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Politics and policies
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Politics and policies. As many have taught us, town planning is a political matter. A plan represents both the manifesto of an administration, élite, or coalition, its concept of the future and scenarios for development, and a programme. On the other hand, town planning is also a policy. A plan is the result of a decision-making process, and defines the devices (regulations and mechanisms) by which these projects, actions and initiatives become possible. The planning process for managing change in San Donato is equally dual in nature, playing a multidimensional role in the area between politics and policies.

Vision: strategies, players and responsibilities. The documents produced by the Diap working party for the local authorities are undoubtedly 'strategic', particularly the Strategic framework document and subsequent planning document. In a complex and stringent sense, strategic as a vision of the future that has to deal with a multitude of selective, varied expectations, and therefore requires political responsibility. The vision in the documents for San Donato takes a selective perspective, which requires a very strong political commitment. Looking at the choices made by the municipal authorities now, after the unexpected political defeat of the majority that was responsible for promoting the planning process, we can see that perhaps some requisites for giving form and power to the vision were disregarded by the local political élite.

Conflicts and leadership. In the absence of responsible commitment from the political leaders, strategies and visions can become empty, and generate negative effects, by 'making the conflict banal'. An open, transparent conflict with regard to the vision is in face an essential condition for giving power to the plan, whereas ideological conflicts muddy the strategic choices. On the other hand, the technical side (and in this case the administration's consultants) can create process conditions that are able, as far as possible, of offering all the players a common ground from which it is possible to eliminate the risk of sterile conflict.

Small exercises in local democracy. The process of constructing the plan put in place in San Donato Milanese has another important characteristic. The adoption of participatory processes has no ulterior motive of manipulating or constructing consensus, but rather is a cognitive strategy. The varied and complex work carried out by the *Quartieri* (District) laboratories focused on identifying shared view of change, and can be interpreted from several points of view, including as an exercise in local democracy, in which what is important is the adoption of social intelligence as a resource and food for generating and regenerating both public and shared assets.

Government tools: negotiating and debating. If we shift our attention onto the experience of San Donato as a policy area, the first thing we notice is the care taken in the planning documents and process of constructing the choices through the definition of effective devices for managing urban change. In both the general architecture of the documents and the mechanisms they put in place, it is possible to see the meticulous attention paid to the potential variety of regulations and mechanisms to use.

Governare per strumenti (Le Galès) at San Donato Milanese meant imagining different families of devices for negotiation (in particular with private entities) and debate (about choices and priorities). In this sense the fact that the planning documents were put together at the same time as negotiations were beginning between the local authority and a major operator (Asio, the new owner of many former Eni areas) for the transformation of some strategic areas is particularly significant. The planning process involved in the preparation of land management documents was no different from the process of interaction between public power and (major) property interests. Only under these conditions can the plan devices truly be opportunities for promoting transparent, reasoned forms of negotiation.

Planning uses. If there is a problem that has remained unresolved in the process initiated at San Donato, it could be the relationship between the sophisticated production of images and tools as part of the planning process, and the ability to intercept and modify the ordinary administrative process, in particular its technical aspect. The quality and complexity of the materials made available, or insufficient attention to the implementation methods, and collection of images, knowledge, and management methods generated during the planning process could end up being misunderstood or underused.

To avoid this risk, perhaps there needs to be a focus on planning uses, in other words concrete actions through which choices and devices are assimilated and 'translated' into everyday practice.

Kairòs. This does not mean imagining closed, predetermined processes.

The planning process gone through in Donato Milanese is also highly flexible, a collection of conditions permeable to only partially foreseeable internal and external dynamics. In this sense, the stimulating experience of San Donato seems to allude to the theory that town planning processes must also be seen as 'opportunities', possibilities open to happenings and unexpected events. Not expected static future scenarios, but pragmatic orientations for action capable of preempting some forms of experimental planning and also adapting to the transformations these then help to stimulate and manage.