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Substantive landscape and territorial sustainability

Alberto Ziparo

The environment in Calabria today shows a disconcerting ambivalence, considering the dominant trends. The very bad state of the sea, a problem for the regional tourism economy, is just one aspect of a landscape that continues to present very high values which, however, in their intrinsic characteristics, are not considered; and of a territory that is greatly unbalanced and too much 'consumed'.

Today, there are just over two million inhabitants in the region, while the built volume exceeds 800 million cubic metres. Every person, in theory, 'possesses' an apartment of more than 400 cubic metres. The built area-inhabitants ratio is the highest in the country. Another point causing concern is the excessive concentration of investments, settlements and inhabitants: more than 80% of all Calabrians live in less than 20% of the territory, which includes some ten densely inhabited areas. The extended towns which have invaded the three plains and the entire coastal area of the region are characterized by congested traffic and settlements, especially residential and tourist amenities, by difficulties of relation and by pollution. Against this, the enormous natural assets, especially inland, of very high ecological and landscape values, are threatened with abandonment.

The use of the territory and of the landscape in the region is almost always a constraint, not a factor of development. A change is therefore called for based on the fundamental concept of rehabilitation, which moreover the new regional strategies, starting with the guidelines, are trying to

propose. Environmental, social, economic and territorial sustainability is indeed taken as a basic paradigm of territorial policies and planning. It should be stressed that sustainability is not only declared, but in substance pervades all regional territorial development policies and planning. The new sustainable development of Calabria must be pursued by recognizing and affirming the territorial identity of the places, through actions of rehabilitation of the natural and settlement assets. This means the capacity to identify the values of the places (ecology, culture, landscape, society, local economies) and to reinterpret them, with new projects, to affirm them and transform them into usable resources.

The concept of sustainability entails the formulation of a scenario of rehabilitation, safeguarding and enhancement of the various places, in which options of exogenous type may possibly be inserted, but only after having verified their sustainability.

The future sustainable development of Calabria is linked with the enhancement of the landscape, as repeated and urged by Italy's ratification of the European convention on the countryside.

The Qtr (Regional territorial outline) is an instrument of guidelines, strategies and normative indications, rather than directly operative prescriptions. However, the continuation and completion in detail are foreseen, at regional scale, of the areas of quality or of particular ecological fragility, already protected, which the instrument is entitled to integrate and amplify.

The project for the landscape, very necessary in Calabria, supplies a cultural and environmental frame which is decisive for the situation proposed by the guidelines, and thus by

the Qtr. At regional scale the landscape plan assumes an indispensable normative or operatively prescriptive function, in the detailed (subprovincial) landscape plans.