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Guidelines of regional planning in Calabria

Maria Grazia Buffon

Up to about two years ago Calabria was lagging far behind in town and country planning and in landscape measures. It was the only region not only without a landscape plan, but even lacking in any other instrument of territorial planning at regional and provincial level. In 2005, with the present regional government, Calabria for the first time carried out a series of concrete actions aimed at ushering in a new season of town and territory governance, in order to provide and radically innovate methods and instruments of urban and territorial planning, and to recognize the local values on which to build for giving a new aspect to Calabrian territories.

The protocol of understanding, strongly urged by the present head of the regional department of town planning and territorial governance, was signed in september 2005, and defines the 'central role that the territory must assume for the development of Calabria'. Planning and control of territorial transformation were regarded as qualifying moments of the action of the various administrations and of the other bodies competent for the subject. The new philosophy of territorial governance, in which sustainability, subsidiarity and participation have been assumed as the principles and the basis of inspiration of planning, and thus of territorial transformation processes, underlies the drawing up of the *Guidelines of regional planning*, as the instrument 'for a new culture of governance of Calabrian territory and towns', which have introduced some interesting innovations:

- in the method of drawing up the instrument: broad-based participation;

- in guidance and strategy: the first planning instrument at regional level;

- in the effects produced in the technical-professional and political-administrative world: a new cultural debate for drawing up the new instrumentation.

The guidelines were prepared in 180 days by a technical-scientific committee representing the main institutions and associations, guaranteeing ample participation and the adherence of all parties concerned in forming the instrument. Participation was open to the entire regional community, through five provincial conferences which presented and debated the document, publicly illustrating contents and effects and acquiring observations and suggestions from those living and working in Calabria. This led to a twofold result: an instrument widely shared by the community, and the spontaneous activation of the debate on town and territorial planning and correlated themes, at regional and local levels. With the drawing up of the guidelines on regional planning, and the participatory method adopted, Calabria has finally 'started up'. The institutions have shaken off the torpor with which matters linked with town and country planning were addressed. The widespread degradation of territory and towns is now publicly spoken about, as well as the limits that these conditions place on the development of the region, and the need to change the way of regarding and designing towns and territories.

For the first time rehabilitation is identified as the main means of intervention with instruments of planning, programming and design, reorganizing the territory and rebalancing uses and consumption in an

ecological manner.

As the instrument for directing the whole planning process at the various levels, the guidelines thus permit the effective application of Regional law 19/2002, starting off the new system of planning instruments.

The Psa (Structural plan in associate form) is an instrument fostering the integration of adjoining municipalities having specific affinities of territorial or cultural type, or of identity, and/or which are characterized by small populations and/or which want to pursue common development strategies. The Psas were thought out with the aim of strengthening the culture of integration, making the territories more competitive, outlining new reticular urban systems or organizing polycentric territorial systems. Strategies contained and well defined in the guidelines, and whose potentials have been immediately perceived by many municipalities which have manifested their interest in joining together for the definition of their plans.

The coming into force of the guidelines of regional planning, at the same time as the amendment of Regional law 19/2002 (law 14/2006), has thus started up a new season of urban planning in Calabria: the Region, provinces and municipalities are in fact required to acquire the new town-planning instruments within a short time, and to try out innovative procedures for their construction and definition. A new experience making Calabria a 'laboratory' of a new type of territorial, urban and landscape planning, in which to experiment on new ways of 'doing town planning', of designing the territory and constructing landscapes that are able to give new meaning to places at present downgraded, to create a regional territorial

design recognized as such, but also to offer fresh opportunities for developing a new culture of territorial governance in Calabria and among Calabrians.