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To research of one impossible balance

Michele Talia

It could be assumed that the works selected by the Inu Prize jury highlight fairly good the state of health of the research developed in Italian universities. In fact, the five essays collected in these pages show a substantial balance between investigations carried out in highly innovative sectors, and studies that aim instead to formalize some issues that had already been widely discussed, but that find here new factors of interest and originality.

This balance seems to betray the inclination of young scientists to follow a middle way that can protect them from the opposite dangers of irrelevance (because of the prevalence of theoretical content, with no immediate operational implications) and lack of motivation (which occurs rather when data processing occurs in the absence of adequate conceptual references).

The prevalence of well-balanced approaches in the research activity is probably due to the same culture of the planners, known for their disposition to draw an ideal link between theory and practice, but it is indisputable that this conservative nature, which is a major constraint for a discipline that should promote on the contrary the epistemological reflection, has widened further in recent years just following the policy of cuts that affected the university. The virtual elimination of funding for research has gradually enhanced the character finalized, and sometimes purely applicative, of the research projects, so that the generation of new theories, or the initiation of new research topics seem destined to become rare events.

In the present context, the fact remains that the exercise of patient mediation between basic and applied research can be not only ineffective but also counterproductive. While most analysts feel the need to address as soon as the changes resulting from the replacement of the previously dominant paradigm in terms of production, consumption and settlement patterns with very different approaches, it is essential that future programs of scientific and cultural institutions are devoted to what appears a genuine phase transition. As a result of this emergency situation, it is therefore necessary to create a marked convergence of available resources on economic recovery and, in a synergistic way, the passing of a dramatic environmental crisis, that in the absence of appropriate policies is likely to deteriorate further in coming decades.

Urban grapes. Polycentric systems in a subregional dimension

Marco Barbieri

The research experience investigates particular forms of territorial organization, especially in Italy, that are linked to an historical polycentrism.

Through an exploration of some case studies (that are typical examples of the 'Italian provinces') this work aims to analyze these systems to understand their policies of territorial government and their future evolutions.

This work is divided into 3 steps.

- the first phase begins with the analysis of the pre-existing literature, focusing on a more detailed definition of the 'polycentric systems'. Moving from the recent debate about polycentric development in a European dimension and from the researches about urban networks, it is possible to define a 'polycentric system' as an area characterized by the historical presence of a certain number of medium-sized cities with non-hierarchical relations;
- the second phase is characterized by the exploration of some Italian case studies. The research deals with the polycentric system of Cuneo (in the southern part of Piemonte, a grape linked to seven major urban areas), the 'metropolitan ring' defined by the main centers of north-central Toscana (Firenze, Prato, Pistoia, Lucca, Pisa, Empoli), the area of Romagna (linked to five major urban areas: Ravenna, Faenza, Cesena, Forlì and Rimini) and some smaller areas in Umbria related to natural elements: a river (Tevere) or a lake (Trasimeno);
- the final phase includes a definition of some specific key-themes. The aim is to trace, through a comparison of the case studies, what are the 'big questions' of the government of a polycentric system. It's possible to conclude that there is a spreading conscience of the necessity of inter-comunal cooperation; at the same time, this process is particularly difficult because of the historical relations based on individualism. The research suggests that a possible way to face this problem could be the creation of common visions related to some 'projectuality' in a large dimension (re-evaluation of transverse elements, such as river, creation of infrastructure ring or parks in rural areas between urban centers, etc.).

Cohousing. Survey and classification of a 'contractual community' model

Valeria Baglione

The research is inspired by residential dynamics observation in Europe and Usa. In particular it is about models of voluntary land use and collective management called 'contractual communities'. The aim is analyzing cohousing model as a 'contractual community' example. The perspective is to find a possible urban renewal model as Jane Jacobs thought (1961).

The research is here described in both theoretical and empirical dimensions. In particular it proposes cohousing theoretical framework starting from the origins and the main settlement characteristics. It also proposes international (Europe, Usa and Canada) and national (Milan, Turin) experiences and their comparison. The final outcome is a cohousing classification proposal as a 'contractual community' model.

Urban changes. Emerging approaches

The 'contractual communities' are private settlements which include self utilities supply and their management. In other terms people association share, by private contract, land use rules and pay fees to get collective utilities. The cohousing seems, at now, the newest 'contractual community'. While maintaining private and voluntary approach, there are particular and specific characteristics like trust, cooperation, solidarity and cohousers participation which may represent a new sense of community and self responsibility.

Cohousing: origins, definitions and main characteristics

The first cohousing experience, originally called bofællesskab, was made up in the Sixties by the architect Jan Gørdmand Høyer (Skråplanet, Copenhagen). From the Seventies, the model spread first in northern Europe, then at the end of the Eighties, in USA and finally, in the Nineties, in Canada, Australia and again in southern Europe.

In literature, the cohousing is a particular type of neighborhood where private and common properties are combined in order to maintain privacy and offer the right answer to sociality needs as a real community.

The cohousing differs from the social housing for its voluntary approach. It shows a right balance between private propriety and public rules. It includes private rules and self utilities-spaces management although in a public policies framework.

The settlement characteristics are:

- process (resident driven, profit or non profit developer driven process);
- project (rural or urban location, new or renewal settlement, small-medium or large size, one or more common houses and environmental attitudes. The common house includes domestic common spaces (kitchen, dining room, laundry), recreational common spaces (playroom,

library, TV and computer room) and managing common spaces (Diy room, offices and guest room). Many activities are open to non-members people (for example car or bike sharing-pooling or neighborhood facilities);

- community (young and elderly people, community care, active citizenship);
- property (unique property outsider profit or non profit developer, cooperative or community association as Brunetta and Moroni say (2008). Each community has statutory documents (Master deed or Declaration of covenants conditions and restrictions) and management documents (Bylaw or house rule);
- financing (private property, management dues).

Europe and Usa. Experiences comparison

It's possible to estimate one thousand cohousing communities in the world. The trend is increasing. Each context has particular specificity:

- Denmark. Medium-large settlements (about 100 units) are located near big cities, in a cluster scheme around the one common house;
- Sweden. Medium settlements (about 50 units) are non profit developer driven communities. The cohousers are tenants and vote a local board for managing;
- Netherlands. Large cluster settlements are resident driven communities. In general these are 'community associations' (Vme). There are also a lot of senior cohousing communities (for people over sixty).
- UK. Medium-little settlements are 'community associations' (Community interest company or Cic's).
- Usa. Medium-large settlements (13-50 units) developed adapting to american standards. A lot of them are profit developer driven and just third are resident driven by homeowner associations or condominium.
- Italy. In Milan, two medium cooperative settlements (Uvb01 and GreenHouse) are profit developer driven by Cohousing ventures society. In Turin, the first little cooperative settlement (Number Zero) is resident driven by CoAbitare association. It is a self-made renewal project with common open utilities.

The experiences comparison shows several common features: aims and motivations, opening to external environment, collective decision making instruments and non profit developer driven process. The cohousing model offers a strong identity and flexibility framework at the same time.

A classification proposal

It's possible to propose a cohousing classification that follows the 'contractual communities' general theory. The cohousing model is, firstly, a 'contractual community' for its private property with common utilities and voluntary based rules. It is also a kind of 'residential association' distinguished by gated communities (security and exclusivity based). Gated communities and cohousing are just two kind of 'residential association', each one is based on different principles.

Conclusions and perspectives

The cohousing is a new model, recently introduced in Italy and not yet widespread. It appears to be an urban renewal model as it considers the common property of goods. The cohousers own goods altogether, producing and managing themselves. The urban planning perspective could include giving more space to self-organized land use models. That means to apply subsidiarity principle as the 118 constitutional article says. Each experience could represent an example of urban self-renewal.

'C riflessa' structure Plan: a thesis for Milan

Marta Arosio. Stefania Soresinetti

Today the city of Milan is a big urban region which has no specific boundaries and spreads over a very broad area comprising more provinces and regions. In the last years the city of Milan has lost almost a third of its residents with an increase in daily and temporary urban users. Milan is a metropolis where a process of development is taking place beyond the administrative borders, including a plurality of territories.

The possibility of using railway lines as a driving force for the regeneration of the urban region has been hypothesized to allow a global rebirth of Milan 'city within the city'. In particular, the employment of disused rail yards is a great chance to rethink the whole urban structure.

The fundamental propulsion to realize this vision has been provided by seven large vacant spaces which are considered to be some of the leading strategic resources of Milan: the rail yards of Farini, Greco-Pirelli, Lambrate, Porta Romana, Rogoredo, Porta Genova and San Cristoforo.

These areas have to become urban densified spaces to constitute the morphological and functional shell of the city's future transformation. Nowadays they are not permeable or accessible, and represent a barrier between urban areas which can not interact with each other. Therefore, it is necessary to reconnect these spaces separated from the railway, and to create new urban polarities and new spaces to allow the communication between the different city areas.

Since it is impossible to govern these transformations through the Pgt, a new instrument has to be found, something able to manage the large-scale change in which Milan 'city within the city' is in.

In order to introduce the city in a system which is larger than the one defined by the administrative borders, a double aim structural plan has been thought: reducing the centripetal force of Milan without breaking its relations with its urban region.

This structural Plan has the task of highlighting, in a selective way, the elements to which it is possible to anchor the change of scale necessary to the territorial planning. This needs to be done in order to meet the need for managing a complex territory which can not be extinguished inside its administrative borders.

The plan aims to enlarge the urban market, favouring residential functions (with particular attention to social policies) and those of excellence, inserting them in the urban fabric to consolidate a spatial model on which the whole reorganization of the 'Milan system' should be based. It should ultimately lay the foundations for a better urban and environmental quality, thanks to the improvement of public services and spaces.

The 'C riflessa' structure is thus formed by the railway belt and the seven disused rail yards which, with other

peculiarities and critical situations (physical and social) of the urban region, can make the 'city within the city' Milan central and usable whether on a small scale or on a larger one.

The structural Plan concerns the whole urban region, however, two figures of the transformation, an international one and a local one, have been identified on the inside, which reflect the double role of Milan and are so closely linked together that they can not exist as independent parts.

Thanks to its accessibility and the already existing functions, Milan is a city which is open to international relations. This international openness is due to the characteristics of the local system (the university, the airport and so on, and so forth), its artistic heritage and its million annual city users. These two systems are linked, since the global one can not exist independently of the local one. In detail, the international system comprises the transformation areas whose characteristics intertwine with the international dimension of Milan; the local system concerns those flows which present a connection only with the city itself and its metropolitan area.

Three are the elements which constitute each figure:

- the epicentres (disused rail yards) which are the transformation areas that spark off the transformation dynamics of the city favouring the regeneration of city areas even external to them;
- the sectors, city areas which are directly linked to the transformations expected by the epicentres with which they constitute a system of spaces and benefit more from the effects of such transformation;
- the public mobility system already existing or a new planned one which functions as connector.

With the international city we can identify the vacant spaces chain that will host the activities around which the international relations will be structured, with a characterization and concentration of the functions of excellence anticipated by the transformation projects which are already being carried out.

The rail yards of Farini, Greco-Pirelli and Lambrate fall into this category. They link the rail yards to the front gates of the urban region of Milan and to the urban spaces chain which hosts the activities and the functions of excellence around which the global dynamics of the city are structured, identifying a series of large-scale connections. The strategy of the international city is based on the reconfiguration and the rearrangement of the public transport system, especially of the metropolitan one. A specific thematic axis originates from each rail yard:

- the cultural-innovative axis takes shape from the rail yard of Farini which is structured on the railway line that links Milano-Porta Garibaldi railway station to Malpensa airport. It has a strong connection with the system of the big north-western centres of Milan, such as Bovisa, the Triennale and the exhibition complex located in Rho and the future Expò location;
- the wellness-historic axis originates from the rail yard of Greco-Pirelli on the railway line that links Milan to Ber-

gamo crossing a high number of historical centres, hospitals, disused areas, the Parco di Monza up to Orio al Serio airport;

- the logistics-interconnective axis takes shape from the rail yard of Lambrate towards east on the first route of the railway line that links Milan to Venice crossing several natural elements. An important junction of this axis is the railway station of Treviglio, the end of the line of the passerby railway. Linate airport links the city to the global net.

The rail yards of Rogoredo, Porta Romana, Porta Genova and San Cristoforo fall into the category of the local city and they link the central city to the open space of the Parco agricolo sud. The local city is based on the precise connections which interact to the surroundings of the epicentre and are able to meet the inhabitants' needs. The local city strategy is that of restoring relations of proximity and transversal connection in the urban fabric in the south of Milan, where large residential settlements grew in an urban background which lacks big centres.

Two are the thematic axes of the local city:

- the axis which connects the rail yard of Porta Romana to the one of Rogoredo. It is linked to the education (because of the presence of Bocconi, Iulm and Cerba universities) and nature (because of the proximity of the Parco agricolo Sud, the Idroscalo and the abazia of Chiaravalle). Areas under transformation are situated along this axis which will play an important role in the transformation of Milan: the project of Montecity-Rogoredo, the City of low, the reconversion of the Ortomer-cato;

- the axis which connects the rail yard of Porta Genova to the one of San Cristoforo. It is linked to creativity (with the fashion and design sector in the Tortona-Savona region) and water since the proximity of the environmental system of the Parco agricolo Sud Milano and the Naviglio grande. In order to allow the realization of the territorial strategy of the 'C riflessa' structural Plan, it is necessary to introduce an economic-financial instrument peculiar to the territorial adjustment: the compensatory fund. The application of this instrument proceeds from the localization of an assets of dispositions of volumes which originate from rail yards (but can not be realized on them with relation to the structural plan's instruction) and are redirected towards the disused areas or the under transformation areas of the urban region of Milan situated inside the different thematic axes localized by the Plan. It is important to highlight that these redirection of dispositions of volumes does not upset the equilibriums in other parts of the territory of Milan since the incidence of the areas given by the rail yards is not very relevant for each single area.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the results of this approach, that strives for managing Milan 'city within the city', have tried to highlight three necessities: the first one is to give a shape to this scattered territory, the second one is to intervene on specific areas of the urban region, the disused rail yards, in order to regenerate the

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whole system 'city within the city' of Milan, and the last one is to introduce an economic-financial instrument, the compensatory fund, which makes the territorial redirection beyond the administrative borders possible, a redirection which is necessary to a planning of metropolitan nature.

Same spaces, new places

Daniela Corsini

Looking at some old pictures of the city of Modena at the beginning of the XX century it is possible to see people discussing in the main square, walking in groups along the main road, children playing soccer in the park, ...

What happened to these public places? What role do they play in our life? Many of these areas are now lost, 'sacrificed' for more practical needs, invaded by traffic and parked cars. Alternatively, survived areas have not been touched at all and do not respond to the needs of the inhabitants of the city anymore. It is now difficult to recognize the central role played by these places, which have lost their main function over the time as cities lost their role of aggregating people in their public lives.

The lack of a long-term planning strategy led to a loss of centrality and consistency of public spaces, along with a fragmentation of the structure of the city. It is now necessary to get back to the concept of city as a complex union of all its different parts, defined by both physical traits and social conventions. Urban planning is necessary to start a new, modern organization of the structure of the city. On the one hand, it is necessary to avoid being over-conservative or to merely plan the city according to laws and pre-computed sets of statistics, which would be able to address the needs of modern citizens. On the other hand, it is fundamental to have a clear and defined vision of the city as a whole, which should include the needs of future generations and consider single actions in their unique relationship with their context, the city and its inhabitants.

Public spaces are fundamental to reattribute functions to each area of the city, which could be redesigned starting from these units, maintaining a global view of the problem.

For these reasons we think it is necessary to define a systematic approach for the planning of public spaces, encouraging multidisciplinary views of the problems and considering the heterogeneous set of issues that should be addressed in the urban project.

This Msc thesis is composed of a theoretical part, followed by three concrete examples of planning of public spaces. We initially reviewed the state of progress of some of the most recent projects about public places, in order to understand the meaning, the role and the importance of public places today. Moreover, we reviewed the literature in this domain, looking for case studies, projects and technical instruments for urban transformations. Many settlements of different size, ranging from large metropolitan areas to small suburban villages, are currently redesigning their public spaces. These initiatives have often approached the topic from a single perspective, missing a broad vision of the problem, failing to manage the complexity of the subject and frequently reducing it to a matter of street furniture.

Our research builds on top of an in-depth analysis of past experiences to point out strengths and weaknesses of a heterogeneous set of projects.

The goal is to understand which project lines were followed in the planning phase, in order to define a list of 'golden rules' for systemic and complex planning of public spaces.

Each of these 'rules' should be respected while planning systems of public places:

- trying to start the urban appeal, as a mix between functions and beauty;
- create an attractive place for people (citizens, tourists, city users, etc.);
- pursue a sustainable development (environmental, economical and social);
- structure the city as a network of public functions;
- close the gap between central and marginal areas of the inner city;
- understand the value of empty spaces and start planning from the ground (architecture zero volume);
- increase the relationship between people and their environment. While it is important to guarantee safety (in particular road and personal safety), it is also important to think about how to stimulate different senses to improve the perception of places.

The second part this Msc thesis translates these observations into projects based on real-world examples. Three very different cities have been chosen in order to show how the same methodology applies on different environments. The cities are Modena and Mantova (Italy), Lugano (Switzerland).

The work on each city is structured as following:

- analysis. Performed at different scales and multidisciplinary, summarized by means of a Swot matrix;
- concept Plan. Lists goals and primary actions for the inner city;
- Masterplan. Focuses on most relevant themes emerged from the concept Plan;
- Details. The main public places of the inner city are analyzed in depth (focusing of areas to be transformed such as squares and roads).

While planning contemporary cities it is not possible to operate only by building, but it is necessary to learn how to manage and to transform existing spaces.

It is necessary to learn how to give value to empty spaces such as squares, streets, parks or disused areas with problems of urban blight.

While local governments usually try to re-use, re-function, re-train, it is necessary to understand which actions can really have a positive impact on the city.

For these reasons it is important to:

- build a multidisciplinary approach;
- deal with multi-scale planning issues;
- have a systemic view of the problem;
- have management skills;
- create flexible spaces;
- carefully plan the organization of the work.

In conclusion, cities already have spaces: now they

need places.