

Planning for tourism in Costa Smeralda

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Abstract

Studying tourism planning means understanding and assuming that tourism is not just a flux of tourists who move without leaving a trace, but a motor that physically transforms the territory due to the need to build infrastructure and tourist accommodation like hotels, second homes, attractions etc, which have contributed to major changes in previously untouched territories. Among them, the Costa Smeralda resort represents the most iconic and best known tourist destination of Sardinia. In 1962 it opened the doors to tourism in the island, distinguished for being a luxury and high quality tourism, an enclave in territory formerly occupied by the pastoral activity.

Keywords: Mediterranean coast, tourism planning, coast development, Costa Smeralda

Introduction

Tourism is generally perceived of as fluxes of persons moving around, consuming tangible and intangible goods, temporarily occupying space. Demands and preferences expressed by tourists generally imply considerable construction of facilities such as hotels, camping sites, tourist villages, apartments, holiday homes and thematic parks. Often, however, we tend to ignore the fact that construction leads to a radical transformation of the territory. When facilities for tourism are developed on an island, the effects become even more manifest. Construction is generally concentrated to the coast, and the landscape is put on the market for tourists to buy - it is “for sale”, just like any other good.

The specific case for this piece of research is Sardinia, the second biggest island of Italy. A large part of the Sardinian coast has still not suffered contamination from tourism and is, hence of great environmental value. Nevertheless, the Sardinian coast has been subject of massive construction, mainly resulting in low-density urban contexts, often inhabited for only for months per year. The paper will examine the Costa Smeralda (the Emerald Coast) in particular. The touristic expansion of the area began in the early 1960's, and Costa Smeralda is generally considered a luxury-type tourist site.

In this paper, a fairly new, little known and hardly quoted aspect will be brought into the research. We will refer to the strategy for planning and design for tourism, including guidelines for construction - which was brought from overseas and adopted for developing the Costa Smeralda.

The Revival Programmes and Tourism Development in the 1950's and 1960's

Tourism expanded later in Sardinia than in the two other big islands situated closeby: Sicily and Corse. The very few visitors that arrived in the 1930's were hosted in private homes, in the inhabited centres, and there was no interest among tourists to visit the coastal zones. On the other hand, authorities and politicians did not show any interest in making the beauty of the Sardinian coast a trademark for tourism development. Rather, the traditions and the culture of the internal part of the island were promoted. The Sardinian beaches started to be at the centre of attention for attracting tourists not until the 1950's. In 1948 the island became an autonomous region, a very important moment for Sardinia. The first ten years of autonomous governance and administration was quite slow and characterised by uncertainty, due to the fact that the island was still suffering the aftermaths of WWII, while the decade after that was characterised by the "Plan for revival" and by two phases of implementation of 15 years each.

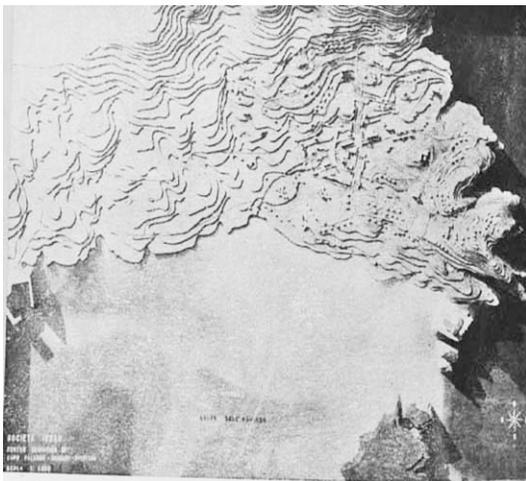
The first phase of regional planning for tourism (1949-1962) was carried out immediately following the establishment of the Regional Authority for National Domestic Affairs and Tourism and of ESIT (Ente Sardo Industrie Turistiche) – a planning instrument for the tourism industry in Sardinia, established in 1949, aiming at "implementing the regional programme for the sector". The programme presented in 1950 by the Authority involved, among other things, the objectives. To: increase the paybeds/number of hotels by using regional cofinancing; improve the network of roads of the island and the transport system between mainland Italy and Sardinia; promote the beauties of the island and enhance sites that may be of interest to tourists – also through carrying out necessary projects and programmes; attract the attention of the rest of the world to Sardinia in general. The mission of ESIT was to give incentives to private investors to construct, renovate or amplify their accommodation facilities through giving them access to favourable loans. The Regional Council did not provide exact directives for where and how these accommodation facilities were to be constructed or inserted, only the importance of customer satisfaction and meeting the demands of the growing tourism industry was mentioned.

The second phase of tourism planning (1962-1978) coincided with the programme for socio-economic revival for Sardegna. The programme aimed at intervening in the most promising fields of the Sardinian economy. The main objective was to increase the level of occupation, and the regional gross product per capita. Tourism was needed in order to enhance the economy (agriculture and he industry in general) which had been negatively affected by structural changes. The aim was, hence, to attempt to create new jobs in coastal areas in which tourism was expected to develop and grow. One of the most important regional strategic instruments were the "touristic nodes", which, according to the plan, would have been connected by an infrastructural network. Each one of the nodes would have established their own policy that would then have had to be approved by the Regional Council. The municipalities would, hence, be responsible of defining their own policy, while the Regional Council would be in charge of the infrastructure of roads and public networks. The strategy building on the idea of "nodes" was expected to limit construction for tourism, and keep development concentrated within designated "nodes". Financial assistance and loans were to be offered to entrepreneurs only in cases when business would fit into the areas and strategies of the "nodes". The original strategy succeeded only partially, since many investors were not in need of the loans – hence they did not limit their investments to areas situated within the nodes. The final decision regarding the touristic node-system was delayed, and meanwhile it was debated, the construction in the coastal area continued went on even more rapidly.

The Dominant Residential Pattern of Tourism

Parallel to the promotion and establishment hotel accommodation facilities and camping-sites, there was a growing tendency that would gradually develop and become the dominant tourism model of Sardinia – “residential tourism” or “second home tourism”. The construction of “second homes” initiated in the 1960’s and consolidating mainly during the 1970’s is a tendency which is general for the entire Italian peninsula. Second homes were constructed mainly by Sardinians who, having reached an improved their social status, succeeded in realising their dreams. Finally they would have a house close to the sea, where they could spend their summer holidays away from their usual residence. The holiday house also represented a potential extra income if let to tourists.

Figure 1. Master Plan Punta Falcone



But, 1962 the first year of the second phase of tourism planning also coincided with another important event; an exhibition organized by the “Pro Loco” of Sassari. The event aimed at promoting Sardinia and attract foreign investors. The projects presented show the wide range of initiatives, some of them already initiated, others completed. The initiatives were: Valle d’Erica, Punta Falcone (expected to host a permanent population of 1000 persons, and more than 7 000 tourists during the summer. It also encompassed the construction of a church, a market, a hotel and shops), Punta Sardegna (4 touristic villages, 5 hotel units and a number of private houses) and the Costa Verde.

The same year, an initiative was taken, that would have been the greatest investment for the creation of an enormous Sardinian tourist complex in Gallura, in the north-eastern part of Sardinia. The project represents a turningpoint for the Sardinian tourism model. The Costa Smeralda, which is also the main focus of the research, is a clear example of the concentration, and the high amount of holiday homes in relation to the number of hotels. The reknown tourism site was initially intended to become a centre for luxury hotel accommodation, but only a few years after the establishment of the first constructions for tourism, numerous investors were attracted to the area, and luxurious villas were constructed all across Costa Smeralda.

In Sardinia in general, the presence of second homes clearly influences the tourism industry, generating “ghost towns” for long periods of the year, inhabited only during the brief tourist season. These second home areas are characterised by infrastructural problems and insufficient services and commodities for whoever would like to live there off-season.

In conclusion, despite the attempts made at the regional level to regulate the new touristic phenomenon and the necessity to construct new services and accommodation facilities, including second homes, there was a lack of monitoring and planning strategy at the municipal level, since the municipalities did not yet have regulatory plans. The national law of 1967 granted Italian municipalities one year for preparing a General Regulatory Programme. In Sardinia, the Regional Law 17/1969 stipulated the deadline to present

a Programme for December 1969: after that date it wouldn't have been possible to construct without referring to the regulatory programme. Hence, a true building boom broke out, a race for receiving construction permits, resulting in the issuance of numerous permissions by municipalities. The reason was partly negligence, partly uncertainty of how to go about. Exactly the same phenomenon took place in the rest of Italy. During these years, the highest peak of expansion ever was reached, especially in the areas of touristic interest, in which the construction of second homes increased rapidly.

In December 1970 the Regional Council obligated the largest coastal municipalities to present a General Regulatory Plan (It: PRG) or Construction Programme (It: PdF), while the rest of the municipalities were urged to present these planning documents in 1972. The Regional Council called upon the attention of municipalities, hoping that the local authorities would monitor their own territory, rather than falling prey to the pressure of external investors. The latter was the unfortunate case in the area of Costa Smeralda and Arzachena, where the PdF was approved in 1972 after several arguments between the municipality and the Regional Council. Normally the municipalities tended to act slowly so as to gain as much time possible, with the objective to sell municipal estate to operators willing to invest in mind. Not until 1974 almost all coastal municipalities had presented a PRG or a PdF, but it was too late, the urbanisation of the coastal areas in Sardinia had already taken place.

The Emergence of Costa Smeralda

Costa Smeralda (Eng. The Emerald Coast), situated in the historical region Gallura didn't exist before 1962, which is the official date for the establishment of the tourist destination. In 1959, Mr. Duncan Miller, representative of the World Bank of London, travelled around in southern Italy, the part considered economically less developed. Mr. Miller was looking for sites and regions which would be suitable for the World Bank to invest in, and was fascinated by the beauty and the natural environment of the central northern coast of Sardinia, especially in the area around Cala di Volpe. Although Mr Duncan Miller is generally referred to as the pioneer of the area, the official founder of the Costa Smeralda, who held the presidential office of the Consortium of Costa Smeralda for 30 years, is Prince Karim Aga Khan. Aga Khan had been indicated as the Imam successor of the Ismaili. This is an important religious office for a faction of Muslims. He decided to establish Costa Smeralda in the light of what was about to happen nearby - in the Costa Azzurra. The Costa Azzurra had become overexposed, mainly because of its position, easily accessible for visitors from all over Europe, and was gradually losing its initial features as an exclusive tourist destination. The Prince recognised the extraordinary occasion that he could make out of this situation. He wanted to establish a new area that would have the same exclusive features as those possessed by Costa Azzurra fifteen years back. Aga Khan wanted, however, to develop Costa Smeralda into an island which would be accessible exclusively to elite clients.

As the project took off Aga Khan organised a charter flight connection so that investors and potential buyers could be attracted. This way the Prince's friends would have the possibility to undertake guided visits in the area *Monti di Mola* which, as a matter of fact, means "Rocky Mountains". Later this area was given the name *Costa Smeralda*, the Emerald Coast. The plan was to involve only a few members in the operation, so as to make the first six investors exclusive owners of the land, which would make them the founders of Costa Smeralda. Others – rich, noblemen, artists, etc. would be invited to buy land at a later stage, but at a cost that would be considerably higher than that paid by the six pioneer investors: this would, hence, be the big business of Aga Khan and the rest of the founders. Aga Khan suggested that the

establishment of Costa Smeralda should be formalised through the creation of a consortium. This would imply that the founders of the consortium would recognise and respect an official charter and common norms, on which any decision taken would be based. The aim was to create something particular and different, and to avoid following what had become the ordinary practice, namely that each investor constructs in his area, according to his own needs and personal interests.

First of all, prior to the formal establishment of the Consortium on 29 September 1961, the land owners signed a letter of intent, written in French, in the villa Renè e Gisele Podbielsky in Olbia. The agreement stipulated that no construction could be undertaken by the founders, before the urban plan had been approved, or before the Consortium had been constituted.

The Consortium Costa Smeralda

The final and binding constitutive act for the Costa Smeralda Consortium was signed the 14th of March, 1962. The six founders: Aga Khan, Andrè Ardoin, Patrick Guinness, Bigio Felix, John Duncan Miller, René Podbielski and the notary, Mr. Altea, were present. The Consortium was presented as a non-profit organisation “aiming at planning for a balanced urban and residential settlement through quality-interventions necessary for an improved valorisation for tourism”. In the beginning it was constituted by only six founders, Aga Khan was the president. The Consortium would be responsible for all construction on commonly owned land and for selling the shares that were already prepared with facilities and services. The Consortium was to remain owners of the common spaces, and was also directly responsible for the supervision of the financial resources as well as intervention for which these resources were used. Selling to third parties was a most profitable business.

What would have distinguished the Costa Smeralda from other Sardinian (and many other European) tourist sites is the organisation and management in the form of a Consortium managing a vast area of 3.000 hectares on the Sardinian coast. This would guarantee a higher quality, resulting from the supervision and monitoring of any activities carried out within the area owned by the Consortium. Regulations were established for all interventions related to public space or services that would be visible, such as: signs, commercial activities, public spaces, green areas, plants, borders of flowers, even road signs (the latter were designed and managed by an American company). The most innovative feature of the management of the area was that interventions not only in public, but also in private space had to follow certain regulations. Even types and materials of furniture used in gardens or other outdoor spaces, were indicated in the regulation, so as to make the built environment blend in with the surrounding nature. Prince Aga Khan put together an international team of architects, assigning them the tasks of defining regulations for construction, evaluating projects and constructing the very first buildings of Costa Smeralda, the latter intended to host the founders. The regulations of the Consortium stipulated that none of the single founders would have the right to divide the area into lots. A general Master Plan was also established.

There were, however, two bodies, operating to assist the needs of the members of the Consortium: the Board of Architecture and the Planning Office. It is evident, in planning documents and other acts from the period in which the Costa Smeralda was first being developed, that less attention was paid to urban planning than to the architectural aspects. There is a clear lack of documentation referring to the planning process, while the description of the built environment is accurate.

The Master Plan of the Costa Smeralda

Several years after the establishment of the Consortium, the members of the Board of Architecture were, hence, still making and implementing plans without adequate regional or municipal planning instruments. These would have served as a crucial support by permitting and promoting certain actions, and impeding and prohibiting others.

The very first letter of intent from 1961 defines the Board of Architecture as the body in charge of regulating construction. The same body should also be responsible of preparing a first development plan based on the expectations of the various owners. Architect Luigi Vietti managed the Development Plan, from which – however – no documentation remains today, apart from a few photos in which planning documents are visible. This does, however, merely confirm the fact that a first planning process of the area was actually carried out and presented to the Regional Council in 1964. The Municipality of Arzachena did, thereby, not have any normative planning instrument during that period of years. The only activities undertaken in that area were therefore limited to issuing single licences for construction of new buildings. During the first decade of the CS, 1962-1972 we can, hence, conclude that the Consortium and the Board of Architecture were acting completely free from any external supervision or legal command, carrying out and living only by their own regulations, organising rough plans related exclusively to the territory owned and managed by the Consortium. Hence, all important policies were left in the hands of the architects of the Board. These architects did, however, adapt a “sensitive” approach, respecting the surrounding landscape and the importance of the autochthonous vegetation, and aiming at involving the local population as much as possible.

The documentation of the planning process shows that the area now called for planning on two levels: one large scale Master Plan for the Costa Smeralda, and one for the urban level (or the *établissement*). The firm Sasaki Associates were selected to handle the Master Plan, while the Board of Architects was in charge of the urban dimension. These two players were to work parallel, so as to guarantee that any intervention defined in the Master Plan would be applied and implemented coherently also at the urban level. Public spaces, green areas and other facilities were to be distributed by the Board of Architecture. In 1968, the Studio Sasaki Associates in Boston, USA was commissioned by Aga Khan to carry out a multidisciplinary plan and draft a long term Master Plan, so as to permit supervision and monitoring of the various phases of construction in Costa Smeralda. The Board of Architecture had, however, already started planning, and the construction of two large hotels was in full progress. These first constructions - Hotel Cala di Volpe and Hotel Cervo and the small tourist-centre of Porto Cervo, the little harbour and the famous square called *La Piazzetta* continue to be the most important square of the entire Costa Smeralda. Hence, as the planning process was commissioned to the Sasaki studio, construction had already started, and several of the decisions regarding the division of land and the location and use of the principal areas had already been presented to, and accepted by Aga Khan. The Prince had created a new territory, ignoring what was happening in the rest of Italy and in Sardinia during that particular period. The area was completely different and distant from the debates of the peninsula. Aga Khan wanted Costa Smeralda to stand out among European coastal tourism destinations, and avoiding that his area would face the same destiny as that of the Costa Azzura, in Sardinia was one of the principal aims. It was crucial to the Prince that Costa Smeralda remained untouched by the Mediterranean cultural climate, and this would only be possible with the help of a non-Italian architect.

The Prince's decision to commission Hideo Sasaki for the role as architect, planner and landscape designer can, most probably, not be explained by merely referring to Sasaki's famous projects. Aga Khan had graduated in Islamic History in 1959, while his brother, Prince Ayn had studied Landscape Architecture at the Graduate School of Design. Hideo Sasaki served as a Decan at the Department of Landscape Architecture from 1958 to 1968. Sasaki worked with the Consortium Costa Smeralda until the end of the 1990's, that is, until the presidency of Aga Khan ended. It doesn't seem to be of great importance here, to evaluate whether the Master Plan of Hideo Sasaki was fully respected or not. It is not difficult to conclude that the speculative pressure of the promoters led to the gradual modification of the limits posed, related to – for instance - the allowed density or the total area of green space that was to be kept untouched. If we compare the initial plan with the present situation in the Costa Smeralda, we can conclude that the intended level of urbanisation was never reached in the southern part of the area. This was also one of the reasons for why the Prince eventually abandoned the coast. On the other hand, in other parts of the area, construction exceeded the expected and planned level.

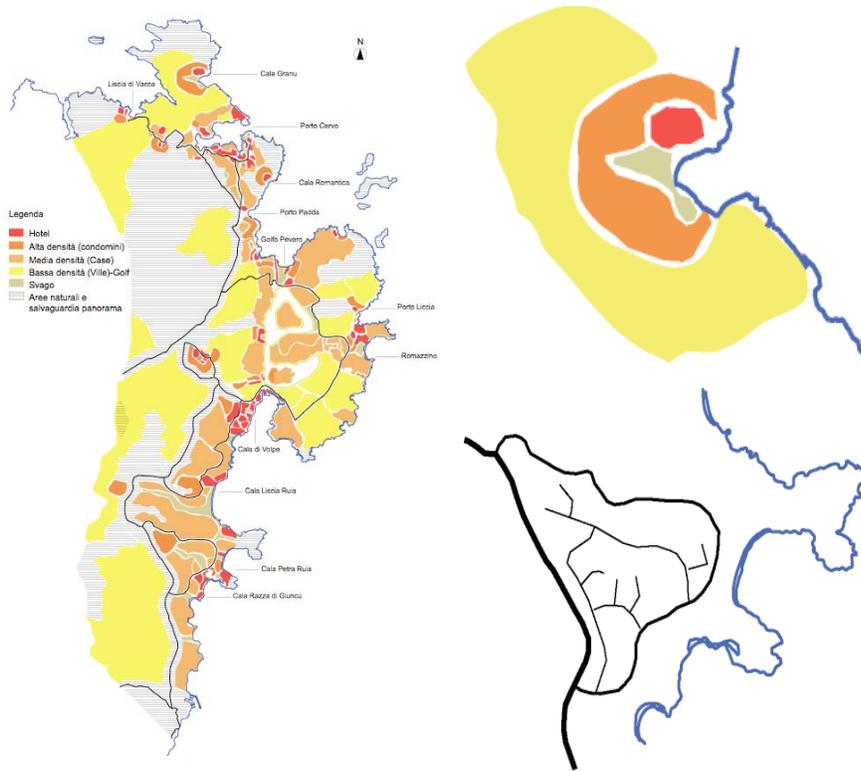
We can conclude, after having examined the Master Plan and the rest of the documentation related to the project, that this is a clear case of consultancy commissioned directly by a private individual (Prince Aga Khan, holding the presidential chair of the Consortium Costa Smeralda) to a professional studio (Sasaki, Dawson, De May Associates). If we assume that the Master Plan never entered into force in the formal, legal sense – at least not until the PdF of the Municipality of Arzachena would have rendered it legally binding (and, as a matter of fact, this did not happen), we can understand why the interventions are recommendations rather than norms and prospects and guidelines rather than actual directives. Details regarding the projects are never fully explained – this can, however, probably partly be explained by the fact that the planning process took place on a macro scale..

Another important, and clearly innovative aspect is the multidisciplinary approach that was adopted for implementing the study. Sasaki's mission was to develop and manage a plan for tourism in Costa Smeralda. Sasaki suggested that thorough and continuous market analyses be carried out, in order to understand tendencies and avoid excessive construction. Other professionals were also called upon to carry out specific studies during various phases of the planning process: agronomists or experts on how to reinsert trees in deforested areas; geologists who would indicate the most suitable pieces of land for various types of use; engineers for planning and construction of infrastructure; experts in communication (graphics and publishers) who would create a global image for the resort.

The following characteristics of Sasaki's Master Plan for developing tourism are considered innovative and significant:

- **short, intermediate and long term planning:** Interventions were made in various phases and always related to an investment-programme, this makes it possible to monitor the construction process and the profitability of the investments. No construction would, hence, be undertaken without a corresponding market demand – this measure was taken so as to avoid the creation of an excessive supply that would eventually become a threat to investment as well as to the overall environment in the area. Sasaki knew that if an equilibrium could be achieved and maintained between construction and demand, economic return would be immediate, and the quality of construction would remain good. The planning process would also remain organic and, hence, balanced.

Figure 2. Master Plan Long Term Planning. Figure 3. Detail of clustering system. Figure 4. Detail of infrastructure system.



- **the organisation of a system of tourist poles or clusters:** Construction was carried out in various phases. As according to the plan, the construction of new buildings had to be fully completed before new were added. Hence, each centre took on a specific character and was inserted into a hierarchy, and newly built environment was given time to densify before construction took place again. This way, constructed areas never extended in an uncontrolled manner, and the development did not deviate from the original Master Plan. The strategy of the plan was to form a number of small

clusters in the territory: the point of departure for these nuclei always being the sea. Each nucleus was, thus, connected to a beach, or – as is the case in Porto Cervo – a harbour. Hence, this clustered structure follows the same tendency on the entire coast. The first nuclei are constructed close to the sea, where the built area takes on the most dense character, and where most hotels, apartments and buildings and areas for recreation are located. The built area then continued toward the inland, but becomes, gradually, less dense. The idea was, hence, to create a number of different centres in the area, each with a distinct character, hence possible to distinguish from the rest of the centres in the Resort. One of the distinguishing features would be the quality of recreative activities that a centre could offer. Porto Cervo represents the most important nucleus, it is the “showroom” of the Costa Smeralda, and offers high quality services.

- **the hierarchy among infrastructures:** The infrastructural network of roads is carefully planned in every detail. Particular attention has been paid to the paving and panoramic views. It is very important that roads and streets make up a part of a hierarchical system, in which each road takes on a specific importance and, hence, its own location, origin and direction. There are two elements that are never ignored in the road layout: the first, and recurring in every Master Plan, is the view. The traveller should remain surprised of the panorama during the whole journey through the landscape, therefore the planners lead the main roads as high up as possible in the terrain, so as to expose the full panorama to the visitor. Another measure taken, closely connected to the aim of letting the visitor enjoy the view of the landscape, is to lead main infrastructures outside of urban areas, not to disturb or block the view towards the sea. Only small, mainly pedestrian roads, were lead through the clusters.

The importance of infrastructures in harbours in tourist areas should not be underestimated. The harbour is the major entrance for tourists in areas of a certain class, such as Costa Smeralda, and even more so in areas where there are marinas. The sea, rather than the roads is the main entrance. The principal mean of transport is not the car, but the boat. A luxury-type tourism is connected to yachts or pleasure boats. Therefore, the harbour becomes the main “showroom”, and that is the reason for why the Master Plan includes a harbour for each of the urban clusters, although of different characteristics and size.

- public space and space for leisure: The plan does take into account the importance of creating public space and recreational activities outside of the privately owned areas, although the positioning close to the beaches can be questioned. The main objective of introducing public space and offering activities was to “satisfy the client”, hence tempting to increase the length and/or the recurrence of the medium-length holiday of 3,5 days, and prolong the tourist season so that it would no longer be limited to the three summer months in which the whole stay is dependent on the favourable climate and the sea. The strategy of the Master Plan was to improve the general offer for tourists by suggesting new activities (such as golf, swimming, indoor-sports, events) and, thereby, to extend the season, but also to attract new and different typologies of tourists. Large areas of the landscape was to be kept open, so as to preserve the landscape in its natural state, available and accessible for walking, biking or horseback riding tourists, also off season.

Conclusions

It is important to understand the context in which the Master Plan was implemented, in order not to draw extremely critical conclusions. Today it would obviously be impossible to implement a Master Plan such as that elaborated for and implemented in the Costa Smeralda a few decades ago – especially in the Sardinian context, where a Regional Landscape Plan recently gained force. This Plan prohibits construction closer than two kilometres distance from the foreshore. Thus, we can conclude that construction nowadays is far more regulated than what was the case when Costa Smeralda was established, and buildings were constructed at only a few metres distance from the coast.

One aspect that can definitely be criticised is the total absence of reference to the part of the Costa Smeralda that belongs to the municipality of Arzachena, but also of any connection between the area that makes up a part of Costa Smeralda and the area outside of it. There exists no reference whatsoever to the local population, and possible repercussions that the planned interventions may have on the population, the local society or the economy. All of the planned interventions and actions are addressed to and designed for a non-permanent population, that visit Sardinia with the only objective to spend their holidays there. The planners and the founders were fully aware of the fact that Costa Smeralda was never going to host a permanent population, not even in a distant future - the absence of “urban type” services confirms exactly this. The absence of urban qualities is palpable along the entire coast, and it is sufficient to go for a visit during the winter months to understand *that* and *why* there are nearly no permanent inhabitants in Costa Smeralda. Some actions within the Master Plan bear clear signs of the fact that actions are taken in order to “satisfy” the demand of a promoter – planners are tightly connected to needs that are obviously related to business, and it is also the business that manages real estate operations.

On the other hand, it is possible to grasp another tendency in the management and planning of Costa Smeralda – the strive to avoid the pure trading of real estate and the attempt to arrive at factors and qualities, not merely connected to financial resources, such as atmosphere and image. Sasaki continuously emphasizes the fact that what makes the Costa Smeralda so particular and attractive is its nature and

landscape. Sasaki mentions the good qualities of the coastal landscape, as well as the inland areas, and claims that preservation is indispensable. A vast area of land is to be kept untouched. Extensive construction might bring short-term financial return, but would - in the long-term perspective - cause the loss of the unique qualities that distinguish the Costa Smeralda among other tourist areas. This would, in turn, threaten the global image of the resort and of the entire area. In the Master Plan, several examples can be found of how interventions that would not be favourable to the territory are impeded. One such instance is the intent to establish a second golf course, without even having finished the first. Another example is the construction of service-buildings for which the demand is not sufficient – and hence the building will not fulfil its purpose.

The organisation in clusters, each one dependent on the others and, at the same time differentiated through a hierarchical and functional order – is a contemporary tendency in the field of planning. The positioning of the high density cores at such close vicinity to the sea can certainly be questioned. Given the fact that construction could actually take place at only a few metres distance from the foreshore– was the decision taken by the planners, placing high-density context closer to the sea, while establishing low density settlements towards the inland? The debate that has been going on for more than ten years now, aiming at arriving at a more sustainable model – dense versus spread out (taking the form of smaller low-density centres) can, supposedly be much nurtured by the principles and elements used by Sasaki. Sasaki often uses a basic set of elements in his works, and it is clear that he has been inspired by American landscape planning, particularly the projects of Landscape Designer Olmsted, for initialising the “clustering” of nodes in Costa Smeralda. The concept “view” is present in all proposed interventions, not only in Sasaki’s plan, but also in planning each single building. The panoramic view towards the sea and the nature become the most important features of first the urban and then the architectural project. The adoption of a sinuous, curvilinear infrastructure is indispensable for provoking a surprise for the visitors, who – constantly - find themselves immersed in distinct glimpses and landscapes. The approach to the landscape is always scenic, and descriptions are often close to being picturesque.

What seems important here is the methodological approach to planning. Such a planning process involves a thorough analysis of the situation, supported by a meticulous topographic survey as well as computerised systems for mapping that is far more advanced than the average European systems. The multidisciplinary approach has always been emphasized by Sasaki, can be considered innovative for the context that we are analysing, through which the various levels of organisation of the Costa Smeralda could be brought together into one single Master Plan.

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