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A new season

Domenico Cecchini

The Leipzig Charter (2007) is seen as the most updated and concise document for a new season in European urban policies and redevelopment practices. A season of 'urban quality and sustainability', where, maybe the first sign to appear on the European scene was the Urban white paper drawn up at the end of the last century by a team coordinated by R. Rogers.

The Charter reaffirms the need to integrate all the dimensions of urban quality environmental, economic and social. In order to render this integration functional, a completely new institutional ability and efficiency is required, at all administrative levels. The Charter also mentions the need for a new awareness of the importance for quality in urban public space. 'Creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces' is the first step in an integrated urban development. 'The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations'.

In this broader framework of objectives and principles, the idea of sustainability is not seen as only one of the elements of quality, the fifth one, to be added to the others. It is more a principle and a responsibility which run through and blend in with each of the urban quality dimensions. Goals of environmental, social, economic and aesthetic quality cannot be achieved if, within each of these elements, the principles and criteria of sustainability are not concretely applied.

Well before the adoption of the Leipzig Charter, in many European cities, there had already been some projects undertaken inspired by the principles of quality and sustainability. The five 'stories' recounted in the following pages concern some of those projects and provide us with some interesting lessons.

Multi-dimensional and integrated approaches

The famous 'Hammarby model' is paradigmatic of approaches of this type. The house at the centre of the diagram is a symbol of the whole suburb considered as a closed cycle eco-system, which works, only due to the integration of the various parts.

The environmental element opens up the path to the multi-dimensional approach imposing the need to take into account, not only it alone, but all the dimensions that make up urban quality. It may happen that more attention may be placed on one particular dimension compared to the others, but none of them can become exclusive. The commitment to reducing the environmental weight, that characterizes Hammarby, is integrated into dealing with the aesthetics, morphology and landscaping of the project design (and its carrying out) and focusing on the social life of the project area. This integration is the real success factor.

We can find the same approach in other experiences. Environmental quality, social quality, attention on the economic dimension, focus on the layout form and the community spaces: the stories of these areas tell us that, only with a multi-dimensional and integrated approach can urban design attain important results. They also confirm the inverse that, where an integrated approach is not able to realize the results, the possibilities and expectations are lower.

The need for public management. The 'stories' tell us of the role of a strong public management of the projects, constant over time, powerful and skilled. A management that has taken on different forms and used different tools depending on the different phases, the conception and planning of the project, and then its implementation and management.

In the initial phases of conception and planning, made concrete in a paper such as that of the 'masterplan, the role of the local public administration was direct and weighty. Based on the objectives and programs defined at a policy and technical level, the guidelines and planning papers were drawn up. In the cases of more involved outcomes, specific guidelines, technically very detailed and stringent, were also drawn up. These took the shape of a 'quality program', binding for those carrying out the work, and who had been subjected to a very careful check by the public offices.

In the following phase of carrying out the work, the key role was played by the project operators, construction companies (profit and no profit), cooperatives or developers. However, the local authorities maintained a strongly coordinated control and supervision over the work done, setting up ad hoc offices equipped with technical skills and support.

Once the work was finished, however, the local administrations did not leave the stage. An example of this is the case of the Greenwich Millennium village, where the representatives of the Municipality of Greenwich are full members of the board of the consortium, set up to manage the area. The board also includes representatives from the residents (renters and owners) and representatives from the developers.

Public space is at the heart of quality. Right from the very conception of the area, in all the cases studied, maximum attention was placed on public spaces as a decisive and irreplaceable factor governing the project area's quality and sustainability. In Greenwich, the networks of the large central park, the main roads, squares and internal green courtyards, and the large number of pedestrian walkways make up the true 'structure' on which the entire project area was conceived and designed'.

For Hammarby, the network of public spaces enriches one's life and projects a feeling of pleasantness and security, due to the choice of avoiding building large shopping malls and, instead, of the fanning out shops and private and public services over all the urban fabric; and to the functional quality in integrating a wise landscape

design and a prudent use, also from an aesthetic point of view, of water resources.

In Linz, the physical continuity between the public spaces, the semi-public and private ones, confers a usability and sense of security and safety to the whole system, where even children play and move about without fear. This attention is also found in the maintenance of the public spaces and reflects the effectiveness of the management organization.

A multi-dimensional approach, public management and focus on public spaces. These are some of the teachings we can draw from the search for quality and sustainability in building the five project areas. But, we are only at the beginning of a new season.

The model Hammarby in Stockholm: strength and quality of an integrated approach

Carlo Vigevano

Hammarby Sjöstad is a successful example of a sustainable city carried out with an holistic, pragmatic approach based on the integration of environmental strategies at an urban scale. A compact neighborhood consisting of 11,000 housing units for about 25,000 residents and productive activities for about 10,000 employees, the project aimed to cap its environmental impact at below 50% of that for standard Swedish housing of the Nineties.

The closed-cycle model of resource utilization, energy, water and plant, known as the Hammarby model, has been experimented with here in support of an urban design that has integrated in a sustainable manner the various systematic components involved: mobility, green space, homes and services.

The size of the intervention required the activation of an innovative management system in which the Municipality of Stockholm played the role of coordinator, effectively mobilizing both public and private players.

The Hammarby Sjöstad district surrounds its namesake lake, part of the inland sea of Stockholm, 5 km south of the historic center of town. Once the country residence of wealthy local families, around 1920 the area surrounding the lake was acquired by the Municipality and converted to productive uses.

In 1990, to address the rapidly increasing population of the capital, the area was included in the Masterplan as an area of recovery and expansion with mixed residential and productive activities.

A strong impetus to the design of the Hammarby Sjöstad ecological district derived from Stockholm's bid for the 2004 Olympics. This area was proposed as the site for the Olympic Village, which would have been a large residential neighborhood, characterized by a strongly reduced environmental burden placed on the land.

In the years 1995-96, under the coordination of the architect Ian Högrström Hinge, father of the initiative, the Stockholm Urban Planning office developed a preliminary general layout for the area. The best firms with which the administration had worked in the past were invited to participate in the project's construction: housing cooperatives, large private companies, mixed public-private real estate development companies, and smaller private companies.

From the outset of the design, utilities providers were involved in the development of a model of environmentally sustainable resource management. To ensure the effective administration of the process, the town council formed a joint enterprise responsible for coordinating the construction work and then managing the district (maintenance, residents' and visitors' information, and

public spaces, services, etc.), under the direction and coordination of the town council itself.

The Quality program

The Masterplan for Sjöstad Hammarby is being implemented in sub-divisions (Kvarteret), twelve in all of about 2000 inhabitants each, representing a sort of finite and self-sufficient 'minimum intervention'. The design of each Kvarter was agreed upon between municipalities and builders on the basis of shared design tools: the Quality programs. In these the urban and architectural character of the areas and buildings are undersigned and approved. Particular attention is devoted to the urban configuration, to the public and private-fronting building facades, the design of spaces for public use, of streets and of gardens.

Urban structure

The Masterplan of the district proposes a reinterpretation in modern terms of the nineteenth-century city structure, a feature of central Stockholm. The goal is to create a setting for the development of vibrant city life supported by a mix of residences, services and productive activities, typical of the historic city.

These principles are solidified in an urban fabric composed largely of courtyard blocks which allow the continuity of urban space and networks of green space. A great cross avenue (Hammarby allee), placed in a central position with respect to the residences, serves the entire neighborhood and along it runs the public transit system composed of buses and trams. Along the wide sidewalks that line the avenue, within easy walking distance of the housing and consciously avoiding the quality of 'mall', lie many small shops. Neighborhood schools and services are located adjacent to residences. In the large central exedra-shaped green square are located public offices and, with higher visibility due to its location on a small hill, the new civic center.

To allow a greater functional mix, the residential density and volume of the settlement were increased relative to the standards normally applied to new districts. The available data, referring to the parts already completed, indicates an overall residential density of 144 inhabitants-hectare (397 inhabitants-hectare on buildable land).

The Hammarby model

The project was developed as a conceptual model of the sustain-able cycle of resources, water-energy-waste, known as the 'Hammarby model'.

The model considers the settlement as a kind of ecosystem in which the various waste components are integrated into a virtuous cycle that allows little or nothing to get lost, and is instead re-used for the livelihood of the neighborhood.

Municipal solid waste is treated by an innovative system. The collection is divided in terms of area, block, and building according to the types of Msw. Part of the system consists of a network of underground pneumatic tubes

that connect the courts of the buildings in the middle of the neighborhood's separate collection of waste. The separation allows separable waste to be sent to the village's reusable recycling facilities (glass, metal, paper). The non-reusable combustible part is sent to the incinerator to provide heat and electricity to the neighborhood. Organic waste is destined for composting to be used as an organic fertilizer for non-edible crops. From this is produced the biofuel that feeds the boiler for the district heating plant.

Initial evaluations of sustainability

The latest monitoring on environmental efficiency was made on four 'kvarteret' completed on the zone, building and unit levels, based on design data provided by the construction companies.

The results are all very positive, particularly the goal of reducing the environmental load by 50% set at the beginning of the design process for the district, can be said to be reached due to the reduced over-fertilization of soils and water consumption. The use of private cars has decreased by 40%. For energy parameters (CO2 emissions, energy consumption from non-renewable sources, production of radioactive waste) reduction of environmental loads are on average between 28% and 40%, depending on different sectors. There are reports that the parameters of the energy performance of buildings have been further improved to fully achieve the objectives of the project.

A sustainable neighborhood instead of gasometers

Francesco Bigi

The Greenwich Millennium Village (Gmv) is a district extended about 24 hectares, including a 5 hectares park, built on the east side of the Greenwich peninsula, east of central London.

About half of the neighborhood is built and inhabited, and the whole plan provides approximately 3,000 housing units for 6-7,000 population.

The neighborhood, designed according to sustainability criteria, is an important intervention in the process of regeneration of abandoned industrial area and represents an experience of international standing in terms of sustainability of urban interventions.

In the early '90s the disposal of an extensive establishment of British Gas made it necessary to plan the re-qualification of the peninsula.

The entire operation was managed by English partnerships, a government agency created for the redevelopment of dismissed industrial sites through the introduction of a sustainable approach. The completion of reclamation and all the infrastructure works costed to English partnerships about 285 million euros.

The Jubilee year 2000 and the attention to the Greenwich meridian has been the opportunity to undertake the revitalization of the peninsula which had met a dramatic industry crisis with the loss of about 100,000 workplaces.

In 1996 the Richard Rogers partnership won the competition for the urban planning thanks to a masterplan based on the attention to environmental sustainability.

The Rogers' masterplan was based on the idea of a new district situated on the northern tip of the peninsula with administrative and marketing functions, having a large domed building for big events, the Millennium Dome. This area was connected to the rest of the project by a linear park placed beside a wide boulevard suitable for vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian traffic faced by the residential blocks; the terminal enlargement of the park, called the Southern park, was the heart of the area for the future Gmv.

The guidelines of the masterplan are the basis for the design of Gmv: the abandoning the suburban outskirts of morphological patterns provides a plant with characteristics of a the city center.

The functional mix is considered essential for the social sustainability and requires a fairly high density, capable of triggering and financially support the new activities.

To promote sustainable development, technological innovation and management, the plan provides for the environmental restoration of the site and requires the creation of long term sustainable communities.

Bioclimatic and ecological issues are required from the plan.

It is expected to achieve socially heterogeneous nei-

ghborhoods, with emphasis on public rather than private housing, promoting the diversity of the population using the variety of building types and tenures.

A differentiation of naturalistic areas is designed through three parks linked together: the Central park, the South park, within the Gmv and a pedestrian and bicycle path along the river side.

The competition for the Gmv area was won by a consortium of developers with the Swedish architect Ralph Erskine, the project was approved in 1999.

The Gmv is the first example of realization of so-called 'Millennium community', a project of English partnerships for the creation of neighborhoods based on the idea of a community linked on respect for the environment as the unifying theme, to increase the quality of life and to try innovative techniques and high social and environmental standards, even more stringent than current regulations.

Real estate companies, invited through a public competition, became owners of the area but were required to respect the issues and standards set for the Community through a set of fixed rules and guidelines, combined in a sort of design code, the Design statement, requested by English partnerships in order to clarify and formalize the goals of the intervention plan.

The English partnerships retains the control above the achieving of the objectives through the review of interim reports. Permission to build, granted by the borough, provides further negotiation in which the authorities may take action requiring changes related to urban and social issues: the negotiation is carried out and formalized following the section 106 of the Town and country planning act (1990).

The project includes four separate compartments connected by a network of pedestrian open spaces.

An oval square, in memory of Crescent, marks the point of connection between the Southern park placed in the center of the different lots, and the linear park that leads to the Millennium Dome.

The interventions include residential buildings of great height, to shield the winter winds, along with different smaller buildings in the center and the southern part, willing to climb from north to south along inclined design to enable widespread diffusion of the solar irradiation on facades.

The installation is almost entirely pedestrian.

Since 1999 the project of the neighborhood has undergone some changes: it has been divided into phases of implementation, the architects Proctor and Matthews were charged to design the second phase interventions, the square has been reinterpreted in a more traditional way and the housing densities increased. Anyway the basic ideas are still alive and expressed thanks to the Design statement, which has been constantly updated with reference to the original.

Urban structure shows the buildings distributed in the shape of a horseshoe around the central park forming a double block fabric with a central main pedestrian street

that runs along the entire neighborhood as a sort of spine of the project.

On the pedestrian road are placed all the squares, the community services like schools, kindergarten, the health care and the access to the block's inner courtyards, treated as semipublic green spaces with controlled access; within the courts, in addition to the common area, there are small private gardens, according to a precise order that sees public space as generator of a plan that goes smoothly and orderly from public spaces to the private ones.

The parking spaces are placed in podium areas corresponding to the first two floors of the big lots, distributed around the limits of the village: vehicle access on the pedestrian areas is limited to loading operations and allowed only for limited periods.

The first phase buildings, designed by Erskine, differ substantially from those of the second phase designed by Proctor and Matthews, the former are made of massive structure while the latter are built with dry assembled technologies.

The implementation has essentially met the environmental and social targets, innovative for the period and indicative of the sustainability of the intervention.

The following results have been obtained (in brackets the value required in the design phase):

- reduction of primary energy consumption amounts to 65% (80%);
- reduction of energy used for the realization of construction materials 37% (50%);
- reduction of water consumption 33% (30%);
- reduction of construction costs 37% (30%);
- reduction of building times 18% (25%);
- development of processes of quality control for the cancellation of construction defects;
- reducing of waste 65% (50%);
- all buildings have achieved the highest standards of the environmental certification Ecohomes.

The social targets set by Greenwich Council in the negotiation of permits relate to the value by at least 35% of housing units for social housing, integrated in the same buildings of the normal ones.

A rate corresponding to 35% of accommodation for families was also adopted to encourage the social mix.

BedZed: eight year later

Cinzia Abbate

BedZed project is no stranger to the long tradition of English suburbs and the utopian idealism of his model, but emerges from many other eco-friendly neighborhoods for the social-ecological vision of its architect, Bill Dunster.

BedZed acronyms of Zero Energy Development, appears as an attractive small village capable to offer alternative life style for a zero impact community. Today the Zed factory has made possible to replicate and industrialize BedZed construction model through small typological changes depending on the characteristics of the new sites.

Almost a decade after completion, it is interesting to understand how an ambitious target of emission reduction has been achieved thanks to excellent design quality of the buildings and of its public spaces. On the other end, we must highlight that some of the most striving EU objectives have not been fully satisfied, perhaps only due to the designer's overestimation of triggering an overall cultural revolution capable to alter even the user's habits (i.e. car sharing, diets, travel and holiday types, purchase choices, etc.)

BedZed includes 82 homes organized in four blocks of three-storey buildings. Eighteen residential units have integrated work space and there are 1,560 sqm of extra office space. Seventy-two apartments have a small portion of the roof garden or a private terrace and a greenhouse. The project reconciles house density with good housing standards (26 square meters of green space for private housing and 8 square meters of public open space).

Since its inauguration three major plant modifications were made to the project. The first regards the biomass cogeneration plant, which used both pellets and remains pruning from adjacent areas. This plant was replaced in 2005 by a large condensing boiler to simplify the maintenance and eliminate the noise.

The second change concerns the use of energy produced by a photovoltaic plants of 109 kw_p, originally designed to supply electricity to a small car pooling park with 40 vehicles. The energy produced by the plant is today instead directly fed into the grid or used by households. The third plant pertains the system of water recycling originally involving a natural wetlands, in 2008 this was replaced with one chemical and mechanical industrial type produced by the Thames Water group, to simplify and reduce the maintenance costs.

The most outstanding characteristic of BedZed is the excellent plant-envelope integration system capable to reduce by 77% the overall heating needs of the entire complex.

In fact, to increase the thermal mass, the external walls were all built 30 cm thick with triple glazed were needed.

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Green roofs and solar greenhouses act in combination with the air conditioning and ventilation system based on air exchangers integrated as chimneys into the roof. The functional layout is designed to take the best advantage from the energy performance of the building and its orientation. Work areas, where machines and people develop more heat, where located to the north, while the residential areas where more sedentary activities are taking place where arranged around the south side of the buildings and heated by solar greenhouses. Strong emphasis has been placed on the provision of internet and computer services to homes, to facilitate in house work activities in order to reduce commuting.

Solar City of Linz

Giordana Castelli

The sunny town of Linz is an excellent example of a socially and environmentally sustainable case resulting from designers and the municipality agreeing on the town's planning and future. Solar city has been able to attain a high level of living comfort, with investments equal to those commonly used for an area of public building and housing, harmonizing consumption, production and energy use.

Public ownership of the land, bought some years ago, and transferred, at a meager price, to no profit developers when the project was begun, allowed for investments in environmental quality (energy saving, bioclimatic use of natural resources, etc.) and social quality (a quota for social housing and housing rental-purchasing price levels) with good results, also from an aesthetic viewpoint.

The history

One of the reasons for the success of this district lies in the role that the local government has played in constantly and firmly guiding and managing the project throughout all its stages. The entire Solar city project has, in fact, focused on the role that the municipal authority has played in the town's urban-planning, from 'project management' to supervising the carrying out of the project and the technical and social support for the settling in of the community.

In the 1970s, the Linz Municipality decided to purchase the land, at that time under agricultural use, in order to develop it for productive activities, but, in the early 1990s, an increase in the number of jobs in the services sector, generated a demand for approximately 12,000 new homes. The new development fell into a strategic vision of urban renewal based on a total environmental and functional redevelopment of all the region around the Danube.

Environmental and social feasibility was checked, prior to the creation of the Masterplan, by the Office for social affairs, together with the municipal administration, leading to the individuation of some planning prerequisites to ensure the creation of an urban settlement that would be well-connected to the historical centre, and with a high level of social integration and urban quality. 'Solar' had to seek a balance between the efficiency of the resources utilized, energy use and quality of life.

The Municipality of Linz commissioned the Masterplan to Ronald Reiner, for the Linz-Pichling lakes area. It was presented in 1993 and divided into five residential areas gravitating around service centres, easily accessible for pedestrians. For the specific architectural design of the Solar city, the town council was supported by a group of designers, called Read (Renewable energies in architecture and design), set up by Thomas Herzog, who was the coordinator, and by Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano

and Norman Foster.

In 1994, at the same time as the project was being initially drawn up, the Municipality of Linz set up agreements with some no profit development companies to construct homes at affordable prices. An important step was to include, at the very beginning of drawing up the Masterplan, broad environmental and social guidelines and indications, by means of a 'round table' made up of the development companies, the designers and representatives from the public administration. On the basis of these guidelines and indications, specific agreements were established between the municipality and each company, with clear references to the applicability of the qualitative prerequisites proposed in each project. The participation of these no profit construction companies was one of the more innovative aspects of the entire project.

The choice of the public administration to directly follow the coordination of the project was carried out along with the management of the settlement of the community. For all of 2005-08, inclusive, in the 'Family centre', a municipal technical-social assistance office was set up, which, on the one hand, was an intermediary between the new residents and the development companies and, on the other hand, facilitated the setting up of a social network.

Pichling today

Reaching Solar city by tram, we first travel through rural countryside bordered on the left by the thick vegetation of the Danube and on the right by small hamlets of country houses. The blending in with the local area and, in particular, with the existing locality of Pichling and the natural context of the Danube reserve were seen as primary objectives of the project.

The urban layout runs along a main axis that follows the tram line, linking the nucleus of public services which make up the centre, and is laid out in four mainly residential quadrants surrounded by the road network. The design of the residential layout has not been rigidly imposed along the solar-thermal axis, being the best orientation for buildings, but rather seeks to create a balance between the open and constructed spaces. The rule was to create a layout of buildings, oriented differently within a network of continuous and easily accessible open spaces that make up the main weave of the district.

The organization of the district appears to be well-balanced between a planned variety of building typologies and the open spaces in between, that create small 'neighbourhoods' and an identifiable similarity in the settlement's common features. The distinction between the three different levels of ownership of public space (private gardens, green areas owned by the construction companies for public use, and walkways and completely public space) and the separate system in managing them, have contributed to an overall environmental quality and beauty of clean and well-maintained common areas.

In Linz, we see the principles of sustainable planning translated into a total design strategy, not only limited to

architectural design, but encompassing the whole urban layout based on criteria of compactness, building density, exposure to sun and shade, and the safeguarding of resources.

Strong social integration has been achieved due to: specific attention being placed on the relationship between the residential and public common places, near, safe and inviting; the commitment of the public administration during the settling in phase of the community; the fast and efficient public transport connection to the city centre; and the offer of quality housing for different groups of users.

Valdespartera in Zaragoza: the city of water and wind captures the sun

Giordana Castelli

The area of Valdespartera in Zaragoza can be considered an exemplary project for all of Spain, a willingness on the part of the Municipal administration, learning from its previous successes, to experiment with the theme of social housing integrated with one of 'thermal-environmental urban-planning'.

The decision of the Government of Aragon to create a new development plan to build social housing emerged in 1994. A working group was set up which included a sociologist (Mario Gaviria) and experts in energy analysis (Energy and building group of the University of Zaragoza). The inter-disciplinary approach, very innovative at that time, and already experimented with some years before in another area of Zaragoza, Parque Goya, contributed to the success of Valdespartera.

In both areas, the municipality had already acquired the land, and this resulted in more possibilities for the developers to invest in building quality and energy efficiency. As well, the climatic conditions favouring solar exposure in winter, and cooler temperatures from the winds in summer, made for excellent conditions in applying criteria for energy saving and efficiency. Another opportunity to strengthen the town's commitment towards sustainable development, was Expo 2008, an international exposition focused on Water and sustainable development, in association with the United Nations.

The history

The starting point for the construction of Valdespartera was the Base agreement, signed by the Municipality of Zaragoza and the Ministry of defence, establishing the re-classification of 243 hectares of traditionally held military land, with its long abandoned barracks, mainly earmarked for Public protection.

The municipal authority played a key role, right from the beginning, in developing the potential of the area thanks to the leadership of the City council of Zaragoza and its skill in managing negotiations among the different public sector players (Ministry of defence, Regional authority of Aragon and other national ministries). In 2002, the City council approved the Plan parcial to redevelop sector Suz 89/4 Valdespartera. In the same year, a public company for urban development, called Ecociudad Valdespartera Zaragoza Sa, was set up. The company was in charge of managing the redevelopment by coordinating both the urban-planning and construction work: the economic feasibility study, the work involving the land transformation, the management of assigning the areas to private operators, the offering of homes to families, and the construction and management of the waste recycling plants.

One of the reasons for the success of the project has been, without doubt, the strong synergy created by the

company, between the municipal-regional partnership, the savings banks involved from the beginning and the private developers.

Overall, the public funding (Plan national de Viviendas and the European program Concerto) resulted in achieving a good balance between building costs and selling and rental prices, estimated based on the principles of affordable housing. Regulated selling prices (1,000–1,200 euro/sq.m.), on the one hand, covered the need for social housing, while on the other, they offered an attractive opportunity for small real estate investment.

A monitoring system was outlined, coordinated and managed by the company Ecociudad Valdespartera Zaragoza Sa, supported by consultants from the university, especially from the Energy and building group managed by J.A. Turegano, which set up the 'équipe mémoire' for all the eco-sustainability work. The group dealt with identifying a series of criteria for energy saving, guiding the companies during the construction phase and coordinating the social education campaign for the residents. The elements for an effective monitoring system emerged, constancy over time, urban organization included within the workings of the urban-planning, coordination by public subjects, implementation by a scientific referent, with on-going reports directly communicated to those involved in the work, and then made available to the community through a specific local office (the setting up of a Centre for sustainable urbanization).

In Valdespartera, the first system in Spain for the disposal of disused tyres was set up, involving the installation of an underground network of special pipes built to transport the waste.

The eco-city of Valdespartera

The agreements established in the Base agreement between the Municipality and the Ministry of defence and adopted as the guidelines for the Plan parcial were translated into bio-climatic criteria concerning three aspects: the urban project for the area, the architectural design of the buildings and the organization of the construction.

Such a precise and careful attention to defining the bio-climatic criteria, immediately included in the urban-planning tools, allowed for the checking and supervision of the work done, resulting in a high environmental quality. The eco-city is of a interwoven octagonal lay-out with a road network around two large avenues (avenida del Septimo Arte in a north-south direction and avenida Casablanca in an east-west direction) that border the residential blocks and their services. The orientation of the buildings is north-south, except where corresponding to the town borders, on the Western axis, where the allotments, more exposed to the prevalent winds, are oriented east-west, so as to create a barrier effect, protecting the open common spaces surrounded by the blocks of buildings. The blocks, along the main roads, are arcaded hosting small businesses and shops, while services and facilities are concentrated longitudinally

and organized alternating between buildings and open public spaces. The open spaces surrounded by the blocks are designed as places for community use, with no private appropriation of space allowed, and are permanent right of ways.

The paseo central, based on the rambla model, is the main common space made up of a series of public areas (gardens, play areas, rest areas) equipped based on criteria of sustainability.

Sustainable neighborhoods and new urban landscapes, an opportunity for the Italian city

Francesco Prosperetti

The support given to professor Cecchini's research by Parc can be seen as proof of the willingness to fully bring the issues concerning sustainable cities under the broader theme of contemporary landscape quality, with the conviction that it is now imperative to face the issue of safeguarding our landscapes somewhat differently compared to the past.

I will show here how the protection policies of the last decades have markedly failed, with results for all see right before their very eyes, the destruction of regions in every part of our country, the urban decay of landscapes and the ever-encroaching urban sprawl. All this, despite a protectionist machinery and restrictions, unequalled in the rest of the world.

There is a need for the right criteria to evaluate new projects, measuring their quality and sustainability, not only energetically, but also regarding the landscape. However, this mainly involves reconsidering the existing building legacy and the possibility to adapt it to new housing standards and urban quality.

The need, to unite the tools for renovating what already exists with the search for a common idea for a new urban quality, was dramatically shown in the recent tragic event in Aquila, and the subsequent work on its reconstruction.

In fact, the devastation produced by the earthquake was accompanied, in the months following, by a strategy of reconstruction concerning not so much the urgency for recovery, but rather the announcement of the immediate building of a city other than the existing one, based on the so-called new towns.

These, then came to light, to be nothing more than anonymous residential complexes. Even in the smallest towns, the new settlements have been built up against the delicate structures of the old town centres with no regard to building form or size, and ending up permanently changing the balanced rapport, that had been established in Abruzzo over time, between its traditional inhabitants and landscape. It was not known how to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity, in all its tragedy, that the earthquake in Abruzzo offered, that of facing reconstruction by studying all the more recent European experiences on the theme of sustainable cities, the main priority in mind being, the best quality of life for their inhabitants. For the above reasons, I am convinced about the major importance of the research theme outlined in these pages, which presents an area for discussion, that cannot be disregarded, towards a new city architecture.