

DANIELA PITTALUGA

FABIO FRATINI

(édité par/by)

CONSERVATION ET MISE EN VALEUR  
DU PATRIMOINE ARCHITECTURAL ET PAYSAGÉ  
DES SITES CÔTIERS MÉDITERRANÉENS

CONSERVATION AND PROMOTION OF ARCHITECTURAL AND  
LANDSCAPE HERITAGE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COASTAL SITES

ripam

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Ce livre est un ouvrage collectif, dont les contributions ont été élaborées à partir de la conférence RIPAM 7, organisée à Gênes du 20 au 22 septembre 2017 par le DAD - Département d'architecture et de design (Université de Gênes) en partenariat avec le CNR-ICVBC Institut national de recherche, Institut pour la conservation et la mise en valeur du patrimoine culturel de Florence).

This book is a collective work, with contributions developed starting from RIPAM 7 conference, organized in Genoa, 20 to 22 September 2017 by the DAD - Department of Architecture and Design (University of Genoa) in collaboration with the CNR-ICVBC (National Research Council, Institute for Cultural Heritage Conservation and Valorization, Florence).

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Daniela Pittaluga et Fabio Fratini ont travaillé ensemble sur les textes initiaux (comprenant les sections “Qu’est-ce que le RIPAM?” et “Conférence RIPAM 7”, les remerciements et les index) et sur les descriptions des thèmes et sous-thèmes (sections A et B et sous-parties). Cependant, Daniela Pittaluga a écrit les parties en français et Fabio Fratini a écrit les parties en anglais, ils sont auteurs de certains articles et les éditeurs de la partie restante.

Daniela Pittaluga and Fabio Fratini worked together on the initial texts (including sections “What is RIPAM?” and “RIPAM 7 Conference”, acknowledgements and indexes) and on the descriptions of the themes and subthemes (section A and B and subparties). However, Daniela Pittaluga wrote the parts in French, and Fabio Fratini wrote the parts in English. They are authors of some articles and editors of the remaining part.

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a Anna Maria e a Luca

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## The seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto (Le Marche). The recovery of its history and possible development

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**Summary.** The seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto, whose infrastructures represented one of the most important assets of the Marche region, is currently in a state of decline. In ancient times, fishing boats landed directly on the beach, with a significant waste of time and resources. In the early years of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, two small structures (the northern and the southern pier), were build perpendicular to the coastline. Between the 1930 and the 1939, motor boats became widely used; the seaport was significantly rearranged for these ships that needed a flat water basin, a deeper sea bottom and accessible docks. Between the 1940 and the 1945 the port and the whole navy of San Benedetto were struck by severe bombings. During the post-war period, the damaged piers were rebuild while the fishing fleet, almost totally destroyed, were reformed. In the 60s, the fleet was further developed in order to expand its activity to Mediterranean and Oceanic routes. As a result, new modifications were carried out to the port. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1968, the Municipality issued the *Proposta di Aggiornamento del Piano Regolatore e Ampliamento del Porto di San Benedetto del Tronto*. However, due to the fishing activities' decrease, this plan had a limited effectiveness. It is now necessary to carefully reconsider the situation and the conservation of the port facilities together with the regeneration of the entire area, through the rediscovery of the fishing traditions, seen as a part of food and wine and touristic systems<sup>1</sup>.

**Keywords:** port infrastructures, history, conservation, enhancement, development.

### 1) Context and legislative framework

The seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto, whose infrastructures represent one of the most important assets of the Marche region, is currently dealing with a state of regression. This is naturally resulted from the decrease of fishing activities in Adriatic waters. Furthermore, in a town that is strongly devoted to beach holidays, transformations of touristic habits and the increasing need for vacancy accommodations is leading to a rethinking

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 1 is by C. Pancaldi; paragraph 2 is by E. Petrucci; paragraph 3 is by F. Di Lorenzo.

about spaces that were once strictly operational and partially limited to the citizens.



Fig. 01 : The regional seaport system (left) and geographic framework of the seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto (right)

Located in the northern area of the district, the seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto looks like "pressed" between the sea (east) and the Adriatic railway line (west), which represents a physical barrier and also an instinctive limit between the urban core and the port. The *Albulia* river marks the southern limit, separating it from the beachside touristic zone. With two main docks (the northern one entirely dedicated to fishing boats and the southern one that hosts touristic boats) the harbor's waterfront consists of a continuous quay with a hauling stopover; in addition, a number of different accessory structures characterize the surroundings: the lighthouse, the port authority building, a museum, boatyards and a number of fish food industries.

The seaport is ranked as a 2<sup>nd</sup> category - 1<sup>st</sup> class infrastructure<sup>2</sup>, and, as predicted by the Law nr. 84/1994, it is administrated by a specific

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<sup>2</sup> The area is under the State jurisdiction. Instead, the Region supervises over excavation works and touristic docking within the harbor. The ranking was issued

municipal plan named *Piano Regolatore Portuale* [Port Strategic Plan], approved by the Region. Also, the compound is regulated by the *Piano Regionale dei Porti* [Regional Ports Plan], issued by the Region in order to renovate and develop connections between touristic and commercial systems and to safeguard fishing and shipyard works<sup>3</sup>.



Fig. 02 : The seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto - aerial view

## **2) San Benedetto and its seaport: a common heritage.**

### ***2a) Premises to the development of the town's fishery***

The town of *San Benedetto del Tronto* was originally a small fortified village whose origins dates back to the Roman age<sup>4</sup>. The settlement developed only after the second half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century through a continuous

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by the Royal Decree n. 71/1907, later reviewed by the Ministerial Decree nr. 1775/1975.

<sup>3</sup> The *Piano Regionale dei Porti* was first established by the Law nr. 494/1993 that defines them as "plan for the employment of the maritime state propriety". Together with the town's *Piano Regolatore*, other territorial tools preside over the seaport, between them the *Piano Paesistico Ambientale Regionale*, the *Piano di Gestione Integrata delle Zone Costiere*, the *Piano Regionale di Tutela delle Acque*, the *Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale* and the *Piano Regionale di Assetto Idrogeologico*.

<sup>4</sup> During recent excavations in the old town a series of interesting roman structures dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century a.D. were discovered.



process of urban expansion toward the coastline. The Battle of Lepanto (1571) introduced to a new era of safety and prosperity for the castles on the Adriatic coast, encouraging their first expansions over the ancient walls [PETRUCCI *et al.* 2016, p. 255]. At the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, San Benedetto had already reached the coastal area with its first fishermen settlement called *Mandracchio*, later expanded through a specific urban plan by the Government official engineer Luigi Paglialunga, in 1788. Paglialunga designed a regular grid of rectangular blocks shaped by a series of terraced small houses<sup>5</sup>. The new district, called *Piano Regolatore*, was implemented in 1873 by the architect Francesco Vespignani, who maintained the regular framework. Meanwhile, the railway line reached the town and its urban track was completed between 1861 and 1863. The installation of the tracks and the construction of the new Station required the entire district to be rearranged. Between the XVIII<sup>th</sup> and the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the coast receding eastward favoured urban expansions; through the years this natural process returned the citizens new plots of land called *relittimarini* [marine relics]. In the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the Municipality bought a part of the *relitti*, those that were closer to the urban centre, and used them to build beach facilities as well as to implement fishing activities by setting aside a specific area, where the future seaport will be created years later [PETRUCCI *et al.* 2016, p.253].

Before the actual docks were build, fishing boats landed directly on the beach, with a significant waste of time and resources for leaving the shore and for taking the ships back to the land. Boats, called *lancette*, *sciabiche*, *barchetti*, *papagnotti* or *paranze*, did not need a deep water basin, they were easy to sail and their routes were quite circumscribed<sup>6</sup>. Anyway, San Benedetto already had a lively fish market held in a dedicated building and, at the same time, peddlers and selling huts animated the streets [MERLINI 2008]. In 1809, San Benedetto could host up to 200 sailors or fishermen, with 24 *paranze* and 13 *battelli*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> A partial copy of the plan is kept in Archivio di Stato di Roma, Fondo *Congregazione del Buon Governo*, serie II, b. 4128.

<sup>6</sup> *Lancette*, *sciabiche*, *barchetti*, *papagnotti* and *paranze* were small sail boats with a flat bottom conformed for landing on the beach. The crew included no more than 10-12 men [MERLINI 2008].

<sup>7</sup> In 1812, 70,000 kg of fish were recorded in the local market for a total value of 18,360 Liras [MERLINI 2008].

Nevertheless, a real seaport was highly desired both by the population and by the Administration. The parliamentary Luigi Dari, undersecretary in the Ministry of Public Works, fought for its realization until in 1908 a contract was signed for the building of the northern dock. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs considered San Benedetto as a perfect spot to place such a structure, a proper shelter for fishermen ships, between the already existing ports of Ancona (north) and Pescara (south) [CASTELLI *et al.* 1989]. Furthermore, the town was already recognized as one of the most important Italian fish market. The dock was completed in 1912, 200 meters long, perpendicular to the coastline and was further prolonged between 1913 and 1917 [BIZZARRI, MENZIETTI 1980].

The southern dock was built in 1919. On the two facilities works were carried out continuously between 1926 and 1928, in order to prolong or enlarge them, together with a routine cleaning of the port basin, to prevent sand accumulation. At the beginning of the '30<sup>s</sup>, San Benedetto had an operative port and a numerous fishing fleets that achieved a leading role in the Adriatic sea<sup>8</sup>. Next to fishery, a series of collateral activities started to thrive; boats were built and repaired on the beach between the two docks, the ancient core of the town's boatyards.

At the same time, the whole citizenship took part in the maritime life. Women collaborated by producing fishing nets within their homes, while a number of industries employed children for the rope manufacturing [CROCI 1999].

### ***2b) The modern seaport and the first Piano Regolatore Portuale (1968)***

Between 1930 and 1939, fishing activities further increased and San Benedetto became the leader in the entire Mediterranean sea for the quantity of fish and for the extent of its commerce routes<sup>9</sup>.

Motor boats became widely used. Therefore, the seaport was significantly rearranged, for these ships needing a flat water basin, a deeper sea bottom and accessible docks. In order to protect the harbour from sand sedimentation, in 1932, the northern pier was further prolonged and, between 1935 and 1937, a 642 meter quay was added to the southern

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to a series of innovations made by its fishermen such as the introduction of motor boats from 1912, for the first time in Italy [MERLINI 2012].

<sup>9</sup> Quantity was about 7.000.000 kg/year [MERLINI 2012].

pier. The next year, a 150 meter quay was built between the two docks, beside the north pier, where the fish open market would be located.

Due to the growing amount of fish, the old *Pescheria* (1886) became insufficient and obsolete; between 1932 and 1935, a new fish market was built, designed by the municipal engineer Luigi Onorati, who conceived a very modern and rational building provided with a market hall, stores, laboratories and all the required services.

He designed a central two-stored service unit, sided by two L shaped warehouses; the auction room was covered with a glass and steel roof. Meanwhile, during the '30s, together with fishery, San Benedetto developed another inclination that, from that moment on, would become crucial in the development of the town. In 1928, as issued by the *Regio Decreto* 15/04/1928, nr. 765 (*Provvedimenti per la tutela e lo sviluppo dei luoghi di cura, di soggiorno e di turismo*), San Benedetto was nominated as a “stazione di cura, soggiorno e turismo” [therapy, vacation and tourism spot] [PETRUCCI, DI LORENZO, LAPUCCI 2017]. This title was given to cities and towns who took a significant advantage from the presence of tourists. In 1932, the new *Lungomare* was opened, designed by Luigi Onorati as a *promenade* by the seaside, where circular platforms and slopes to the beach alternated. This path, which is actually the core of San Benedetto's *Lungomare*, was placed south to the port, in order to get a neat distinction between the harbor zone and the touristic beaches [PETRUCCI *et al.* 2016, p.258].

Between 1940 and 1945, the port and the whole navy of San Benedetto were seriously damaged by a number of bombings [MERLINI 2014]. The basin was almost useless due to the great amount of sand gathered, while many boats were confiscated by the Army that used them for para-military activities. Fishing abruptly dropped and the fish market closed for more than a year.

During the post-war period, a specific *Piano di Ricostruzione* [Reconstruction Plan] was adopted by the public administration, implying a strong urban expansion<sup>10</sup>. In the port, the damaged piers, the central

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<sup>10</sup> *Piano di Ricostruzione di S. Benedetto del Tronto (AP)*, 1950, Archivio Dicoter, Roma, QLC 2AP066 C1\_RM1. Also in the digital Archive RAPu - Rete Archivi Piani urbanistici, [www.rapu.it](http://www.rapu.it).

quay and all the facilities were rebuilt. Wrecks were removed from the harbour, while the remaining fishing fleets were reformed. Between 1950 and 1957, the southern pier was prolonged and, in 1957, a new and modern lighthouse was built at the root of the southern pier, connected to Onorati's *Lungomare* and to the main road of the old town. Meanwhile, in 1956, to display the richness of the local maritime heritage, the new *Museo Ittico* was opened.



Fig. 03 : The northern dock in the 50<sup>s</sup>

In the '60<sup>s</sup>, the fleet was further developed, to expand its activity to Mediterranean and Oceanic routes<sup>11</sup>. As a result, new modifications were made: in order to equip the seaport with a new slipway (1962-63), the central quay had to be extended toward south. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1968, the Municipality issued the *Proposta di Aggiornamento del Piano Regolatore e Ampliamento del Porto di San Benedetto del Tronto* [Proposal for the Updating of the Urban and Expansion Plan of the Seaport of San Benedetto del Tronto]. The plan, which is still effective, aimed at enlarging the two piers, prolonging the southern and building another one next to the northern one, to create a specific larger bay for yachts and touristic boats. This proposal was favourably considered by the Ministry of Public Works, but became effective only in 1985 [D.M. nr. 2722/1985].

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<sup>11</sup> The first boat to go over the Pillars of Hercules was the "*Nicola Marchegiani*", later followed by a number of other boats. From the Canary islands, where the crews landed for restore, boats sailed both to the Pacific and to the Indian Ocean [MERLINI 2012].

Due to the fishery decrease that involved the entire Adriatic sea, the 1968 plan had a limited effectiveness. Therefore, the administration focused on the implementation of existing structures and on the development of urban services. A series of sport facilities and green areas were created within the harbour, trying to develop connections to the touristic beachside. In 1988, a *Variante al PRP* [D.M. nr.1391/1988] was accepted concerning the modification of the touristic port. The Region allocated about 8,500,000,000 Liras from 1988 to 1998 for this project, which increased the number of harboured ships up to 800.

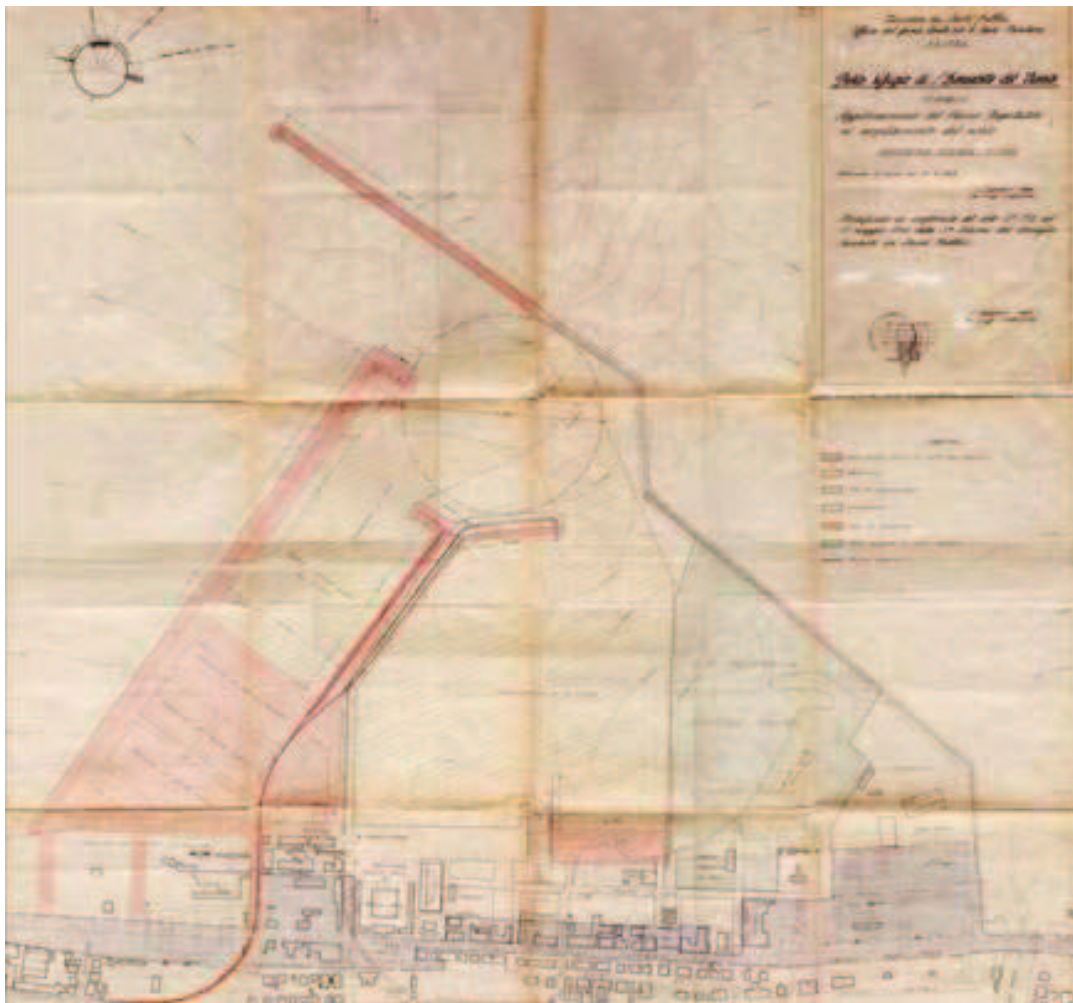


Fig. 04 : March 30<sup>th</sup> 1968, "Proposta di Aggiornamento del Piano Regolatore e Ampliamento del Porto di San Benedetto del Tronto"

During the '90s, a new *Capitaneria di Porto* was built together with new refuelling spots. The docks were equipped by street furniture to make them enjoyable by the citizenship. Moreover, a series of sculptures were placed along them, mostly referring to the sea world and to local

traditions. For the southern pier, the artist Mario Lupo realized his "Monument to the Seagull Jonathan", a 10 meter high steel circle surrounded by seagulls, symbolizing the town's industry and the courage of its fishermen. In 1992, the Fish Market opened the new electronic auction system, restored and enlarged in 1997 [MERLINI 2012]. The building, that since 1976 hosts the *Museo Ittico*, opened to a new section in 2011, called *Museo della Civiltà Marinara delle Marche*, to enrich the town's museum system.

### **3) Regional strategies and proposals for the new *Piano Regolatore Portuale* (2011)**

The fishery industry drop, the growing need for holiday accommodations, the under dimensioned touristic dock and the separation between the port area and the urban framework are today critical issues, which prevent an appropriate development to regional ports. This is the reason why the Marche region is trying to propose a new planning model, the *Piano Regionale dei Porti*<sup>12</sup>, that the Municipality of San Benedetto del Tronto is implementing with a new *Piano Regolatore Portuale*, proposed in 2011.

In the last decades, fishery in the Adriatic Sea has moved from an extensive exploitation to a more rational and organized practice, as the number of boats and people employed on this industry have decreased. In order to take advantage of the smaller amount of product, the Region is trying to renovate the fish processing chain. In San Benedetto this branch was already strong [REGIONE MARCHE 2010]; nevertheless, the *Piano Regionale* calls for an implementation of the Fish Market commercial scope to cover the entire production, from certification to product sale. Also, regional policies aim at regenerating processing industries by introducing new techniques and also by relocating them to the shipyard zone, in order to create a special spot, connected to the harbour and to the city.

"Connection" seems to be the keyword of the regional maritime planning policies in Le Marche. Limited by the railway and divided from the touristic

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<sup>12</sup> The *Piano Regionale dei Porti* is conceived as shared platform between public administrations, citizens and industries, aimed at a sustainable development. The plan offers a model of integrated re-use with a mix of different activities within the harbor.

beachside, the seaport of San Benedetto suffers a sort of isolation that is typical of places conceived for a specific use. The *Piano Regionale* especially wants to stimulate these links by opening the area to a series of mixed functions, most of them public, and by reorganizing the traffic system.

To compensate the fishing drop, the interest in sailing tourism has lately increased<sup>13</sup>. The regional administration has acknowledged its economic relevance, because it could create new employment possibilities and attract a different kind of tourist. Therefore, since the touristic dock is today under-dimensioned, the *Piano Regionale* reintroduced the idea of the new northern pier, as planned by the 1968 P.R.P. Also, seen the general positive trend that shipbuilding industry has showed in Italy in the last years<sup>14</sup>, a series of collateral activities, such as the boatyard and boat repair industry, could be created.

In order to widen the accommodation capacity, the *Piano Regionale* requires new structures to be created in specific buildings within the seaport perimeter. This intervention would meet the need for city lodging that has become relevant in the last 10 years. In addition, in view of a global campaign to create new touristic routes, the *Piano* includes the creation of multifunctional buildings, together with sport and wellness areas.

The proposal for the new *Piano Regolatore Portuale* tries to implement the regional indications. The first step in the elaboration of the plan was the limitation of the seaport area. Then, zones that are actually used and those that are left unused were defined. The area was therefore divided into two main fields: the "operative area" for the seaport and its activities and a "city-port integration area", where the interaction between the city and the port could be possible. After a detailed analysis of the land and building uses, the P.R.P. tries to better organize their distribution and give

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<sup>13</sup> In 2006 the Marche region made an esteem on the number of new boat lots needed in all its seaports and, on the basis of the national demand, proposed an increase up to the 75% for the next 12 years [REGIONE MARCHE 2010].

<sup>14</sup> The Marche Region represents one of the most important producer in Italy. Between the 2000 and the 2006 the number of industries increased up to the 90% [REGIONE MARCHE 2010].

them the appropriate flexibility to conform to the modern real estate market.

Amongst the specific interventions, planners conceived the *Albula* river mouth as a project crucial node. The goal is to make this part of the seaport a natural continuation of the *Lungomare*, a new promenade equipped with green areas and sport facilities and a joint between the town and the harbour.

Finally, the P.R.P. revived the idea of the new northern dock, as proposed in the actual P.R.P. (1968). This expansion would lead to a functional regeneration of the seaport, providing the city with a modern touristic dock and the possibility of connecting with the other side of the sea.



*Fig. 05, 06 : Proposal for the new P.R.P. (2011) - Zoning (left) and seaport's arrangement (right)*

The recent proposal for the new P.R.P. demonstrates that the reuse of the port's structures for touristic or generally public uses seems to be the only way for responding to a particular declining circumstance by regenerating spaces and buildings, returning them to the city. The port's history and traditions can have a key role while trying to activate a cultural touristic system, linked to the main regional routes. These are the new challenges for the local public administration, highly demanded by national environment laws and by recent regional and urban plans.



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