

## **THE STRUCTURAL PLANNING OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DIAMANTE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

An urban plan, whatever the level and size of territory it invests, must necessarily have at its base disciplinary considerations, methodological criteria, values and cultural principles, reflected in the contents of the instrument. These only partially pertain to the training, experience and vision of planners and administrators. In fact, it is in urban planning legislation that the cultural bases that give substance to the plan must be traced.

The article examines the evolution of the regulatory framework of urban planning in the Calabria Region – which saw the introduction of the “Municipal Structural Plan” (PSC) in place of the old General Urban Development Plan (PRG) – analysing the its impact on the shape, strategy and design choices of new urban plan of Diamante” (Calabria region, Italy).

**KEYWORDS:** urban planning, territorial transformations, territorial governance

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the year 2000s, the Regional Law n. 19 April, 16 -2002 and the following ones, issued to modify and integrate the Calabria Region legislation, implemented a progressive review of the territorial governance laws, in order to adapted the legislation to the new legislative framework as well as the new conditions and development needs of the Calabria territory.

“Safeguarding the physical and cultural territorial integrity”, “improving the citizen quality of life”, a productive development together with an appropriate use of environmental resources”, “social equity”, “transparency”, “containment of soil consumption”, these are only the main keywords that guided the legislative reform action; an action that materialized, for the most part, through the continuous improvement of territorial governance processes and instruments, with the aim of improving, at least as intention, the quality and efficacy of the following specific aspects:

- a clear definition of competences, limits and institutional hierarchies.
- technical-administrative procedures simplification.
- cooperation methods and consultation among institutions.
- level of citizen participation in the construction phase and in the choice’s genesis.

Regarding, specifically, the general urban planning at municipal level, the Regional Law of Calabria has introduced the “Municipal Structural Plan” (PSC), which aims to specify “the strategies for the governance of the entire municipal territory” and which replaces, in the functions and objectives, the General Town Plan provided for by Law 1150 of 1942. Compared to the Town Plan, in which prevails a prescriptive approach, the Municipal Structural Plan recognizes the programmatic and strategic role of the Town Planning Instrument of general level. Instead, the task of detailing the management rules and the design of specific areas subject to protection, recovery, transformation and development is delegated to operational planning (and in particular to the “Time Operational Plan”).

The experience of PSC of Diamante fits into this legislative context (still evolving). This experience, started in June 2008, with the activation, by the Municipal Administration, of a procedure for the “Constitution of the working group to draft the Municipal Structural Plan”, assigning, internally, the position of editor of the plan to the head of the Public Works Sector, Eng. Tiziano Torrano; subsequently, in July

2009, the Municipal Administration entrusted the task of urban and environmental consultant to an association of urban planners headed by Prof. Pier Luigi Carci.

After a long and complex elaboration process, on October the 22nd 2014 the new PSC was adopted by the City Council, transmitted to the Region, Province and Competent Authority for the purposes of the “Strategic Environmental Assessment” (VAS) and published, to allow, as required by law, to institutions, associations, economic subjects and citizens to propose changes.

Currently, for its final approval, the PSC is awaiting the opinion of the VAS Regional Commission.

## **DIAMANTE MUNICIPALITY**

The Diamante Territory presents, in general, the morphological, environmental and settlement features recurring and characterizing the northern Tyrrhenian coastal system of Calabria, but which here assume particular quality and value. Diamante, in fact, with its naturalistic Excellences (including the Isle of Cirella and its seabed, Site of Community Importance- SCI) and historical-cultural sites (i.e. the ruins of the ancient Cirella), it is known as one of the places of greater tourist interest in the Tyrrhenian-Cosentino coast. With a resident population of about 5,000 inhabitants, in summer due to its strong tourist-seaside vocation, the municipality of Diamante reaches more than 27,000 presences.

The approximately 8 kilometers of coastline, along which the municipal territory develops, are characterized by a sequence of volcanic cliffs alternating with extensive stretches of sandy beaches. The two most important cliffs, which take the form of prominent headlands above the sea, lodge the two main historical centers: to the north, the built-up area of Cirella and, to the south, that of Diamante. The coastal plain, about one kilometer deep in the northern part, narrows more and more, forced between the coastline and the sinuous hills, until it reaches the width of just 100 meters in the southern area of the municipal area.

Except for the large plain area located north of Cirella, at the mouth of the Vaccata stream, in which agricultural activities still prevail, the rest of the coastal strip of Diamante is rich in infrastructures and, today, almost totally urbanized. In fact, the agricultural plot, which developed close to the historical settlements and their first expansions, has gradually been substituted by heterogeneous constructions

consisting, in part, of one or multi-family houses, in part, of residential buildings with three to five floors. It must be said, in fact, that since the 1970s (like most of the Tyrrhenian Coast, Cosentina) the municipal territory of Diamante has been subject to an intense and decomposed urban-building development, driven by the growing tourist accommodation demand and, in part, helped by an improvement in the accessibility to the area, consequent to the strengthening of connection infrastructures, in particular, opening of the State Road n. 18 “Tirrena Inferiore” (SS.18)

In more recent times, even the hilly areas near the coastal plain have undergone a settlement development characterized mainly by tourist-residential construction and, in some cases, hotel accommodations. The substantial saturation of the coastal plain, the strong relationship with the SS. 18 road, and the progressive abandonment of rural practices, have, in fact, stimulated the gradual transformation of these areas, even in locations that are steep and almost inaccessible. Here, crops and rural buildings have given way to tourist-residential settlements, which are autonomous from a morphological point of view and, almost always, organized as private independent districts.

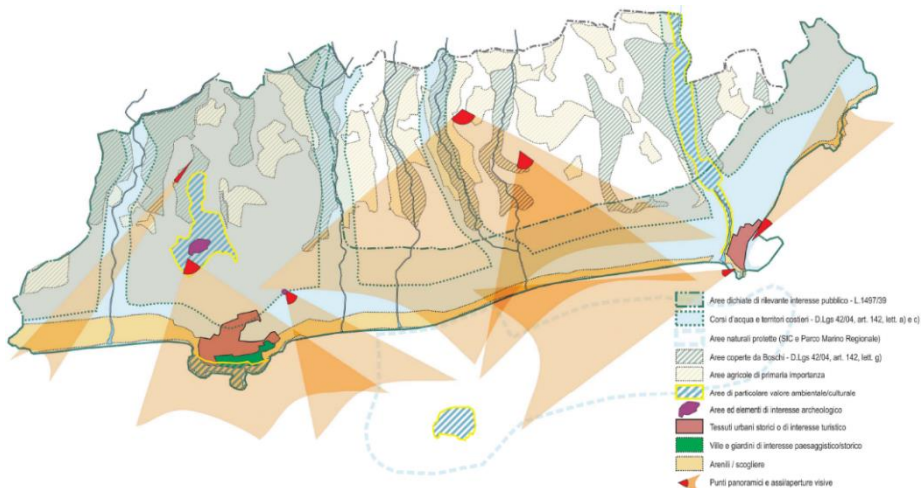


Figure 1: PSC Diamante - Summary of historical cultural values and sensitivities of the territory of Diamante

## PREMISE TO THE PLAN

## **The address lines of Municipal Administration**

At the start of the new planning activity, the municipality of Diamante, owned a “General Town Plan” approved in May 1998 and, subsequently, subjected to variant (“Variante di riequilibrio 2001”) in March 2004. The inadequacy of this existing instrument to respond to the renewed needs of government and to the changed regulatory framework was established in 2008, and the activities for its revision started in June 2008, when the City Council defined the general guidelines to elaborate new instruments based on the assessments summarized in the following general consideration:

- “The natural, environmental and historical-archaeological resources are limited, and they risk an irreversible degradation if not adequately protected. Therefore, the adoption of new strategies for the safeguard of the environment and the development of a collective sensibility oriented to support eco-compatible behaviours and lifestyles are considered fundamental. Diamante, Cirella and Contrade must be an example to the whole Riviera, aiming at a sustainable development that will not compromise the quality of the landscape and naturalistic heritage of the territory.”
- “The Urban regeneration to re-establish the territory “values” or introduce new ones in order to improve the quality of life and to provide new opportunities for development and to promote (support) the tourist appeal of Diamante.”
- “Promote sustainable development and protect the territory means to implement an economic growth, capable of supporting a correct interaction among man, environment and resources. There are many aspects in the municipal competences requiring significant attention: waste management, purification, air and water quality. All actions have to gravitate around the centrality of Environmental protection and enhancement, understood as a single, unitary and non-reproducible resource. “
- “Our territory would face a great opportunity if it was granted by an adequate process of economic and social growth (enhancement of available resources, labour, products and services market reform, creation of specialized jobs and new sources of productivity). Therefore, we want to propose a programmatic and shared development plan, made of

consistent, methodical, concrete, innovation and widespread promotion of our typical products. “

Taking in mind these considerations, it is evident as the Administration political and programmatic objectives referenced to a framework in which the Plan revolves around an idea of sustainable development of the territory, which should be reached through:

- the Protection of the environment in all its aspects and components;
- the Safeguard and recovery of historical and cultural heritage;
- the Optimization of resource use;
- the Enhancement and promotion of areas and elements of the environmental, the landscape and the historical-cultural value of the location, to promote the tourism industry.

### **Planning Conference - The Preliminary Document**

Developed as part of the preparatory activities for the composition of Diamante PSC, the Preliminary Document (DP) - provided for in paragraph 2 of the art. 27 of the L.R. n. 19/2002 and s.m.i in order to gather the opinions of the interested bodies during the Planning Conference – it anticipated the cognitive framework and the preliminary design choices. In this sense, the Preliminary Document represented a moment of comparison and verification of the choices being made by the interested territorial bodies and the population. A moment of confrontation that allowed - before outlining the new urban / territorial structure and the contents of the framework that will guide and control its development - to define in a conclusive (and shared) way both the impediments to transformation as well as the potential and the propensity for development of the different municipal areas.

The need to specify such an intermediate reference scenario before establishing the new urban and territorial architecture also stems (derives) from the awareness that territories such as those of the Municipality of Diamante have a strong rigidity with respect to planned transformation and reorganization processes.

### **The contribution of participation**

The article n. 11 of the Regional Urban Law providing the procedures for the formation and approval of territorial government instruments, including the Municipal Structural Plan, states they must provide the following essential moments:

- the consultation (phase/moment) with economic and social forces as well as with technical-professional categories, regarding the strategic and development objectives to be pursued;
- the consultation with citizens and local associations set up to protect widespread interests.

The objective is to allow a democratic involvement of citizens, associations and economic subjects in the definition of decisions affecting the quality of life, having significant economic impacts on some of these subjects and (in general) able to modify the legal conditions of the areas. In order to meet the people need for participation in various forms, the Municipality of Diamante has activated, as part of the activities for the preparation of the Structural Plan, forms of involvement provided for by current legislation through the organization of public meetings and the implementation of a specific dedicated public online service.

Thanks to the meetings with the population and the established electronic channel, a certain number of observations and requests were collected, all carefully considered, evaluated and, in some cases, acknowledged in the drafting phase of the PSC. Furthermore, we want emphasize, as the moment of participation has provided the Plan designers with the opportunity of deepen their knowledge of the areas of planning, acquiring a multiplicity of points of view, so to have a broader and more real picture of the territory and its demands.

## **PLAN STRUCTURAL OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES - THE GUIDING PLAN SCHEME**

On the basis of the acquired knowledge and the made evaluations, also through, as seen, a close cooperation (exchange - comparison) between the administration and the population, the PSC sets its own “structural objectives”, formally mapped in the “Guiding Scheme of the PSC”, relating to three general purposes: “conservation and enhancement”, “redevelopment and rebalancing of the territory”, “sustainable and equitable development”.

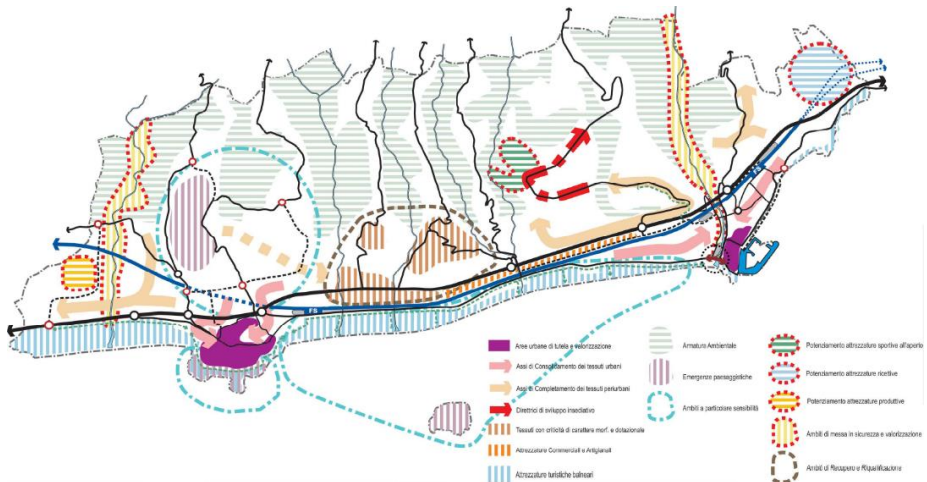


Figure 2: PSC of Diamante – Redevelopment and rebalancing of the territory - Reorganization and strengthening of the internal relationship system

## Conservation and enhancement

The cognitive analysis carried out on the natural and anthropic system in the context of the PSC, which document the richness of the environmental, historical, cultural and archaeological heritage of the Diamante territory, highlight also some deficiencies and critical issues concerning the scarce usability of part of this heritage, and the progressive erosion of its quality due to the settlement dynamics. Due to these remarks, the Plan makes a special effort to identify the areas of cultural and landscape value, including potential, and promoting their protection, redevelopment and, where appropriate, tourist use. In particular:

- Coastal areas :the PSC has planned to protect, with strict limitations to the transformation possibilities, the areas located close to the coast, that are still intact; to improve the accessibility to beaches, redevelop and functionally enhance, with temporary facilities (to be removed at the end of the tourist season), the amenities of the beach areas. Furthermore, the waterfront is to be redeveloped with the construction of a pedestrian and cycle walk, the enhancement of the vegetation and the construction of parking areas.
- Areas of archaeological interest: substantially lacking adequate accessibility and forms or elements of protection,



for these areas have been introduced “protect zones”, within which the transformation activities are limited to interventions, of low impact, aimed at improve the accessibility and use of the areas themselves.

- Historical settlements:
  - recovery and rehabilitation of the residential social fabric and the renewal of the urban infrastructure by harmonizing the needs of socio-economic regeneration with the preservation of historical-architectural and environmental values and characteristics;
  - the enhancement and re-use of areas and buildings, in the context of strengthening receptive services and structures, as well as commercial and productive artisan production; these latter activities besides characterizing the traditional local economic reality, can also affect the overall urban quality of life and tourist attractiveness.
  - The safeguarding of the “environmental landscape scenario” of which the historical fabric is part.
- Areas of natural and landscape interest: This tool identifies areas that - due to their natural characteristics and cultural value or their spatial relationship with other places or valuable elements - cover or may cover significance and landscape interest. The objectives defined for these areas are the protection and possible enhancement of their characteristics, based on the following actions:
  - protect, through the establishment of “protection zones”, areas of particular naturalistic value or landscape significance not already included into protection zones;
  - preserve as much as possible the current land coverage, directing building expansions and urban transformations into agricultural areas of minor environmental and landscape value (impact).
  - allow and encourage all interventions and transformations activities being functional to the conservation of traditional agricultural activities and, therefore, of the original agricultural landscape;

## **Redevelopment and Enhancement**

The PSC pursues (pursued) furthermore, the purpose of a redevelopment of those parts (in the urbanized territory and/or

somewhere else) lacking in quality, in order to render them more appealing and usable, through:

- coordinated actions for urban and building redevelopment of zones in urban degraded areas;
- Attendance on provisioning (endowments) when there is a lack of structures, in order to guarantee what the legislation contemplates, and, in other cases, to improve the existing supply of equipment and services so to improve the offer to residents and tourists;
- Development and reorganization of the roads and parking facilities to improve:
  - the accessibility of the hill settlements and their relationship with the coastal settlements and the seaside / beaches
  - the accessibility of urban municipality responsibilities and functions (Schools, cemeteries, railway stations, etc.) and of the Port (under ongoing strengthening).
  - the relationship improvement between the settled territory and the seaside, when hampered by the physical barrier represented by the SS 18 and the Railway.

### **Sustainable and equitable territory development**

Regarding this specific purpose of the PSC, the instrument intends to promote and favor those development processes and those economic activities that can establish a positive relationship with the environment and its resources and at the same time, constitute an opportunity for lasting (durable) growth and a fair distribution of resources. In this sense, the Diamante Structural Plan considers essential:

- complete and diversify the tourist offer of the coast and of the hills, to intercept not only the summer tourism related to the presence of seaside activities;
- support the development of craft and commercial activities by strengthening the relationships between the tourism and production sectors (circulation and promotion of agricultural products and local crafts);
- encourage the establishment of new productive activities by offering new areas suitable from environmental and accessibility point of view;

- to encourage the implementation and introduction of commercial and accommodation activities within urban areas, determining the conditions for the recovery and re-use of existing buildings;
- favor the implementation of new processing economic activities in order to extend the resulting economic benefits;
- guaranteeing an equitable distribution of the real estate values resulting from the urban planning as well as of the burdens deriving from the realization of the territorial endowments, through the acknowledge of same building opportunities to the different areas, when presenting homogeneous characteristics, *“so that to the same state of fact and law, it will correspond an equal capacity of building right”*.

### **The evaluation of “Overall settlement capacity”**

The Regional Planning Guidelines (drawn up pursuant to article 17, paragraph 5, LR n. 19/02) highlight as the need to achieve a sustainable structure of the territory, it requires a “new and different methodological path”. This different path should account for a different approach where, the forecast of possible future demographic structures (often questionable) and the consequent sizing of the Plan, is replaced *“by the definition, more certain and objective, of the territorial structural framework and by the construction of scenarios compatible with its conditions. In other words, the Structural Plan’s objective is to identify the overall settlement capacity of the territory, regardless of the demographic or socio-economic development forecasts, starting from the conditions of the environmental resources (air, water, soil) and the anthropic resources (landscape, historical testimonies, infrastructures, etc.)”*.

In line with what is indicated in the Guidelines, the hypotheses for the future structures of the of Diamante territory, elaborated in the new PSC, are based on the identification (understanding) of the “transformation (susceptibility) ability” of different areas in the territory; this task (activity), taking concrete form through an articulated process of progressive selection, aimed at identifying all the areas characterized by a more or less high impedance to transformation, (will organize the different zones as following) :

- Areas having a high naturalistic, landscape and/or cultural-historical sensitivity;

- Areas subjected to high levels of hydro-geological, seismic, hydraulic risk etc.
- Areas of particular agricultural value;
- Areas for which the transformation process results not feasible or inappropriate, due to location, accessibility or intervention complexity.

These analysis resulted in the identification of what the Regional Urban Law defines as “urbanisable territory”, excluding the infeasible areas and net of the already urbanized ones, where the transformation potential and, therefore, the settlement capacity, results from a transparent evaluation of the environmental characteristics and the functional vocation of the different identified areas.

## **CONCLUSION**

On one side, it is possible that - within the framework modalities indicated by the Calabrian Regional Urban Planning Law for the construction of the Territorial Structural Framework - the overall settlement capacity assessed by the PSC exceeds the supposed needs, in the short-medium term, but the other side, the conditions are planned in order to better intercept, in the medium-long term, the programming and propositive capacity of the private operators market.

Respecting the first possibility (exceeding short-term needs), it is worth emphasizing that, as far as propositive the Diamante PSC is concerned, the application of the above illustrated criteria and methods, made possible to achieve a significant transformations containment with respect to the previous PRG. In fact, both the consumption of land and the expected potential urbanity load, with the new instruments will be at a slightly lower level than those programmed in the previous PRG. This because a certain number of areas identified in the previous Plan with the purpose of being expanded and not yet implemented, will not be expanded. These areas, in fact, were not implemented both because they are considered unsuitable for transformation due to environmental or functional reasons, and because of the low propensity of the owners to transform.

In any case, beyond the considerations that may emerge from the dimensional comparison between the choices of the PSC with those of the previous Plan, the sustainability of the development forecasts of the new plan was verified in the Environmental Report for the purposes of Environmental Strategic Assessment. Moreover, the in-depth thematic analyses and the evaluations carried out in the context of this activity

have allowed - also thanks to a recursive process of verification and gradual adjustment of the choices of the Plan - to integrate new environmental considerations into the elaboration process and thus elevate the “environmental performance” of the overall Plan.

### **Notes**

This article is translated by Giuliana Bondanini

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