial issue set after 1989 was the rebuilding of a shared vision of both the town and its place in the tourist market. If the model of the seaside tourism monoculture and the adhesion to the political ideology have been the hinges on which Rimini has built its social, economic and political relationships nowadays, both cannot control the social and economic fragmentation of the social tissue. Today, “ ... the social contract that made Rimini famous is breaking into pieces.”⁸

Undoubtedly, the *Municipalità - Azienda di Soggiorno* duopoly, escaped the outbursting of the conflicts between the operators that now are competing for all the resources available in the market, in a constant contraposition of the productive sectors. If the predominance of the seasonal traditional model assured the operators of seaside tourism, such as the hoteliers and the bathing attendants, today other sectors are out of season and tied to tourist services, such as trading and restaurants, that claim their place and weight in the market. A new seasonal adjusted management, with shorter holidays and breaks on alternate periods of the year, a clientele that, in addition to family groups is made up of congress members, schools, fair employees, weekend tourists, all of them with different needs.

The conflicts arose between different categories of operators (hoteliers, restaurateurs, beach employees etc) but there were also internal conflicts in order to gain new market ranks, have made the elaboration of a common promotional strategy difficult, the main element to enter into competition with other districts (Dall’Ara, 2002; Buhalis, 2000). The lack of a common tourist promotion strategy, together with the stagnation of the model, has turned the opportunity for tourist product diversification into a situation of conflict, in which operators compete for the available resources without a common strategy.

The Fair of Rimini is typical of this surrounding conflictual atmosphere. The ownership of the the *Ente Fiera*, (Fair Agency) with an important public sharing, doesn't prevent, but rather feeds a continuous dispute about the administration and its leading role in the market. The Rimini Fair, which opened its new center in 2001 and in 2002 welcomed a million visitors⁹, has a relationship of delayed cooperation with the Bologna Fair and is mergeing with the *Regione Emilia - Romagna* and other local Fairs in order to promote the regional fair system abroad. The effects of the growth of fairs on the deseasonalization of the tourist demand are already significant and could increase as its weight increases on a regional scale. It is worth considering that since 2003 it has been the only Italian fair

provided with a railway station served by daily line trains. (Rimini Fiera Spa, 2003). As a matter of fact, the contrast seems to concern more the role of the fairs as alternative development drive to seaside tourism than all doubts about the good quality of its administration.

The new use destination of the buildings where the old fair stood, gave rise to a five year long conflict and has become a significant example. All political forces expressed their ideas about the final decision; spontaneous committees called for a municipal referendum so as to impede the building of a congress palace in the contended site and to promote its building in another part of the town¹⁰.

Even over less difficult matters the level of consent has been particularly low. The debate that has been going on in the last two years between the left - wing trade union (CGIL), the municipality and the operators over the opportunity of introducing a tax, which should finance the modernisation of the touristic system, well symbolizes the lack of a common position. Even within the left - wing party, CGIL, and the main progressive party are unable to find an agreement as to the need for an intervention.

The actors' replacement within the Rimini system should seem to favour, at the moment, those subjects more capable of integrating and operating in a strategical advanced environment. An important role is played by tourist products already known, an alternative to the traditional seaside tourism such as the *loisir* sector, specifically amusement parks and the discotheques that more often opt for the integrated promotion among the several operators. Or even the case of the congress system that lodged 970 thousand congress members in 2002. The Riminese hotels are better and better placed compared to the local congress centres. The yearly opening of hotels to increase turnover also appears to be an interesting opportunity (Convention Bureau of the Romagna Riviera, 2003). The work of the Convention Bureau, which coordinates congress activities in the territory, and the attempt to integrate such segment in the planning strategies of the local tourist system, could increase the output of congressional tourism.

The Federico Fellini Airport is also aiming at a relaunching, thus attracting those Tour Operators that are rediscovering the Riminese territory. A further perspective of development could be represented by the negotiations in favour of the internazionalisation of the airport, which could become the official landing of San Marino State and could attract new Italian and foreign airlines.

The Riminese tourist industry is facing the passage from an idealized static equilibrium, based on the position incomes coming from 160 years of a hospitality culture focused on the seaside tourism monoculture, to a new open system, where new actors and different tourist products play, with different views on the possible future of the destination.

3. THE REFLECTION UPON THE TOURISTIC MODEL. NEW PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ACTORS.

Since the 1989 crisis, it appeared clear that all the reflections upon the crisis of the Rimini model, which took place during the eighties, should lead to change the strategy of the tourist market administration. The fall of presences due to the mucillage signalled the fragility of the Riminese touristic system. In the last fifteen years, some strategical choices have been creating the most appropriate conditions for a new position of Rimini as a destination within the tourist market to reassure an integrated development on a huge area level.

A basic element in such a process has been the making of the *Provincia di Rimini*. The 1992 law and the first elections, which were held in 1995, gave birth to a new institutional actor, whose innovating role has been crucial. The *Provincia* has first been able to launch the idea of a sustainable

tourism, especially by means of the actions of the UE Life project.¹¹



Picture 2.: UE Life project “Strategies and implement toward sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean coastal areas” . International Conferences on Sustainable Tourism (2001; 2003)

In addition to a new international visibility¹², the indications coming from the Life project have led to the promotion of the Agenda 21 process at a provincial level. Since June 2002, the forum work has tried to integrate within the Agenda 21 process, the life project cornerstones, by visible actions, although of no great significance. What seems to appear from the analysis of those projects put into action within the Life and Agenda 21 project is the will to give an alternative pioneering development view to the local tourist operators.

Such an activity took shape, for example, in the realization of a preliminary project for the design of beach establishments with low environmental impact (due to buildings materials, water saving and recycling, electric power by alternative sources.). After the opening of the first establishment in the summer of 2003, 30 new projects have been approved for the summer 2004, with the operators' positive adherence; has even be detected a partial reduction of the cost of the

establishment administration.

Poor success met the municipality local Agenda 21 process, put in action in February 2003 by the Riminese city council over the crucial themes of urban retraining, mobility, and shared planning. In the light of this experience the provincial administration's prudent choice as to the whole acts of Agenda 21, proved to be partly justified by the fear of a negative result of the sharing experience. Even within all forums in the provincial Agenda 21, some main themes had been found. Among the rejected priorities, were mobility, deseasonalized tourism and reduction of hotel receptivity, eco-compatible agriculture, urban quality and alternative energy sources, accessibility to the territory; there have been rather chosen "...realizable actions, aiming at getting demonstrative actions, such as to make the sustainability ...of our provincial development a concrete concept...the already set out distance starting from targets realizable in a short time, now more and more the *Provincia* Agenda 21 process must confront itself with startegical horizons".¹³

3.2 I partecipanti al Workshop "Rimini provincia sostenibile nel 2012"

20 settembre 2002

Gruppo Amministratori	Gruppo Tecnici	Gruppo Imprenditori	Gruppo Associazioni
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prov. Rimini Tomasetti • Prov. Rimini Ass.Romani Cesare • Comune di Rimini Ariano Mantuano • Comune di Cattolica Vittoria Prioli e Mario Tebaldi • CCIAA Forcellini Guido • Scuola Forcellini Carla • Scuola IPSSAR Malatesta Anna Maria Sanchi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARPA Rimini • Stambazzi • Ordine degli architetti Zaoli Marco • TRAM Renzi Roberto AUSL Rimini Zanzani • AMIA • LAV, Guidi Michele • Centro Studi Ambientali, Mussoni Anna • Ord. Ingegneri, Gamberini Gastone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIA Rimini Bucci Gabriele • AIA Riccione Giovannini Marco • Compagnia delle opere Raffaello Bonora • Convention Bureau Stefania Agostini • Italia in Miniatura Cecchi Massimo • Confesercenti Righini Paolo (pm) • AERADRIA Tomaso De Cesare • Confcommercio della Prov. Di Rimini Alberto Rossini (am) • AIA Bellaria Igea M, Pantani Gianfranco • Società GAS Rimini, Bettini Mauro • CNA Panigalli Ivano 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWF Italia Bologna Daniela(pm) e Bruschi (am) • Legambiente Loris Casali • ARCI • Scuola Gruppo Istituti aderenti ASE Gabellino Giancarlo • GEV, Morri Wilma • Ass. Il millepiedi Roberto Pagliarani • Umana dimora di Rimini e dell'Adriatico, Bellocchi Maurizio • SUNIA Cartagena Jacqueline • Banca etica di Rimini e S.Marino, Capizzi Giuseppe • Progetto Città Cantiere Sociale, Mario Galasso

Table 3.: Provincia di Rimini, Local Agenda 21. Stakeholders involved in the process (2003).

In support of the effort toward innovation attempted by the Provincial Administration, lies the fact that even operators are aware of the advantages in terms of appearance and of tourist presences coming from the adoption of policies focused on sustainability (Aguilò, Alegre, and Sard).

It is not by chance that the *Provincia*, if on the one hand has stimulated the adoption of good practices in the sustainable administration of tourist enterprises, on the other hand has been able to create the premises for the integrated promotion of the Riminese territory, by means of the creation of the *Agenzia per il marketing di distretto* (the district marketing agency).

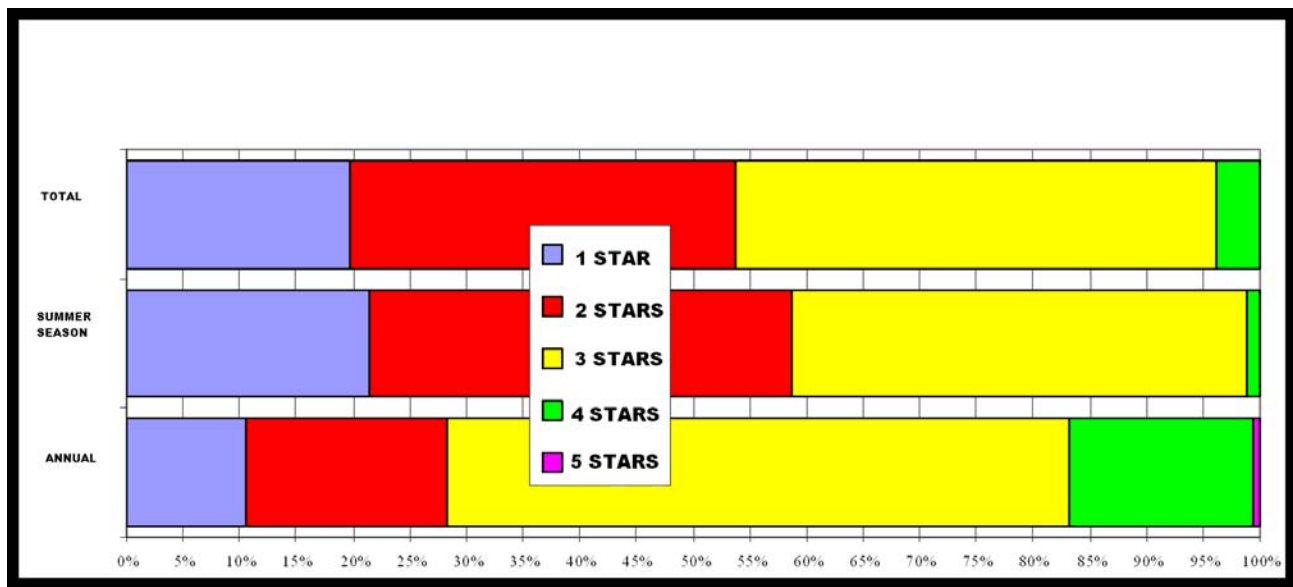
By means of such agency, infact strategic turning point in the riminese tourist promotion fields

it is being created. Historically has always lacked coordination as well as a view shared by all operators in Rimini. The new national law on tourism¹⁴ has introduced the ideas of Local Tourist Systems that, aiming at the integrated demand of tourist products, also stimulate the tourist promotion on a large scale. In its effort of enforcing the law, in April 2001 the Provincia publicly presented the *Agenzia per il Marketing di Distretto*, an agency that coordinates all promotional actions in the territory of Rimini, including its province.

The new subject arose from the cooperation with the category associations, included in the board of directors¹⁵. The promotion of the territory on a regional scale is the strategic starting point for the building of the Riminese and province integrated tourist system, so as to plan the deseasonalization and the diversification of the tourist supply. The agency, thanks to the institutional and financial support coming from both the Government and from the Emilia Romagna Region, has widened both its range of action, and its available resources in a 3 years period, also tanks to an accurate choice made by the province, that means to equip the agency with the greatest ability of action, to transform it into the local reference for all tourist promoting activities¹⁶.

The marginal propensity to innovation showed by the local entrepreneurial class is one of the factors capable to restrict the new articulation on a wide range of actions of Riminese tourism. Aware of it, the Agency has set a sum of about 3.700.000 euros in order to retrain private tourist enterprises like hotels, public shops and tourist service. Some modernization projects for about 36 millions euros are financed.

In the case of the modernization of the Riminese hotel supply, the problems are also both cultural and strategical. The challenge is therefore towards a better quality service and a professionalization of the relationship with the customer, without losing the personalization of the product sold, which has been, and still is, the Rimini model's key point (Bonini, 2003). Such a process, is slowly taking shape and the appearance of international hotel chains or else of managers within family business hotels, has increased competitiveness. As the most evident consequence, an increasing number of hotels are opened all the year round, about a quarter of the total in Rimini, and those operators that have not succeeded in innovating the hotel administration system are excluded from the market (Poma and Bondi, 2001).



Graph. 4: Provincia di Rimini, Seasonality and Hotel ranking. (2002)

Source: Adapted from Provincia di Rimini, Ufficio Statistica.

In less than ten years the Province has been able to take up the gauntlet of a mature tourist system, which is going through a crucial evolutionary phase from the seaside tourism monoculture model to that of both a tourist town and a new local tourist system. We can foresee a similar strategical horizon among the most important market actors who should accompany and stimulate the transition toward a new position of Rimini in the touristic market. Both the Rimini Fair and the Airport but also the Dockyard, will find a placement at least on a regional or provincial scale. The Riminese system could take full advantage of the process of building a convergence of views between the public actors (first of all the Province) and the greatest drives of the local tourist development.

4. CONCLUSIONS. ANTITOURISM OR COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION ?

This article tried to outline how one of the greatest tourist destinations in the Mediterranean has reorganized itself in the mass tourism market. The aim was to analyse the local touristic development model along the 160 years of its history. Among the prerogatives of the tourist Rimini model, the seaside tourism monoculture has been the central thread of the town events and of the surrounding territory: such a monolithic view of the tourist demand has gone through a very difficult period with the transformation of tourist consumer models, far from the summer holidays model, and therefore different. The structure of the Riminese tourist field, based on small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, has been a strong point for a long time, and in the last fifteen years has gone through an important renewal crisis, aiming at the retraining of its structures and at higher service standards.

Nevertheless Rimini is a town of average dimensions (approximately 130.000 inhabitants), it has different characteristics from most of the others mass tourist coastal destinations. The relationships between economic operators, different institutional levels and Riminese society are so complex that in 160 years of tourist history the strategical view has been seldom shared if not for the mere pursuit of the seaside tourism monoculture. A perspective first shared by the Fascist regime and then by the Communist administrations. Such a way is no longer achievable, owing to the irreversible transformation of tourist demand and to a new adherence to the principles of economic, environmental

and social equity. Rimini has to reinvent its place as tourist destination, as town and as territory in the widest meaning of the word, according to the above-mentioned criteria of the Local Tourist System. From seaside tourism destination to tourist town¹⁷. From tourist town to a plural development of the productive system.

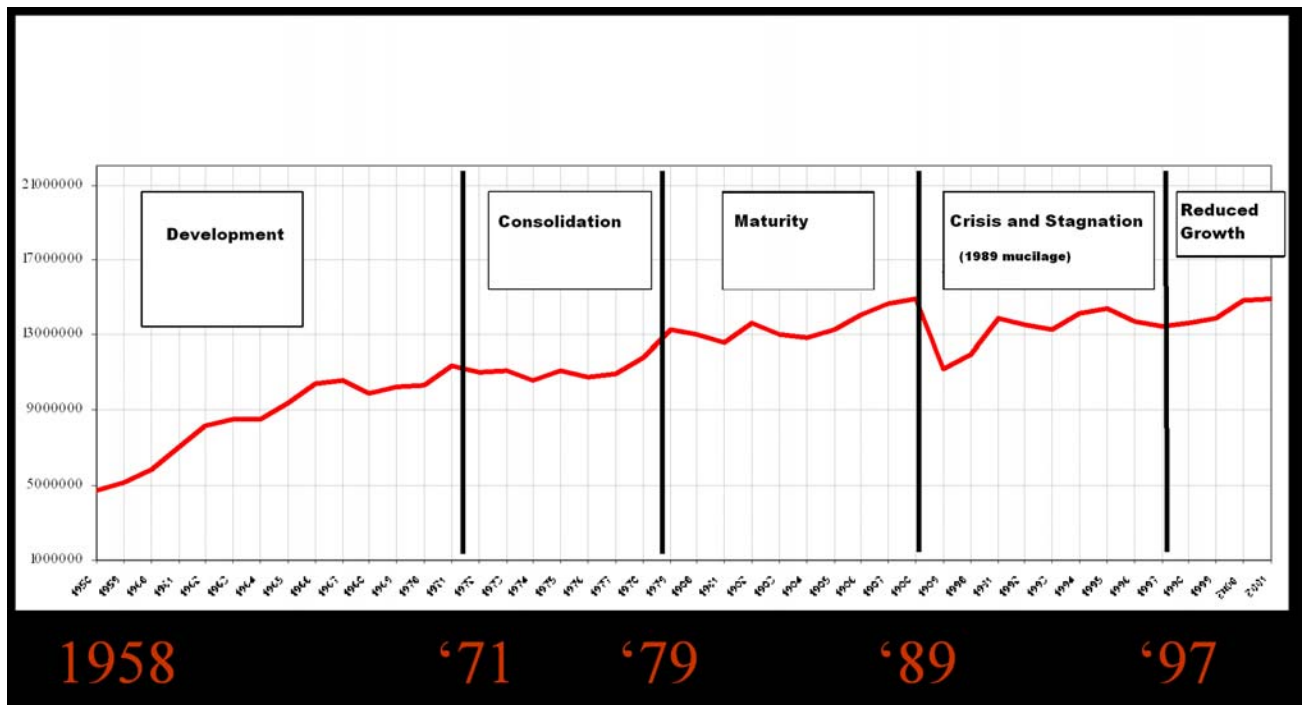
The keywords seem to be cooperation and integration¹⁸. Integration of different tourist products by means of a common promotion; integration between historical, seaside and touristic town so as to avoid the spreading of signs of antitourism; integration on a wider scale to create the system of Riminese hospitality, including, for instance, the hinterland. If we consider tourist promotion, the action of the Rimini Province, by means of the *Agenzia per il Marketing di Distretto*, seems to mark the overcoming of the historically conflictual relationship between the municipality and the tourist promotion agency, whatever its origin-national or regional.

The rediscovery of the promotional feature of the Riviera of Rimini already used during the 1930's, today marks an important innovatory sign and an attempt to unify the operators so as to face external competitors. It would be the first strategical attempt to coordinate tourist stakeholder competition and to create an integrated tourist system. The consequences of such a change of perspective could be also crucial for the local communities role and for their development (Jamal, 1995; Savelli, 1999).

A dilatation of tourism territories from local unipolar dimension, with the seaside tourism monoculture as the main attraction, to multipolarity of the local tourist system and the consequent integration of the hinterland could adjust all those sources of social uneasiness present in the tourist model, such as the occupational precariousness¹⁹. A perspective of action on a wider territorial range could finally eliminate the traditional dichotomy historical - seaside town. Rimini has not worked out a sharp spatial segregation between every day life space and leisure town, with the constitution of tourist enclaves as occurred in many other towns (Judd, 2003). It is also true that the next step towards the non-integration between historical and tourist town could be the bursting of antitourism. During the nineties, the growing concern for the environmental and territorial decay, together with the perception of a touristic system controlled by the seaside tourism monoculture, contributed to the creation of the perception of tourism as threat and not as occasion for a strategical relaunching of "urban quality".²⁰ At the same time, the Catholic Church has adopted a definite position regarding the changes of life style connected with tourism and the danger of a progressive disgregation of the Riminese community (Dal'Ara, 2002).

Two surveys, carried out in 1994 and 2001, emphasized the fact that most citizens showed signs of intolerance towards tourism. Between the two surveys such percentage rose from 14,5% up to over the 18% of the population, but with a progressive radicalization of the antitouristic positions of those who in the mid-nineties were uncertain or just annoyed. If we analyze the motivations, a certain degree of anxiety it clearly appears for lack of tourism government and for it's the strongest impacts, such as noise, traffic, rise in prices and the overloaded urban infrastructures. Therefore, it is not tourism that causes anxiety, but rather the lack of a tourist planning sector and its related contexts (Trademark, 2001). The City Council, historically, has never been able to adopt strategical planning measures apt to rationalize the spontaneous development of tourist activities. In such a context, the weight of Riminese tourist history and the inheritance of the tourist model represented by the seaside tourism monoculture pose structural problems that can be hardly faced without a new global strategy of development. But to adopt a new strategy a reflection is necessary over the role the city and its territory should play, a

strategy able to create a vision of Rimini shared by the stakeholders (Jamal, 1995; Buhalis, 2000).



Graph.5: The evolution of the touristic system. Night spent in hotels, 1958 – 2002.
Source: Adapted from Provincia di Rimini, Ufficio Statistica.

The new arrangement as proposed by the Local Tourist System could represent a sound starting point. The real strategical innovation in the last few years seems to be the integration between tourist products and the creation of a unitary tourist promotion system, such as the Local Touristic System. By means of the action of new institutional actors, such as the *Agenzia per il Marketing di Distretto*, the Rimini system is trying to replace itself in the national and international tourist market, working toward the ideal condition for a definite passage from seaside tourism monoculture to wide range tourist system. In this phase of transition, the weight of tradition and of power arrangements in the old tourist model gives rise to unavoidable conflicts owing to the replacement of old and new actors in the market. Even at an institutional level, new normative laws are innovating the old administration model that has determined poor cooperation between the different levels of political decision, creating the area system of Riminese tourism.

In spite of such problems, the new integrated approach to tourist promotion and the reinforcement of local tourist system seems to bring about a new approach towards a more competitive tourist destination.

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Notes

- 1) For a critical reading of Putnam, see Moritsen, 2003 and Bagnasco, 1994.
- 2) The years 1952-1955, under the presidency of Mario Soldati, are those in which the Rimini Communist Party became the protagonist of tourist development.
- 3) Among the protagonists, Walter Ceccaroni, mayor of Rimini between 1948 and 1970.
- 4) The tourism establishment has a popular base of consent lower than that of the municipality, but the control of the tourism tax incomes implies a leading role.
- 5) At institutional level in 1970, the delegation of duties on tourism from State to Regions was defined. The first Local Authority Tourism of the Emilia Romagna Region was the former mayor of Rimini in the post-war period, Walter Ceccaroni. The reform obtains the reinforcing of the local government and of the expense capability for the infrastructures in the riminese territory.
- 6) In July 1989 the campaign against mucilage in the Adriatic Sea broke out in national and European newspapers, which lasted all the summer long. Pollution was indicated as main reason for such a phenomenon. The state of national emergency was declared and Rimini applied to some international authorities, such as Peter Morris who had worked in Alaska to put an end to the damages provoked by the petroleum came out from the Exxon oil tanker. Summer visitor presences fell from 7.069.935 in 1988 to 5.174.694 in 1989. On annual bases, the fall is greater, and becomes fixed on 2.500.000 presences less. (Dall'Ara, 2002). Successive studies will emphasize the recurrence of the mucilage presence, already certified for ages, and absence of connections between pollution and the phenomenon, which would rather be connected to the different temperature of the water and sea streams.
- 7) Before the creation of the Riminese Province in 1992, in the early seventies another subject of local government called *Circondario* was created, made of the city councils in the riminese. Its role has remained marginal.
- 8) Gilberto Zangari, *La Voce di Bologna*, June 7, 2003. Originally in Italian.
- 9) Data taken from the Rimini Fair.
- 10) The participation to the referendum was low, so that the minimum quorum of electors was not formed. A further sign of the fragmentation of position and of the scant interest, even among the citizens.
- 11) It is about the Life project "Strategies and implement toward sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean coastal areas (Life 00/env/it-0067), which has seen the Rimini Province as leader, together with the Calvià City Council (Spain), Ambiente Italia and Federalberghi (Italy). The project started in 2000 and ended in December 2003, implied several actions, among which two international conferences dealing with themes of sustainable tourism, the adoption of administration plans based on the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) of the UE and the CCA (Carrying Capacity Assessment) of the UNEP. Furthermore, the project implied the spread among private operators of methods of administration eco-compatible of touristic structures, the activation of participative processes at the local level, such as Agenda 21, and the reinforcement, in cooperation of the ICLEI, of a network of cities for a sustainable tourism. In Calvià the demolition of 16 hotels built in the early seventies and the new planning of the set free areas has given visibility to a possible reconviction of edified areas of no great tourist interest, often with great pollution problems and trivializing of the territory, in the Rimini case some have tried to put into action a process of divulgation of possible tourist models of a lesser impact between operators and tourists.
- 12) In march 2003, The Province of Rimini won the European Award "Carmen Diez de Rivera" for sustainable tourism, founded by the Balearic Islands Government and the Royal Awards Foundation, with the support of the European Agency for the Environment.
- 13) Cesare Romani, Environment and Sustainable Development councillor of the *Provincia di Rimini*, in *Provincia di Rimini*, 2003, *Piano d'Azione e Progetti Agenda 21 locale*, page 2. Originally in Italian.
- 14) Act 135, March 20, 2001, dealing with the "*Riforma della legislazione nazionale del turismo*", specifically article 5, dealing with local tourist systems, defined as "homogeneous tourist contexts or integrated including territories even belonging to different regions, characterized by the integrated offer cultural, environmental goods of tourist attraction, including typical agriculture products or local handicraft products, or else characterized by a wide presence of both single and associated tourist enterprises".
- 15) The board of directors made up of 14 members, with the equal delegation compared with public establishments. Their involvement is also guaranteed by a voting system for a majority of two-thirds. Begun with a 1,124 million euros budget by 1.9.2002 to 31.08.2003, the Agency could count in 2004 on about 3 millions two hundred thousand euros, 2 millions of which financed by *Regione Emilia Romagna*.
- 16) Among the main projects already activated, the promotion of the hinterland, by creation of the brand "Signoria dei Malatesta", and its connection with the summer littoral; surveys on the point of satisfaction over congressional tourism and on the perception of the Rimini brand among Italians; the promotion of the local tourist system by means of an agreement with Rimini Calcio (Rimini Soccer Club). In the spring of 2004, the Agency attended the Bit (International Tourism Fair) in Milan with its own stand. Its own brand was distinct from other tourism resorts of the region. In cooperation with the Rimini city council it planned a tourist promotional project addressed to all Scandinavian countries with meetings with tour

operators and an economic mission in Sweden and Norway. Thanks to such an enterprise, was reached an agreement to link the Rimini airport to Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, with effect from summer 2005.

17) Significant of such passage is the roundtable “The future of Rimini: from seaside town to touristic town?” which took place in Rimini in December 2001.

18) In May 2002, a conference was organized in Rimini entitled “From seaside tourism monoculture to plural development”, which involved politicians, operators and the academic world.

19) The terms unipolar and multipolar are used following Lozato-Giotart, 1999.

20) The mayor of Rimini, Giuseppe Chicchi in “Il Resto del Carlino”, May 8, 2003.

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