

igusQUARTERLY

INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE OF LARGE URBAN SYSTEMS

Vol 8 | Issue 4 | March 2023



A spotlight on Italian cities: urban change, governance and planning

3	Ignazio Vinci and Numan Yanar Editorial
5	Matthias Finger IGLUS Quarterly – The End of An Era
6	Francesca Governa and Carlo Salone Lost in Transition: Turns and Twists of Turin's Post-Fordist Governance
15	Laura Montedoro Does a 'Milan Model' Exist? : Notes on Italy's Most Dynamic City
23	Valentina Orioli The Challenges of Bologna's Metropolitan Identity
32	Gilda Berruti and Maria Federica Palestino New Alliances with The Environment in The Governance of The Metropolitan Naples
40	Ignazio Vinci The Reshaping of the City-Port Interface in Palermo: A Case of Successful Urban Governance?

IGLUS Quarterly | Published four times a year, IGLUS Quarterly contains information about Governance, Innovation and Performance of Cities in general. It provides original analysis, information and opinions on current issues. The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion or views of IGLUS/EPFL. The author(s) is solely responsible for the accuracy of the information presented and will be held liable for any potential copyright infringement.

ISSN | 2571-628X

Subscription | The subscription is free. Please do register at www.iglus.org to be alerted upon publication.

Letters | We do publish letters from readers. Please include a full postal address and a reference to the article under discussion. The letter will be published along with the name of the author and country of residence. Send your letter (maximum 1000 words) to the editor-in-chief. Letters may be edited.

Publication Director | Prof. Matthias Finger

Publishing Manager | Dr. Numan Yanar

Editors of This Issue | Prof. Ignazio Vinci and Dr. Numan Yanar

Designer of This Issue | Ozan Barış Süt

Image Credit for the Cover Page | View of Naples from the Spanish Quarters' by Gianni Fiorito

Publishers | IGLUS Program, EPFL Middle East, P. O. Box 35249, Ras Al Khaimah, U.A.E. (phone: +971 7 206 96 04; fax: +971 7 243 43 65)

Email | info@iglus.org **Website** | www.iglus.org



Italy's territorial organization is historically marked by the density of town and cities spread across the country. Italian cities were the places where new institutions and forms of government have been shaped over the centuries, and where main innovations in the social and cultural domains continue to take place. The country's economy, itself, is rooted in a multitude of medium – and even small – urban areas, a factor that has helped Italy to limit the impact of the polarization process affecting other European countries (e.g. rural depopulation).

Despite that leading role, it is only since the end of last century that urban areas started to be highly regarded within the national political agenda. Drivers of this process have been legal reforms to further empower local government, State initiatives to stimulate urban regeneration and, not least, the European Union, that especially in the Southern regions still plays a key role in supporting local projects and planning innovation.

In the nineties, reforms have brought to municipalities a greater autonomy in a wide spectrum of relevant policies for local development, including new approaches to urban planning. New principles were embedded in the planning practices – for instance, civic participation – while the spreading of public-private partnerships have accelerated urban renewal in a number of Italian cities. More recently (2014), metropolitan government have been established in 14 city-regions, likely the territorial scale where the most urgent urban issues of contemporary Italy should be addressed, from social housing to climate change adaptation (Vinci, 2019).

While institutional innovation is a good key to explain the progress in local governance and planning capacities within most Italian cities, their material transformation must also be related to the external investments that national and European policies have moved to urban areas in these years. Among the main target of these investments have been (and continue to be) public housing estates, districts where urban decay and economic distress have often led to serious problems of social marginality. The recovery of brownfields, also, is a typical focus of this generation of public initiatives,

in the attempt to combine environmental restoration with the creation of public space and facilities of vital importance for the community.

After the downturn of the 2010s, when austerity have slowed down public intervention in all sectors and regeneration projects in most Italian cities, in recent years a new momentum for urban policy is taking place in different directions. The EU Cohesion policy is bringing fresh resources to a strategy started in the previous programming cycle (2014-2021), promoting sustainable urban development through projects in sectors such as green transport, energy retrofit of the built environment and social inclusion.

Even greater expectations are generated by the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), the 191 billion package the country has agreed with the EU in response to the pandemic crisis (Viesti, 2022). Here, several billion euros will be spent for the climate change adaptation of urban areas and city-regions, beside wide-spread interventions on basic infrastructure – from schools to sport facilities – to bridge the gaps created with the shrinkage of welfare policy.

The desire of national government with these policies is also reducing the striking differences that still exist, in terms of urban development, between the northern and southern regions of the country. Cities in the south of Italy, in fact, are the mirror of deep-rooted territorial inequalities, with a development potential often trapped by inefficiency in the public sector, fragile local economies and widespread social distress (Eurostat, 2016; Fina et al., 2021). These weaknesses end up affecting not only the 'performance' of cities and the quality of life they can offer, but also the ability of public policy to promote effective transformative processes. In the end, it is worth considering this diversity when the question of urban change in the Italian cities is approached.

With this scenario in the backdrop, the papers of this special issue reflect different ways urban questions can arise in the Italian cities and the many directions can be

given to urban policy under the impulse of municipalities and local stakeholders.

In the first article, Francesca Governa and Carlo Salone examine Turin's urban policies during the last thirty years. By highlighting the present weakness of the socio-economic urban fabric, the article talks about Turin's recent urban events, and gives discussions on urban policies that have marked the last thirty years of Turin, and the current difficulties for confronting a post-industrial transition.

The second article comes from Milan. Laura Montedoro questions the replicability of the processes that have redesigned the Lombard capital and the (modest) role of urban planning in the city's revival. She further discusses the role of urban planning in the alleged 'Milan model'. The article further touches upon on the balance between public benefit-private profit by also talking about the urban planning policies that the government should apply.

In the third article, Valentina Orioli draws our attention to the challenges of Bologna's metropolitan identity. The article starts with giving a brief information about the metropolitan reform in Italy and the choices of Bologna by also talking about the metropolitan challenges in the current administrative mandate. Then, the article illustrates the fundamental aspects of the flagship projects of Bologna, namely "Green Handprint" and "City of Knowledge".

The fourth article examines the environmental issues and their integration into urban planning in Naples. In their article, Gilda Berruti and Maria Federica Palestino first discuss the role of environmental education in response to climate change; then, they focus on the strategies of the Metropolitan City of Naples. In the end, they conclude the article with by talking about the 'Oxygen Common Good' resolution of Naples and institutional agreement between the Department of Architecture of Federico II University and the Metropolitan Council.

Last but not least, in the fifth article, Ignazio Vinci provides a deep understanding of the process that is

reshaping large waterfront areas in the city of Palermo, and talks about the modern urban development of Palermo. Vinci first talks about the events and economic factors that have negatively impacted on the city-port spatial relations; then, he gives a discussion of the threats and opportunities the current regeneration process can provide on the city's future development. This article has a critical importance for better understanding the regeneration of the waterfront area of Palermo.

In this last and concluding issue of IGLUS Quarterly, we had chance to visit Italy thanks to the great efforts of well-known urban scholars from Italian Cities. We sincerely believe that you will enjoy the articles in this issue. We also invite you to join the discussion at iglus.org. If you have any questions related to this issue, you may contact the editors of this issue through ignazio.vinci@unipa.it and numanyanar@hotmail.com.

Ignazio Vinci and Numan Yanar

References

Eurostat (2016). *Urban Europe. Statistics on Cities, Towns and Suburbs*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Fina, S., Heider, B., Prota, F. (2021). *Unequal Italy. Regional socio-economic disparities in Italy*. Rome: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Italy.

Viesti, G. (2022). The territorial dimension of the Italian NRRP. In Caloffi, A., De Castiris, M. & Perucca, G. Eds. *The Regional Challenges in the Post-Covid Era*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Vinci, I. (2019). "Governing the metropolitan dimension: a critical perspective on institutional reshaping and planning innovation in Italy". *European Journal of Spatial Development*, 70: 1-21.

IGLUS Quarterly – The End of An Era

I am proud, yet also very sad, to present to you this last and final issue of our IGLUS Quarterly publication series. IGLUS Quarterly started under the leadership of Mohamad Razaghi in 2015, one year after the official launch of the IGLUS Executive Master, and was subsequently managed by Maxime Audouin (volumes 2 and 3), Diego Giron (volume 4) and ever since (volumes 5 to 8) by Numan Yanar with the help of IGLUS manager Umut Tuncer. I would like to thank them all for all their excellent work which has made IGLUS Quarterly one of the rare free global online quality publications on urban infrastructure governance. During these 8 years we have featured 124 articles covering each time a particular urban infrastructure governance topic. Today, IGLUS Quarterly is freely distributed to 50'000 readers worldwide.

My sincere thanks also go all the authors of the articles who have shared their expertise and insights with the larger IGLUS family. Thanks to IGLUS Quarterly we have managed to build a global network and community of IGLUS friends with whom we not only want to continue to interact in the future, but actually engage in the next phase. Indeed, the IGLUS journey does not stop with this last issue of IGLUS Quarterly. Quite to the contrary, and so let me share with you the IGLUS phase, so-to-speak IGLUS 2.0 as of January 2023.

To recall, IGLUS was officially started by myself in 2014 while being a professor of management of network industries (infrastructures) at Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland, and was built around a global executive master program with 2-week action-learning modules in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas. During the past 9 years we have met extraordinary people all around the world, all sharing a passion for understanding and collectively addressing urban infrastructure governance challenges in innovative ways. Unfortunately, COVID-19 put an end to our itinerant action learning modules and so, regrettably, the last modules had to be taught online. Thanks to the IGLUS Quarterly and our three MOOCs – the most successful one being

the Smart City MOOC with over 40'000 learners – we have reached a global visibility that we could never have dreamt of.

I have now retired from EPFL and we have now engaged in a two-year transition phase (2023-2024). While I will stay in charge during this transition phase, IGLUS headquarters have moved to the University Cristobal Colon (UCC) in Veracruz, Mexico. Dr. Julio Torres has taken over the management of the IGLUS project from Umut Tuncer, whom I sincerely thank for all his efforts and great accomplishments during the past 5 years.

There will be a new IGLUS Newsletter to be published four times a year with more but shorter contributions on similar topics as in the past, yet involving the global IGLUS network of which you as readers are part much more actively than before. The discontinued IGLUS Executive Master will be replaced, on the one hand, by short certificate online courses and, on the other hand, by shorter, 4-day long, action-learning field visits in the major cities around the world. Furthermore, the metropolitan area of Veracruz, Mexico, will become first IGLUS action-research laboratory, whereby UCC will play an active role in the emergence of a metropolitan governance for all the relevant infrastructure. At the same time UCC will use this urban action-research laboratory in order to transform itself into a new type of transdisciplinary action-learning University at the service of a metropolitan area, its citizens as well as its economic, social, and ecological actors.

I truly look forward to IGLUS 2.0 and hope that you will all be part of this new step in our global and local collective learning journey. Thanks to this, we should all become better equipped to “*learn our way out*”¹ of the challenges faced by an urbanized planet with problems so big that they appear, at times, overwhelming.

Matthias Finger

¹ *Learning Our Way Out* is the title of a book published in 2001 by myself and my friend Dr. José Manuel Asun, who, today, is the rector of Universidad Cristobal Colon (UCC). Finger, M. & J. Asun (2001). *Learning Our Way Out. Adult Education at a Crossroads*. London: Zed Books.

Lost in Transition: Turns and Twists of Turin's Post-Fordist Governance

Francesca Governa¹ and Carlo Salone²

Abstract: *The article aims to present and critically discuss Turin's urban policies during the last thirty years. Starting from the '90, Turin, the Italian "one company town", has passed through various moments of a never ending urban transition. By focusing on the Turin's attempt to go beyond the so-called "Fordist urban model" and face the deindustrialisation process, and highlighting the present weakness of the socio-economic urban fabric, we advance two main arguments. The first one is that the never ending search for a new urban development model is marked by shortcuts and illusions, that led to the disapper of a fresh view on the city and its possible future and the gradual tarnishing of the leading role of the political and economic elites; the second one is that today Turin urban policies are mainly introverted and closed, while the possible links between Turin and the evolving urban geography of the Northern Italy are completely missed. This situation leads to the weak structuring of today urban public debate and to an endurance urban crisis.*

Keywords: *Turin, urban policies, post-industrial transition, post-fordist urban governance, urban elite*

Authors' Profile

Francesca Governa, PhD, is an urban geographer and professor of economic and political geography at DIST, Politecnico di Torino. She is currently the principal investigator of a three-year research program on urbanization processes related to the Belt and Road Initiative and the scientific supervisor of a research funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

Carlo Salone is Full Professor of Urban and Regional Development at DIST, Politecnico and Università di Torino (Italy). He taught as a visiting professor in France (UPEC, Université de Paris Cité, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), Spain (Girona, Doctoral School of Geography and Planning) and Finland (Oulu, Doctoral School of Geography).

Introduction

In 1990, the Italian sociologist Arnaldo Bagnasco edited a book titled "The city after Ford". The city was Turin. The title is nothing but a formula. However, the story told to describe Turin follows a well-known plot that remains still today more or less the same: the strong industrialization process during the so-called "gold period" started to crack during the second half of the seventy and in the following decade the deindustrialisation took place, Turin entered the "after Ford" era and the quest for a new model of urban development began. Even now, however, it is not clear which could be the direc-

tions to follow. What does "after Ford" mean and entail? The anxious search for a new model of urban development capable of replacing, or at least completing, the city's traditional industrial specialisation is now complemented by the search for a mode of representation (and power) suited to the new era in which the city must weave relations with the 'outside', be it the 'near' outside of regional relations or the 'far' outside of transnational networks and flows. Notwithstanding, the current public debate in Turin is introverted, focused on 'decline', and prone to self-pity or even rancour. By questioning this stance, this article suggests the need to overcome the entanglement of local dynamics and open Turin to the web of complex and multi-scalar relations that connect it with the city-region of the Italian North and the broad spatiality of international connections.

¹ DIST, Politecnico di Torino, Italy

² Urban and Regional Development at DIST, Politecnico and Università di Torino, Italy



Fig. 1: *Spina Centrale*, the Mario Merz's Igloo (Source: Carlo Salone)

The article aims to propose a critical reading of Turin's recent urban events, not only through a necessarily synthetic interpretation of the urban policies that have marked the last thirty years, but also by highlighting some 'missed acts' that explain, at least in part, the current difficulties to face an arduous and never ending post-industrial transition. The discussion starts from the 2006 Winter Olympics, and then describes the difficulties of the urban transition towards the so-called knowledge economy. By focusing on the Turin's attempt to go beyond the so-called "Fordist urban model", and highlighting the present weakness of the socio-economic urban fabric, we advance two main arguments. The first one is that the never ending search for a new urban development model is marked by shortcuts and illusions, that led to the disapper of a fresh

view on the city and its possible future and the gradual tarnishing of the leading role of the political and economic elites; the second one is that today Turin urban policies are mainly introverted and closed, while the possible links between Turin and the evolving urban geography of the Northern Italy are completely missed.

Rise and Decline of the Olympic city

At the beginning of the 1990s, the electoral reform that allowed the direct election of mayors, and the more general change in the Italian institutional organisation, reverberated in a change of the city's government, from both the point of view of the actors involved (with a general - though not as radical as it seemed at first sight - change

of local political leaders and the redefinition of the forms of representation and participation of the civil society), and of the urban agenda, the decision-making processes practised, and the policies implemented.

In 1995, after a long period of false starts and attempts to define new plans that are never being implemented, a new masterplan (Piano Regolatore Generale - General Regulatory Plan-GPR) was approved and a general urban transformation of Turin started. This transformation is mainly a transformation of the built environment. Enthusiastically, a study by the Chamber of Commerce pointed to Turin's new GPR as a key instrument to remedy "the disappointments of urban planning by projects in the 1980s, which had in fact brought the city's transformation processes to a standstill" (De Santis and Russo 1997, p. 132, auth. transl.). Approved during the first term of the council led by Valentino Castellani (1993-1997), the new GPR searches for a new urban centrality and its guiding image can be summarised as a 'return to the (city) centre'. The central axis (*Spina Centrale*) that links along the central railway (*Passante ferroviario*) (Fig. 1) the many 'industrial voids' left in Turin's urban fabric by the economic transition of the 1980s, with strong concentrations especially north of the river Dora (i.e. in the first industrial suburbs), is the "flagship project" of the new masterplan.

At this stage, Turin seemed to have left its dark periods behind it: the transition of the Italian one-company town was underway, not without trouble, but everything seemed possible. In 1999, during Castellani mayor's second term in office, the city was indicated as the venue for the 2006 Winter Olympics. This event will become the catalyst for the administration's action around which many of the choices made and strategies implemented revolved. The administration led by Chiamparino, Mayor in his turn for two terms (2001-2006 and 2006-2011), managed both the design and the implementation of strategies and actions devoted to making Turin the 'Olympic city' (Dansero and Puttilli, 2010).

Generally speaking, and also thanks to the undoubted communication capacity of the local government and especially the mayor, the event was a success. However, to

fully appreciate the Turin Olympic story, it is necessary to distinguish various layers. The first layer is the urban marketing strategy and the promotion of the urban image: thanks to the network of actors already active in the strategic planning process that began in the second half of the 1990s, this strategy was successful in terms of the enhancement of the tourism offer (Vanolo, 2008). The second layer is the extraordinary 'material' impact of the Olympic programme, particularly on certain parts of the city: 7.5 billion euros in public works, with 65 Olympic works and more than a thousand interventions, in the municipality of Turin alone, on the road infrastructure; 4.5 million square metres of usable floor space of new buildings, 70% of which residential (Mancini and Papini, 2021).

Many of these square metres are concentrated along the *Spina centrale*: 342 dwellings converted into subsidised housing in the northern part of the city and 204 dwellings converted into social housing in the southern part. The implementation of both the masterplan and the Olympic Programme has thus engendered an extraordinary physical, social, and functional urban change, which has also led to the acceleration of spatial transformations that had long been under discussion (from the underground railway to the expansion of Caselle airport, from the reuse of some large derelict lands, such as the former General Markets and Italgas area, to the modernisation of some sports facilities). Yet the urban transformation of Turin appears in many ways detached from an overall idea of the city, so much to be configured solely as a set of interventions that seize the opportunities offered by the industrial vacancies to be filled.

The third layer is the most problematic: urban politics and policies, especially in a city in which basic statistical indicators - such as the number of inhabitants, ageing of the population, unemployment, and so on - show difficult underlying trends, seem lacking a clear vision of the city's future after the collapse of the industrial fabric, in order to manage the post-industrial transition (Bagnasco et al., 2020).

The evolution of Turin over the last forty years seems

relatively simple to summarise: from the ‘one company town’, dominated by the automotive sector, to the “always on the move” city; from the city in crisis of the 1980s to the ‘creative’, vibrant, funny city (Vanolo, 2015); from the ‘grey’ city of the past industrial monoculture to the ‘increasingly beautiful’ city where ‘passion lives’. These expressions, which echo the slogans used by the municipality to present the Olympic Programme and the 2006 Winter Olympics (“Turin always on the move”) and to accompany the city during the period of the event (“Passion lives here”), describe a transformation that conveys simple and somewhat stereotypical contents. The transformation of the built environment has contributed to building consensus and legitimacy around an idea of the city that has forgotten ‘other’ visions, erased differences, and eluded conflict, partly as a result of the progressive impoverishment of public debate on the city and the rise of a strong leader and personalist conception of political representation.

Today Turin is presenting the bill for these cancellations and elusions. In the aftermath of the 2006 Olympics, the construction sector started to slow down (Rapporto Rota, 2016) and the 2008 crisis further complicated the situation. At the same time, the Olympics have left a heavy legacy from a financial point of view: against costs of more than 3.3 billion, the benefits have been generously estimated at 2.5 billion, with heavy consequences on municipal budgets. The pacified and ‘happy’ urban transformation is progressively being flanked by the grey areas of a fragmented and hidden unease, of unheard demands and denied needs, in which the segregated spaces of the new immigrant ethnic groups mingle with those of consumption and the leisure activities of the impoverished middle classes, the places of innovative tertiarization with those of poverty and abandonment.

This unease - and intolerance - has gradually found a way to manifest itself, at least politically, in the change of municipal administration. In this sense, post-Olympic Turin seems to be an example of those “places that don’t matter” described at a European level by Rodriguez-Pose (2017), who points out how much and how the resentment and difficulties of places and people who feel - and in part really are - excluded from the processes of globalisation

are expressed above all from a political point of view with support for sovereigntist and populist parties and movements.

The political-administrative change in 2016, with the win of the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (a sort of vehicle of anti-political protest, used to voice popular discontent with traditional parties and professional politicians: Diamanti, 2014) and Chiara Appendino as mayor, closes the political cycle started in 1993 and the long period of center-left political-institutional continuity whose action had, however, begun to show signs of tarnishing at the moment of its greatest success. The 2006 Olympic Games probably constituted the apex and at the same time the breaking point of Turin’s transition. It was certainly impossible to continue on the same level, also for financial reasons. But that is not all. While at the beginning of the 2000s everything seemed within reach, once the party and the aftermath of the Olympic triumph were over, Turin slowed down. Data show a city progressively smaller (today 866,510 inhabitants, with a 4.4 % reduction in the resident population between 2011 and 2020 (Fig. 2), older (with an old-age index in 2016 of 207.7, while the North-West regions stood at 169.8) and poorer (Piedmont Region, CEP, 2018).

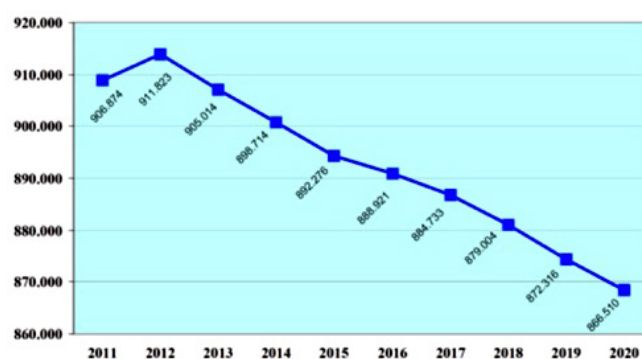


Fig. 2: The decrease of the Turin population (Source: Città di Torino, 2022)

This situation is added by the void of ideas and (any) vision for the future: Turin seems no longer capable to think and rethink itself. While in 2022 the municipal elections were again won by the center-left parties, and the Turin

leadership of the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* can be considered as a sort of parenthesis, the political and strategical “void” does not change. It is not only a matter of (weak) local government but of more general weakness, if not lack, of governance and the absence of a new urban élite. A narrow intellectual and professional elite, an expression of universities, entrepreneurial and professional worlds, with a major role of the banking foundations and the Chamber of Commerce, governed Turin for more than 20 years without real opposition (Belligni and Ravazzi, 2013). The turnover of elites did not take place. What it is trivially a problem of generational turnover, clashes in Turin with a blocked system, not able of defining even the slightest economic, cultural, and political pluralism and of overcoming a pyramidal vision of power and urban government. Turin’s networks were and remain simple networks, tending to be closed, with few actors and a strong circularity of decision-making processes.

From Factory to Skyscraper: The Unfinished Transition to A Service Economy and The Dark Side of The Knowledge Economy

On the closing night of the Olympic Games, the fireworks illuminated an economy and a society undergoing a profound transformation: after a long and fluctuating restructuring, Turin’s production apparatus and the entire economy underwent a metamorphosis that saw the progressive loss of centrality of the automobile industry. During recurring crises - from the late 1990s to 2004 and finally to 2008 - the urban decision-making system tried to counter the difficulties in the automotive sector by devising strategies to reverse the decline of the “city-factory”. The first attempt to overcome the Fordist economic organisation and its social legacy was made through the First Strategic Plan (1997). Ten years later, a Second Strategic Plan (2006) tried to apply the paradigm of the knowledge economy as a “key recipe” to plan the 21st century Turin. Finally, the Third Strategic Plan (2016) focused on a ‘new manufacturing economy’ connected to a neo-industrial paradigm that aims to translate the traditional industrial legacy into innovative forms (DASTu and Irs, 2014), promoting new consumption patterns especially

on food and technological urban smartness, changing the model of consumption and focusing the new functions on food and technological urban smartness.

In the meantime, FIAT tightened and then dissolved its engagement with General Motors, proceeding with the contraction of production activities in the Turin plants. At the same time, it articulated the process of delocalisation and presence on foreign markets with the merger with Chrysler in 2009 and the creation of the Italian-American group FCA, and with the recent ‘hot merger’ between the latter and the French Peugeot (Ginori, 2019; Sodano, 2019). FIAT is thus moving away from Turin and at the same time reducing its connections with the more dynamic productive system of the rest of Piedmont and Northern Italy. This last aspect is fundamental in influencing the role played - and suffered - by the Turin area in the relations between flows and places within the northern macro-region and in the broader relations with Europe and the world (Berta, 2009).

The need to govern the transition from secondary to the advanced tertiary sector within the metropolitan system and, at the same time, to direct relations with the contiguous systems - Milan above all, but also the non-metropolitan systems of Piedmont - had been consciously taken by Turin’s élites since Castellani governments (1993-2001). In that period, the perspective adopted was strongly centred on the city of Turin. The transition towards an economy of business services, hoped for above all during the second Castellani administration and pursued by the Chiamparino one (2001-2011), contributed to modernise Turin’s industrial base, but did not develop according to the expectations of the decision-makers. The unequivocal change in the quality of urban spaces, indeed, was mainly oriented towards cultural and tourist functions, perhaps the only innovation that has asserted itself in the city’s tertiary profile, conveyed by the image success of the 2006 Winter Olympics and the massive, albeit not always successful, urban renewal conducted in those years.

Notwithstanding, the laborious transition of the Turin economy towards the tertiary sector has shown significant signs of acceleration in recent years: based on the latest



Fig. 3: *Spina Centrale*: the restored OGR and the Renzo Piano's Intesa San Paolo Bank skyscraper (Source: Carlo Salone)

available ISTAT survey (2018), there are 222.577 businesses within the territory of the Metropolitan City of Turin, of which about 1/3 are tertiary (Camera di Commercio di Torino, 2022). Among the latter, however, only a minority can be counted under the category of the innovative enterprise (Caviggioli, Neirotti and Scellato, 2018; Rota Report, 2018).

The late and never-ending tertiarization mobilised expectations and attempts of a Turin's variant of "creative class" strengthened during the effervescent onset of the 2000s, made up of more or less large-scale events (the 2006 Winter Olympics and the entire framework of periodic events linked to contemporary art), highly successful cultural experiences (the Book Fair, *Artissima*) and institutions consolidated over time (the municipal museums'

system and the related Fondazione) (Fig. 3).

A complementary but increasingly important aspect in the local economy and public policy is also the food sector, especially in its cultural and experiential implications. An articulated system of supply has been built on food, based on events of great international appeal (*Terra Madre* and the *Salone del Gusto*, promoted by Slow Food) and on a widespread presence of venues, restaurants and bistros focusing on regional (and other) food and wine.

The city's image has thus been radically re-branded, focusing on some aspects (culture, creativity, food, leisure) mainly oriented towards an integrated offer for national and international tourism (Vanolo, 2015). By hinging on the richness of regional food and wine traditions and the

innovation brought by digital platforms in the temporary accommodation market (Semi & Tonetta, 2021), Turin has then become a tourist destination. Since technological innovation activities and start-ups do not take off, tourism represents one of the few truly significant items in the urban post-industrial tertiary sector. Moreover, the consolidation of platform economies in the short terms rentals market collides with the other major axis of local urban policies, i.e. Turin's as a 'university city'. The effort of both the University and Polytechnic of Turin to attract students from other regions and abroad, opened up the issue of so-called "studentification" in a real estate market that, while traditionally lower than in other Italian cities, is already cracked by the higher rate of evictions in Italy (Bolzoni and Semi, 2022).

Intimately connected to the late and never-ending story of the tertiarization of the metropolitan area, the knowledge economy has been a powerful factor in Turin's last twenty years. Declined in its many specifications - culture, technology, and industrial design - it includes professional figures and companies operating in sectors with a high intensity of intellectual capital. The two Turin universities are undoubtedly a dynamic component in this area, with a traditionally strong presence of the Polytechnic in the industrial field, but also a growing capacity of the University to assert itself as a vector of innovation and an actor of technology transfer. The multi-year research agreements entered into by the two universities with the Compagnia di San Paolo, a leading bank foundation in the regional and national panorama, represent a successful attempt to lend unity to the efforts to achieve the economies of scale required to make investments in basic research effective.

In quantitative terms, already at the turn of the new century, the metropolitan area boasted a presence of skilled workers, half of whom were specialised technicians and the other half divided between entrepreneurs, managers and professionals, representing 40% of the total workforce. This relevant dimension of highly qualified professions placed the Turin area in third place in absolute values after Rome and Milan in the early years of the century, but in a less apex position in percentage terms, surpassed on this level by medium-sized cities such as Flor-

ence and Bologna due to the still strong presence of those employed in the manufacturing sector.

If the 2000s saw an increase in the share of skilled workers, in the same period there were signs of a presence of low-skilled workers that was higher in percentage terms than the other urban areas in the Centre-North, prefiguring an increasingly dualistic labour market that, in 2018, presents eloquent numbers and equally worrying social and political effects.

The 2008 crisis and its aftermath have dramatically accentuated these characteristics, leading to a generalised rise in unemployment until 2014, which is much higher in Piedmont than in the rest of the North. In this context, Turin's situation is even more worrying, as can be seen from the 2018 Piedmont Region-CEP Joint Report, which also highlights the particular severity of youth unemployment (40.8% of young people up to 24 years of age) compared to other regions in the North.

Questioning Turin's Urban geography in the Northern City-Region

The urban crisis of Turin comes from afar: it is rooted in the post-industrial late and contested transition; it is suspended in the illusion of the Olympics period; it is embedded in the after-Olympics difficulties, both financial and otherwise; it is enmeshed in the fiscal crisis of 2008; it is part of the present covid, post-covid and climate change emergency.

The rise of the global economy, and its today evolution, opens the issue of governing the variegated territorial structure of the macro-region of Northern Italy, affected by the concentration of production clusters and tertiary activities of the leading sectors, creation of logistical platforms operating on a continental and so on. Where is Turin in this bargaining space? What are the current conditions of the relationship between Turin and what is outside? Where does Turin fit within the macro-regional and global transformations?

Looking at long-range spatial relations, the Turin area

suffers from a condition of isolation that the high-speed train connection with Milan and the rest of Italy have only partly alleviated. It is not only a matter of 'physical' connections. Turin's weakness and difficulty probably lie above all in its inability to look beyond itself, to promote generous and open images and visions, to think (and think of itself) in relation to the regional and macro-regional territory, enhancing the potential of the city-region such as, for example, those that emerge in the field of innovation and digital development linked to old and new production traditions and the role of universities and research.

On these major issues, local politics seems to remain in a worrying state of aphasia. Not even the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, with its claim of the need for change, has led to the turnover of key players, the emergence of new actors and new models of action. The election of Stefano Lo Russo as Mayor in 2021, with a centre-left coalition, sounds as a back to the past in a city that was sorted out through the Covid-19 emergency with a mix of despair and violence. Turin appears to lack a ruling class capable of expressing an idea of the city and a strategic vision of urban government, of proposing ideas and overcoming old imaginaries (and new-old myths), of looking beyond institutional boundaries (be they those of the Municipality or those of the Metropolitan City), to build alliances and coalitions to innovate the treatment of unresolved problems: among the others, poverty and growing inequalities, the worsening environmental quality and sustainability of development processes, the governance of mobility flows. No tangible signs of a new urban policy agenda, no evident attempts to think at Turin differently and to redefine the role of the city in the enlarged geographies of flows and relations against the backdrop of the changing Northern Italy.

During the 2021 elections, the city's debate tended to reproduce themes and slogans that have accompanied the history of Turin over the past twenty years: Turin's Mayor is called to lead the transition and emerging from the crisis (which one?), in an eternal (and frustrating) confrontation with Milan now in a quite evident urban boom. No thoughtful reflection on an idea of a future for the

city that takes into account its structural constraints, its links with the rest of the administrative region, and its interdependencies within an 'implicit' global urban region of which Milan and Turin could be the key metropolitan nodes.

The current role of Turin within the evolving urban geography of the Northern Italy is increasingly weak, so as the area seems to be 'off the map', as other recent research about the economic performance of the Northern Italian regions show (Buzzacchi et al., 2022).

The reasons for this progressive marginalisation are partly due to structural problems in Turin's economy and society that have emerged starkly over the last two decades, and partly to the tarnish role of urban elites and local politics to focus on the future and promote new ideas and strategies

References

- Bagnasco, A. (1990). *La città dopo Ford*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri.
- Bagnasco, A, Berta G., & Pichierri A. (2020), Chi ha fermato Torino? Una metafora per l'Italia, Torino, Einaudi.
- Belligni, S., & Ravazzi, S. (2013). Policy change without metamorphosis. The 1993-2011 urban regime in Turin. *Metropoles*, (12), <https://journals.openedition.org/metropoles/4642>.
- Bolzoni, M. and Semi, G., Adaptive Urbanism in Ordinary Cities: Gentrification and Temporalities in Turin (1993-2021). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4084633> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4084633>
- Berta, G. (2006). Torino, Milano e la questione settentrionale., *Bologna, il Mulino*, 55(4), 697-707.
- Brenner N. (2014) *Implosions/explosions*, Berlin, Jovis.
- Buzzacchi L., De Marco A., Governa F. and Salone F. (2022). Lo spostamento del triangolo: densità e trasformazioni economiche nella differenziazione spaziale del Nord Italia. *L'industria*, 1, 37-79.
- Camera di Commercio di Torino (2022), *Natimortalità delle imprese torinesi – anno 2021*, Torino.
- Caviggioli F., Neirotti P., Scellato G. (2018) (eds.), *Osservatorio sulle Imprese Innovative della Provincia di Torino. Indagine 2018. Trasformazioni digitali e sfide globali*, mimeo. Centro Einaudi (ed.) (2016), *Check up, Diciassettesimo Rapporto Rota su Torino*, Torino.
- Centro Einaudi (ed.) (2018), *Servizi: uscire dal labirinto, Diciannovesimo Rapporto Rota su Torino*, Centro Einaudi, Torino.
- Cepernich, C., Pellegrino, D., & Cittadino, A. (2018), Come votano le periferie?: la terza città alle elezioni comunali di Torino 2016. *Meridiana*, (92), 211-244.
- Dansero E. & Puttilli M. (2010) Mega-events tourism legacies: the case of the Torino 2006 Winter Olympic Games – a territorialisation approach, *Leisure Studies*, 29:3, 321-341, DOI: [10.1080/02614361003716966](https://doi.org/10.1080/02614361003716966)
- DASTU e IRS (2014), *Torino. Verso la strategia territoriale metropolitana*, Milano.
- De Santis G. e Russo G. (1997) (a cura di), *Crescere in rete, 18 idee per Torino e per il Piemonte*, Torino incontra, Torino.
- Griseri P. (2019, Fca-Peugeot: c'è l'accordo per la fusione, *La Repubblica*, 30 Ottobre.
- Indovina, F., Matassoni, F., & Savino, M. (1990). *La città diffusa*, Daest, Venezia,.
- Mancini, Anna Laura and Papini, Giulio, All that Glitters is not Gold. An Economic Evaluation of the Turin Winter Olympics (2021). Bank of Italy Temi di Discussione (Working Paper) No. 1355, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4026218> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4026218>
- Pacetti, V., & Barbera, F. (2009). Torino: rete policentrica e leadership municipale, in Burrone L. (a cura di), *Città metropolitane e politiche urbane*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 1000-1015.
- Regione Piemonte – CEP (2018), *Chi offre e chi crea lavoro in Piemonte*, Torino.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2018). The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge journal of regions, economy and society*, 11(1), 189-209.
- Semi, G., & Tonetta, M. (2021). Marginal hosts: Short-term rental suppliers in Turin, Italy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 53(7), 1630-1651.
- Sodano M. (2019), Nozze Fca – Peugeot, le attese di Torino: Appendino, “Ruolo centrale per la città”, *La Stampa*, 31 Ottobre, p. 1.
- Vanolo, A. (2008). The image of the creative city: Some reflections on urban branding in Turin. *Cities*, 25(6), 370-382.
- Vanolo a. (2015), The image of the creative city, eight years later: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo, *Cities*, Volume 46, pp. 1-7.

Does a ‘Milan Model’ Exist? : Notes on Italy’s Most Dynamic City

Laura Montedoro¹

Abstract: *Over the last twenty years, Milan has become the protagonist of an ‘urban renaissance’ in terms of demographic increase, investment attractiveness and transformation capacity. The season of negotiated urban planning, which began on an experimental basis in the first half of the 1990s to tackle the post-Fordist transition, now seems to have fully matured into a depowering of the traditional tools (the general regulatory plan) in favour of more agile tools that would make it possible to seize the various opportunities offered by transformation areas, legacy of the industrial past. These different modes of regulation, together with a stubborn urban marketing-oriented narrative and a good use of a great event (Expo2015), have indeed attracted international investors and new inhabitants, to the point of making Milan an exceptional case. This phenomenon is considered by many as unique in Italy, to such an extent as to suggest the existence of a ‘Milan model’. Starting from the description of this phenomenon, this article questions the replicability of the processes that have redesigned the Lombard capital and the (modest) role of urban planning in the city’s revival.*

Keywords: *Milan, Planning tools, Urban planning, Urban transformation, Urban design, Global cities*

Author’s Profile

Laura Montedoro is an architect and art historian, is a full professor of Urban Planning and Urban Design at DASTU, Politecnico di Milano, where she has taught since 1998. She focuses on design exploration as a cognitive tool of site potential, with a cross-scale approach, often interacting with local authorities, including through consultancy and applied research. Particular attention is turned to the implementation planning dimension as an indispensable tool for controlling the quality of widespread regeneration and spatial results of urban planning in the complex processes of large urban transformations, such as military areas and disused railyards. Since 2011, she has been involved in research on urbanization in Global South countries, with particular attention to the african cities and the growth models of reference.

Introduction: The Season of Negotiated Urban Planning

After decades of traditional planning strictly framed by Milan’s General Regulatory Plan, the document ‘Rebuilding the Greater Milan. Strategies, Policies, Rules’ (Milan City Council, 2000), published in June 2000, marked the first official opening to the practice of negotiated urban planning, even if it is possible to recognise some negotiation practices, not fully regulated, had been in place in the Milanese context for decades. Namely, an urban planning more flexible

and adaptive to the rapidly changing urban contexts. It represented an epochal change in the traditional approach to urban transformation, pushing to experiment numerous intermediate flexible tools, more adequate and effective in governing the processes of redevelopment of the post-Fordist city than the rigid General Regulatory Plan. There have been numerous occasions to test different approaches to urban design that have overlapped over time with negotiated urban planning (Gaeta, 2021), in continuity with the pursuit of a vision of a dynamic city capable of mobilising and producing substantial private economic resources.

¹ Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbano, Politecnico di Milano

Indeed, careful observation shows how Milan has managed to maintain a substantial continuity - albeit some modest changes - on major urban transformation projects in the passage between administrations of different political parties, or between administrations of the same party, but with different governance styles (Pasqui, 2018). The typically Lombard 'primacy of doing', well rooted in the city's culture, seems to inspire administrative action and seems to prevail over the *what* and *how* of doing. 'Doing' seems (and is presented) in itself as a value. And there is certainly some truth in considering action as a value, especially if compared to the baffling Italic immobility of crossed vetoes, perpetual incompleteness, and eternal restarts.

A peculiar character of the Lombard capital thus seems to be precisely its propensity to seize the various opportunities that are steadily offered to it in the national and international market playing field, and in global competition in terms of attractiveness (to people, investments, valuable functions and major events); in fact, Milan has become one of the sites taken into consideration by global financial real estate players (sovereign funds, international developers, institutional investors...). It is perhaps this propensity which is the most distinctive 'modelling' trait in the self-representation of the city in public discourse. A very pervasive narrative, which has proved effective in territorial marketing, but which is not without omissions and, at times, a few lies².

This vitality is very evident when analysing recent urban development both quantitatively and qualitatively. Data from the construction sector in 2017 show

that 41% of all real estate transactions nationwide are concentrated in Milan³. An impressive figure, which certifies the dynamism of the Lombardy city, but also the difficulty of completing large, medium and small-scale urban transformations in the rest of the country. In this context, the transformative capacity of Milan in the last twenty-five years cannot but be valorised: the city can pride itself with a considerable number of successfully completed projects (where success is here understood precisely as the capacity for realisation, and not as a qualitative assessment of the project itself). Nevertheless, there is no shortage of striking failures, such as Porta Vittoria - with its large New European Library of Information and Culture (BEIC) - and the Milan Santa Giulia district, just to mention the best-known cases of areas where development is in on hold despite a series of very onerous preparatory activities⁴ (Bolocan Goldestein and Bonfantini, 2007). Looking back, even the Lombard capital has unfulfilled potential.

If one takes the thesis of Milanese exceptionality as reliable, the next question is: what was and is the role of urban planning in the alleged 'Milan model'? Indeed, the city that chases opportunities definitively frees itself from the design dimension⁵ and regulation of current urban planning practice - as we have known it until the beginning of this millennium - and provokes a profound questioning of the role, sense and

2 It is a type of narrative that has already been widely experimented and exploited by other European cities, such as Barcelona, since the 1990s. Suffice to think of Manuel Delgado's essay, *La ciudad mentirosa: fraude y miseria del 'modelo Barcelona'*, which focuses on the dangerous partiality of that self-representation, going as far as to define it a 'lie': "All the processes of transformation that the city has undergone have certainly made it a model, but a model of how a city is conceived only as power and money, turning its back on the most pressing problems of its inhabitants and facing the prospect of raising levels of justice and freedom. The failure of a city blind to the miseries it harbours, deaf and dumb to the exclusions it relentlessly generates. Thus, instead of the gentle arcadia of civilisation that Barcelona should have become as planned, what remains afloat, on the surface, for all to see, is the proof that inequality, exclusion, anomie and even violence continue to be ingredients inherent to the existence of a great capitalist city" (Delgado, 2007).

3 2018 report on the Milan real estate market 'Milan over the rainbow', edited by Scenari Immobiliari and Vittoria Assicurazioni: "The Report first of all summarises the numerical data referring to developments in recent years: of the 38.8 billion invested in real estate in Italy between 2010 and 2017, as much as 16 billion, corresponding to 41% of the total, concerned the Milan metropolitan area. An important result that, according to forecasts, will continue to grow during 2018 by about another 7 billion. As already mentioned, an area of about 12.5 million square metres will host new large projects, for a developed surface area of 6 million square metres, including 2.9 million square metres reserved for residential use, 1.2 million square metres for the tertiary sector, and 800,000 square metres for commercial activities".

4 Only today, more than twenty years later, the two 'cold cases' are finding a solution through PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) funds, the Library, and the extraordinary resources for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games, the Santa Giulia district.

5 Design should not only be understood here in the sense of spatial transformation, but also as the ability to express a vision or indicate a development orientation with reference to a broad notion of project; from the Latin *pro-jacere*: to throw forward.

objectives of the discipline and public administration.

Weak Planning/Strong Architecture

The iconic potential of global architecture, widely used in recent urban transformation projects, indirectly exposes to the following weakness: caught between traditional planning tools - which choose to deal with major transformations outside the general forecasts⁶ - and transformation processes of individual areas - which destinies lie predominantly with the private sector - what role do urban planning policies and instruments and – ultimately – city governments take?

“Star architecture and icons of the imagination” (Borlototti, 2020) indeed seem to largely prevail over “Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen” (Sitte, 1889), or the art of building the city.

Analysing recent events, it would seem that the administration's role has mainly been that of a negotiator who undertakes to guarantee that urban transformation projects include public benefits, understood in economic and financial terms (charges, extra charges, compensated works) and - much more timidly - in terms of influence on the projects (requests for sale, constraints, etc.). Hence, what we need to ask ourselves for an honest assessment of the ‘Milan model’ is, first, whether this role of negotiator has been well played, and, second, whether it is really possible to express a stronger public direction that is not limited to mere bargaining, but is instead capable of anticipating certain strategic choices, and of securing certain general objectives, beyond the rhetoric of the case. This especially applies to the location of supra-local scale services (to be assessed from a systemic point of view)

and of ‘valuable’ metropolitan functions, such as large health care facilities, stadiums or universities. Here we tread on a slippery slope, because in the widespread perception of those inside the scene – tired by exhausting negotiations and fearful of ‘not bringing home’ the result due to excessive interference from the investors – the role is obviously well played, and they understandably exhibit what they have achieved as a success of administrative action. Nevertheless, for many outside observers - including the author - the compensatory measures appear largely insufficient to guarantee a genuine collective advantage. In other words, this is certainly a difficult, but crucial balance, which deserves to be exposed and discussed on the public stage (Tozzi, 2023).

Public Benefit/Private Profit: A Difficult Balance

Let us attempt to take a closer look at Milan's major urban transformations from this peculiar point of view. There is no doubt that many of the large recent operations have (also) produced advantages for the city: new parks and public spaces, new pedestrian and cycle systems and services, and – above all – new liveable and lively urban areas returned to the throbbing life of the metropolis, which replace inaccessible brownfields or abandoned complexes. These were often the source of various kinds of problems, ranging from insecurity due to improper occupation, to health risks. However, considering the balance between public benefits and private profits, the needle seems to lean more decisively on the second side.

This article is not the adequate space to argue this assessment, which would require an adequate justification apparatus, but it is important to emphasise that this is not an ideological evaluation of the municipality's work, but the outcome of a careful observation of the processes and outcomes of recent urban transformations, also in comparison with similar experiences in other European cities (Montedoro, 2018). However, the balance, as mentioned above, is not only quantitative (the quantity of new volume compared

⁶ Since Milan adopted the new instrument provided for by Regional Law 12/2005 - the Territorial Government Plan (PGT 2012) - we refer to ad hoc instruments for the regulation of the recovery of large urban transformation areas (ATU), such as Programme Agreements or Integrated Intervention Plans, whose contents are to be incorporated, if already in force, or to be defined, if in progress, in the general instrument. See, for example, the case of the railway yards (Montedoro, 2011 and 2018).



Fig. 1. City Life: the square of the Three towers. (Source: Laura Montedoro)

to the size of public space ceded, new services added, or charges collected), but also qualitative. What tools does the administration deploy to control the quality of urban transformations' spatial outcomes? What role does it play in defining the physical layouts envisaged in the new projects? And here we return to the opportunity and plead for public regulation to be stronger, more effective, more oriented. In other words, the opportunity for a regulation that knows precisely what to ask for, because what is desirable is clearly defined.

Unfortunately, the impression is that also on these arguments, urban planning regulations don't have a

say and rely completely (and accidentally) on the skills and quality of the professionals that private developers contract. This is not to deny that some recurring elements present in the development processes of recent urban projects certainly act to encourage qualitative transformations. If compared in terms of process, the major recent Milanese urban transformations are very different from one another. Nonetheless, they have all resorted to the competition tool, albeit at different stages, which is undoubtedly one of the ways to raise the proposals' architectural quality, and to respond to the demands for transparency and public evidence inherent in 'healthy' processes. Whether one looks at



Fig. 2. Portello and City Life: view on the new urban landscape. (Source: Laura Montedoro)

the development of Cascina Merlata, Scalo Farini, Scalo di Porta Romana, some areas of Reinventing Cities⁷, the new European Library or the Milano Innovation District (MIND) – project which differ in their stage of maturity and set of actors involved – it is evident how the very use of competitions has been an important ingredient in ensuring their qualitative implementation.

⁷ “Reinventing Cities is a global competition that seeks to accelerate the development of decarbonised and resilient urban regeneration across the globe. Through this competition, cities identify under-utilised sites that are ready to be released and transformed and invite creative multi-disciplinary teams - including architects, planners, developers, investors, environmentalists, creative project holders, start-ups, academics and community associations - to submit proposals that can serve as a model for city landmarks of the future”. <https://www.c40reinventingcities.org/en/professionals/>

Strength/Weakness of Public Direction

Nevertheless, we should ask ourselves why the administration maintains such a lateral role for itself in the drafting of calls for tender and in the juries. In other words, it completely renounces to express itself on the urban form of the new constructions, on the invariants elements and quality that it would like to ensure, on the idea of the city that the projects convey. In this sense, for those who - like the author - deal with urban design, it is disorienting and worrying to record how the theme of the city's form has completely disappeared from the narrative on urban transformations, which environmental, performance and economic merits are instead emphasised (Mazzoleni, Lepratto, 2018).

A further consideration concerns an overall reading

of the Milanese experience, namely what happens to all the parts of the city that do not fall into the category of ‘urban transformation areas’, i.e. unitary areas, precisely delimited and under the control of a single property (or at most two, as in the case of Scalo Farini)? What happens to its extended body, its variegated fabric, studded with episodic and punctual forms of small and large building transformation and replacement?

The city’s rich and extensive building heritage lends itself to further transformation, notably in regard to environmental sustainability. This aspect is strongly encouraged both by the new Regional Law on urban regeneration (LR 18/2019) and the 110% tax refund EcoBonus included in the recent Decreto Rilancio (DL 77/2020)⁸. Is this, then, what the ‘Milan model’ is: big transformations that become flag projects on the international scene and small actions - light, low budget and reversible - on public space?

And yet, despite the quote reported above, even the City Council’s Town Planning Department must have seen the limits of this attitude, since in the new ‘Milano 2030’ Plan of Territorial Government, the morphological rules have become more stringent, and the practice of derogations is discouraged to try to contain the degeneration (understood as the production of excessive volumes in fragile contexts) that could be induced by new incentives and rewards. Doubts are, however, expressed on this measure, for two distinct reasons, apparently in contradiction with each other. First, although Milan can boast a robust and very recognisable urban fabric, it is possible to recognise peculiarities and characters that are quite different from zone to zone, much more variegated and complex than those recognised in the general town-planning instrument. It would therefore merit the development of meditated ad hoc morphological norms. Second, the stiffening of morphological norms reduces the range

and freedom of architectural design.

In these very inhomogeneous areas – with a high potential, but also certain criticalities – subject to very strong transformative forces, urban planning could intervene with intermediate tools (local plans?) that put the theme of *diffuse urban regeneration* at the centre (Montedoro, Pasqui, 2018). A theme crushed by large urban projects and *asphalt art*, but, on closer inspection, crucial for the future face of the city.

Conclusions

The Milan City Council’s councillor for town planning of the previous junta declared in 2020: “one of the clear points of all the great European capitals is that there are now two types of town planning: on the one hand the one to which we are accustomed to, which relies on great transformations (as Porta Nuova and City Life have been for us, and as seven Scali Ferroviari, the former slaughterhouse, Bovisa, etc. will be for us), and on the other hand, immediate solutions, now known as tactical urbanism (or town planning)”. The town planner, thus, bypassed with a straight face everything that does not fall into these two families of actions, forcing upon the urbanist the polarisation of heavy and light operations.

The 2020-2022 pandemic emergency has challenged the city to rethink itself, forcing it to pause the flow and the dominant positive narratives, to suspend the idea of growth to which Milan is desperately anchored. A break experienced - at least until today - as a temporary and not irreversible interruption that would imply a radical rethinking. To date, the reverberations of the economic crisis – which is dramatically affecting like a wave important productive sectors of the country – have not yet reached the real estate market: it is true that during the pandemic there was a brief slowdown in buying and selling, but the ‘property bubble’ grew instead. The latter has seemingly remained unaffected by the spread of the virus and its fallout, stable and largely inaccessible to the impoverished middle class. We will have to wait a little longer

8 DECRETO-LEGGE 19 maggio 2020, n. 34: “Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all’economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all’emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19”.

to understand whether the crisis we have experienced can also be seized as an opportunity to give rise to a more complex model, one that gives more space and substance to the other side of the prevailing narrative, namely that of inclusiveness, proverbial Ambrosian hospitality, and sustainability – environmental and non.

References

- Bolocan Goldstein M., Bonfantini B. (eds.), *Milano incompiuta. Interpretazioni urbanistiche del mutamento*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2007.
- Bortolotti A., *Modello Milano? Una ricerca su alcune grandi trasformazioni recenti*, Maggioli, sant'Arcangelo di Romagna 2020.
- Delgado M., *La ciudad mentirosa: fraude y miseria del "modelo Barcelona"*, Catarata, Madrid 2007.
- Legge Regionale 18/2019: *Misure di semplificazione e incentivazione per la rigenerazione urbana e territoriale, nonché per il recupero del patrimonio edilizio esistente*.
- Decreto Legge "Rilancio" n. 34 e DL n. 77, 2020.
- Comune di Milano, *Ricostruire la Grande Milano. Documento di Inquadramento delle politiche urbanistiche comunali*, Assessorato allo Sviluppo del territorio, 2000.
- Comune di Milano, *Piano di Governo del Territorio*, 2012.
- Comune di Milano, *MILANO 2030 - Piano di Governo del Territorio*, 2019.
- Gaeta L., *Urbanistica contrattuale. Criteri, esperienze, precauzioni*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2021.
- Mazzoleni P., Lepratto F., *Il disegno urbano nella trasformazione della città europea contemporanea*, Territorio 87, Franco Angeli, Milano 2018.
- Montedoro L. (eds.), *Una scelta per Milano. Scali ferroviari e trasformazione della città*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2011.
- Montedoro L. (eds.), *Le grandi trasformazioni urbane. Una ricerca e un dibattito per gli scali milanesi*, Fondazione OAMi, Milano 2018.
- Pasqui G., 2018, *Raccontare Milano. Politiche, progetti, immaginari*, F. Angeli, Milano.
- Montedoro L., Pasqui G., *Strumenti e processi per il governo della trasformazione urbana e della rigenerazione diffusa*, in AA. VV., Atti della XXI Conferenza Nazionale SIU. *Confini, movimenti, luoghi, politiche*, Firenze 6-8 giugno 2017, Planum Publisher, Roma-Milano, 2018.
- Sitte C., *Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, Wien 1889. *ars later*: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo, *Cities*, Volume 46, pp. 1-7.
- Tozzi, L. (2023). *L'invenzione di Milano. Culto della comunicazione e politiche urbane*, Napoli, Cronopio.

The Challenges of Bologna's Metropolitan Identity

Valentina Orioli¹

Abstract: *In Italy in 2014 a local government reform process introduced 14 metropolitan cities, but it remained unfinished, leaving many critical issues on the ground on the effective functioning of these territorial bodies. Although within this unfinished reform, since its constitution (2015) the Metropolitan City of Bologna has tried to pursue effectiveness, also through forms of voluntary organization which are due to a long tradition of institutional collaboration. In particular Bologna experimented a strong synergy both in organization and in planning activities between the metropolitan city and its capital. This synergy has been strengthened in the current administrative mandate, starting from the initiative taken by the new Mayor, elected in October 2021, to organize the governance system, once again on a voluntary basis, with strong transversality and widespread communication between the two entities. This “governance experiment” benefits on the one hand from the base offered by the previous planning season, and on the other from the possibility of making significant investments thanks to the resources allocated through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and other ordinary and extraordinary sources of financing. The choice of field made by local administrators in the allocation of these huge resources constitutes an element of originality in the national panorama, for the desire to give an effective “metropolitan” identity and coherence to the projects implemented. These are in fact the “Flagship projects” of the new administration, “City of Memory and Knowledge” and “Green Handprint”, in addition to the huge changes foreseen on the entire mobility system and the participation in 100 Cities Neutral Mission. This essay presents these projects, through the direct experience of a responsible administrator, who is its author.*

Keywords: Bologna, City governance, City of Memory and Knowledge, Green Handprint, 100 Cities Neutral Mission

Author's Profile

Valentina Orioli, architect and PhD, is an associate professor of Urban planning at the University of Bologna. In 2016-2021 she was deputy mayor in charge of Urban planning and Environment at the Municipality of Bologna, where she also served as Vice Mayor (2020-2021). She is serving as deputy mayor in charge of Mobility, Public Space and Green Handprint at the Municipality of Bologna. Her teaching and research activities are aimed at the knowledge and experimentation of tools for the design and governance of urban and regional transformations, in a perspective that focuses on physical space and its regeneration and draws on the comparison with the disciplinary tradition but also with urban history. She is Vice President of Urban@it, a National center for urban policy studies based at the University of Bologna. Together with Martina Massari she recently published the book “Praticare l'urbanistica. Traiettorie fra innovazione sociale e pianificazione” (FrancoAngeli, 2023).

The metropolitan reform in Italy (2014) and the choices of Bologna

Italy is a country of small and medium-sized cities², with only three “metropolitan cities” by rank, as Mi-

lan, Rome and Naples. While various interpretations of Italian urban settlement have followed one another over time (see for example the national research program led by Balducci, Fedeli and Curci 2017a, 2017b), Law 56/2014 recognized some “metropolitan cities”, effectively establishing a coincidence with the 10 capital

¹ Urban planning, the University of Bologna.

² Out of 7904 Municipalities, only 12 have more than 250,000 inhabitants, while 32 are in the range between 100,000 and 250,000 inhabitants. Overall, only 509 Italian municipalities have more than 20,000 inhabitants. <https://www.tuttitalia.it/comuni-per-fasce-demografiche/>

provinces of the main regions³. This decision concluded a path that had been started with law 142/1990 without ever finding an effective realization, both due to the vagueness of the concept of “metropolitan area” (and the difficulty of defining it), and to the inertia of the local authorities involved in the process.

The reform process initiated by Law 56/2014⁴ was very promising (Orioli, Martinelli and De Leo, 2016), but it has never been fully completed, leaving many critical issues on the ground on the effective functioning of territorial bodies, such as metropolitan cities and provinces. This is not the place for a precise examination of the limits of this reform. With specific reference to metropolitan cities, it is important to underline the substantial weakness of these second-level bodies without elected political representatives and with limited resources and functions compared to the needs and complexities that metropolitan government would require.

The definition of the respective statutes of the new metropolitan cities, in 2014-16⁵, showed a tendency to favor a cooperative/associative option for the governance system, which interprets the Metropolitan City's role in terms of coordination of the functions of the Municipalities and of connection between the interests of the public bodies and those of the various local actors.

Since its constitution (2015) the Metropolitan City of Bologna has tried to overcome the limits of the reform and pursue effectiveness, in particular by playing the role of “federating body” for the 55 Municipalities of the territory. This choice of field was also facilitated by forms of voluntary organization linked to a long tradition of institutional collaboration and was initially expressed in the recognition of the 7 Municipal Unions, already op-

erational at the birth of the Metropolitan City, as basis for the articulation of the governance⁶.

Another relevant aspect in the organization of the new body is the collaboration with the capital municipality (City of Bologna), both in the management of services and in the performance of strategic functions such as territorial planning and mobility. The 2016-2021 administrative mandate was in fact under the banner of planning, not only with the formation of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan, mandatory under Law 56/2014, but also of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)⁷. After the national guidelines were issued in 2017, Bologna was one of the first cities in Italy to adopt the SUMP, making the decision to develop a single plan for its entire metropolitan area. The SUMP was approved in 2019, together with the General Plan of Urban Traffic (“Piano Generale del Traffico Urbano”, PGTU) of the Municipality of Bologna. The planning framework is completed with the parallel formation of the General Urban Plan of Bologna (“Piano Urbanistico Generale”, PUG)⁸ and the Metropolitan Territorial Plan (“Piano Territoriale Metropolitano”, PTM)⁹, both adopted in 2020, pursuant to the new Regional Urban Planning Law 24/2017.

This work in synergy has also involved more general policy issues, such as the adherence to the UN 2030 Agenda, which has led to the formation of a “Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development”¹⁰, shared and adopted also by other Italian metropolitan cities. The Agenda constitutes a strategic reference framework for planning tools and identifies some significant indicators for monitoring the progress of policies in the various areas of the metropolitan territory. Structured in this way, the Agenda deals with the important issue of defining common datasets and baselines, but at the same time it highlights the profound differences that characterize the territory, both in the availability of cognitive bases than

³ The 10 metropolitan cities are Torino, Milano, Venezia, Genova, Bologna, Firenze, Roma, Napoli, Bari and Reggio Calabria. Other 4 metropolitan cities have been identified in the autonomous regions (Palermo, Catania, Messina and Cagliari).

⁴ The Law 7.04.2014, n. 56, “Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni”, also known as “Legge Delrio”, introduced a broad reform of local bodies, providing for the establishment and regulation of 14 metropolitan cities and the redefinition of the system of provinces, as well as a new regulation on unions of municipalities and of the creation of new municipalities by merging existing ones. The law was never followed by the necessary constitutional revision and the reform process remained incomplete, leaving many problems in territorial governance, especially at metropolitan and province level. <https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1104880.pdf>

⁵ <https://osservatorio.urbanit.it/>

⁶ The statute in art. 19 specifies that, in addition to the capital municipality, the municipal unions represent the priority reference for the territorial articulation of policies and actions of the metropolitan city.

⁷ <https://pumsbologna.it/>

⁸ <http://dru.iperbole.bologna.it/piano-urbanistico-generale>

⁹ <https://www.ptmbologna.it/>

¹⁰ https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/agenda_sviluppo_sostenibile/

in policy implementation.

The metropolitan challenges in the current administrative mandate (2021-2027)

The assumption of these differences is the basis of a policy of closer synergies undertaken in the current administrative mandate, starting from the initiative taken by the new Mayor Matteo Lepore, elected in October 2021, to organize the governance system, once again on a voluntary basis, with strong transversality and widespread communication between the two entities. This “governance experiment” benefits, on the one hand, from the basis offered by the previous season, both due to planning activity and to the reorganization of some services and, on the other, from the possibility of making significant investments thanks to the resources allocated through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan¹¹ and other ordinary and extraordinary sources of financing. The constant effort, even if not without contradictions and difficulties, of all these activities is aimed at increasing territorial cohesion also trying to define and strengthen a “metropolitan identity”.

In fact, a certain territorial balance could be maintained through a traditional method of redistribution of resources, which recognizes the needs of the various territories and satisfies them starting from their requests. The challenge that Bologna tried to put in place is instead that of a ‘selective distribution’, based on a framework of meaning and a common development perspective of the entire territory. The choice of field made by local administrators in the allocation of these huge resources constitutes once again an element of originality in the national panorama, for the attempt to give an effective “metropolitan identity” and coherence by the means of some “flagship projects”.

The first of these is inherited from the previous mandate and consists in the “New Mobility”, that is the

transformation of the entire metropolitan mobility system, starting with the strong implementation of the cycling network (“Bicipolitana”), the construction of the first tramway lines and the redevelopment of the highway ring (“Passante di nuova generazione”). The project is mainly focused on the municipality of Bologna, but the entire metropolitan mobility network, and especially public transport and bicycle network, will be reorganized around the transformations of the mobility system at the municipal scale.

The second is in continuity with the Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development, but with a significant acceleration in the achievement of the objectives: indeed, Bologna was selected in the Mission “100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030”, together with 8 other Italian cities¹². Participation in the Mission is an opportunity to accelerate the changes already underway, share the process with a wide range of actors through the Climate City Contract, and engage with other Italian cities participating in the process, sharing policy issues, strategies and good practices¹³.

The framework is completed by two other projects, called *Impronta Verde* (“Green Handprint”) and *Città della Conoscenza* (“City of Knowledge”). In general terms, these two projects, which have a perspective of realization in 10 years, offer a framework of physical transformation of the city, associating precise figures and programs with the vision already implemented through the planning tools, PUG and PTM. In fact, the new generation of plans, with their strategic setting and ideogrammatic language, need a design “translation” so that the public discourse on future perspectives is sustainable and effectively transmissible.

At the same time, the use of these flagship projects helps in interpreting urban regeneration as a systemic challenge (Orioli and Massari, 2022), not only because their implementation presupposes a broad involvement

¹¹ The PNRR is the plan that the Italian government has prepared to allocate the Next Generation EU funds, received from the European Union following the pandemic crisis. It is a Plan of 750 billion euros, of which about half are grants, to be spent by 2026, according to 6 missions (see for details <https://www.mef.gov.it/focus/Il-Piano-Nazionale-di-Ripresa-e-Resilienza-PNRR/>). The Italian Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR) is available at <https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/PNRR.pdf>

¹² The Italian cities participating in the Mission together with Bologna are Bergamo, Firenze, Milano, Padova, Parma, Prato, Roma and Torino.

¹³ With reference to the participation of Bologna in 100 Neutral Cities Mission, please refer to the website www.chiara.eco/ managed by Comune di Bologna together with Fondazione per l’Innovazione Urbana.

Un'impronta verde per Bologna

Infrastruttura ecologica esistente

- Infrastruttura Blu
- Patrimonio agricolo
- Parchi e giardini urbani
- Aree forestali

Le connessioni

- La rete portante del Biciplan

Lo scenario futuro

- I nuovi corridoi ecologici ed ambientali urbani
- 6 Parchi territoriali per Bologna



Fig. 1 Bologna's Green Handprint (Fondazione per l'Innovazione Urbana)

of all urban actors, but also because these projects effectively highlight the connections between physical and socio-economic aspects of regeneration.

“Impronta Verde” and “Città della Conoscenza” flagship projects

The scheme representation of Impronta Verde is a “green hand” which overlaps Bologna's map [Fig. 1]. The hand palm and its five fingers correspond to six territorial parks, which have no limits because they connect the city with its metropolitan territory. This approach considers the territory by highlighting its empty spaces in a “reverse city” vision (Viganò, 1999), and connects open and public spaces through the sustainable mobility network (pedestrian, bicycle, public transport).

These networks of paths and areas emerged as funda-

mental in the pandemic period; their relevance for individual wellbeing and social life is the reason why the Impronta Verde project involves citizens in the co-design and shared management plans of the six territorial parks. The general objective of the project is to include in a landscape strategy (Fromonot, 2020) several layers «assumed as strategic pillars by the public administration, such as the “Biodiverse city”, which guarantee continuity to ecological corridors to protect urban wildlife; the “30km/h city” which integrates a vision of public mobility system in order to make public roads more inclusive and secure; the “5 minutes city” in which reaching green areas is easy and accessible to all thanks to sustainable public transport system; the “Collaborative city” in which the management of six parks and of public space in general is shared between citizens and the municipality; and finally the “Good city”, thanks to a human-oriented landscape project that gives precise identity to the city and valorizes the specificity of each

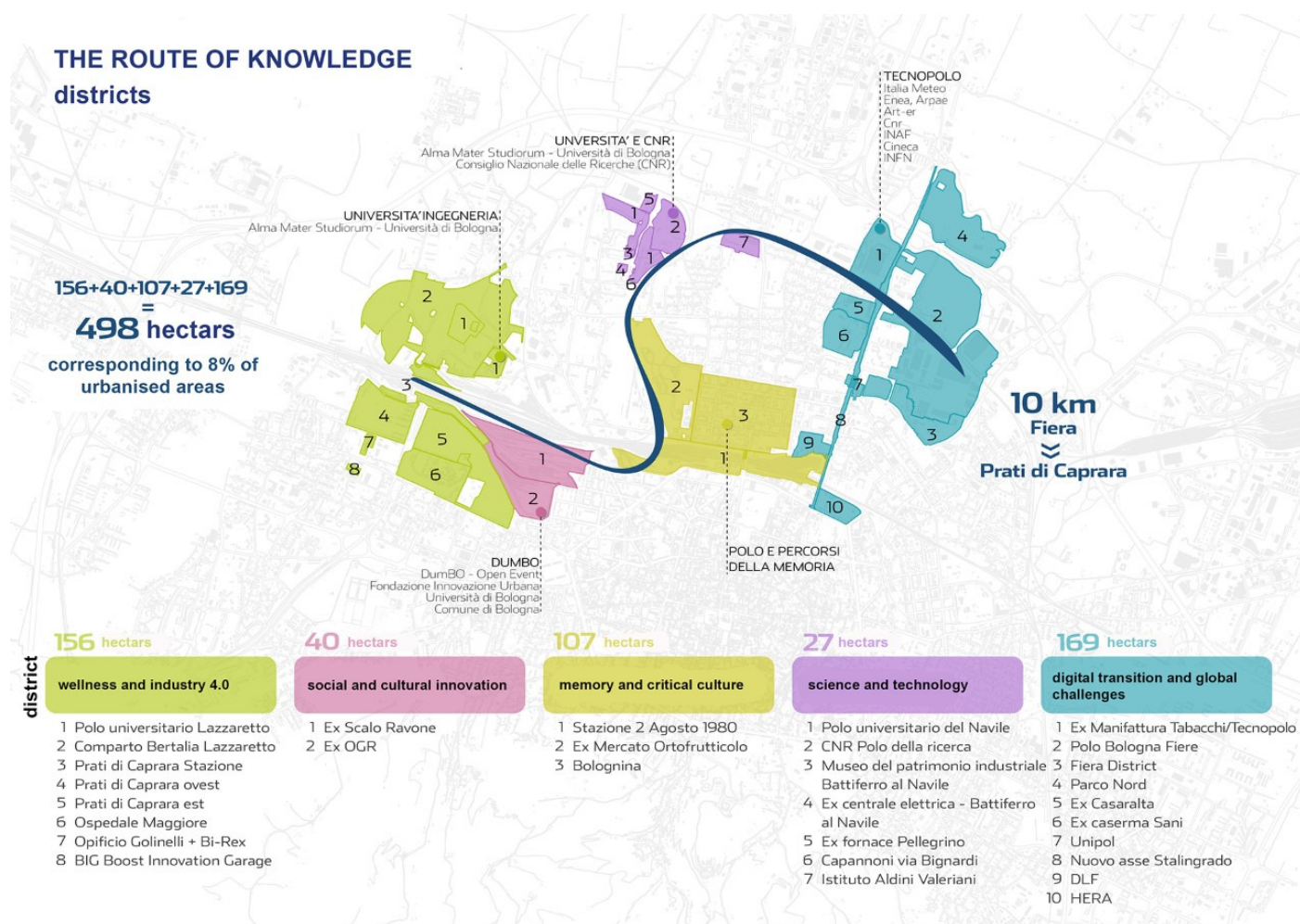


Fig. 2. City of Knowledge Districts in Bologna (Comune di Bologna, Ufficio di Piano)

part of the territory» (Gianfrate *et al.*, 2023).

The implementation of the Impronta Verde in this first phase of work is limited to the city of Bologna, where the overall landscape strategy is being defined while the first specific projects are being outlined (new school areas, redevelopment of parks and public gardens, completion of the cycle lanes, design of public spaces connected to the tramway, etc.). Despite this, the metropolitan perspective is fundamental and for some specific aspects already the subject of attention (in particular on mobility issues). The qualitative leap to be made consists in working on landscape and ecological continuity, finally tackling the theme of biodiversity and landscape qualities in all its complexity at the most appropriate scale,

which is metropolitan.

This goal is very challenging for the public administration, not only because the required skills are partially owned by the public bodies, but also because the complexity and stratification of the landscape palimpsest requires by definition an intersectoral approach.

Impronta Verde is the result of a stratification of different design layers, each of which contains a complex mosaic of projects. This corresponds to different funding sources and implementation paths, not all directly led by the public¹⁴. For its implementation, the public

¹⁴ However, the Municipality of Bologna has allocated 35 million euros of PON Metro Plus funds to finance the Green Handprint.

THE ECOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

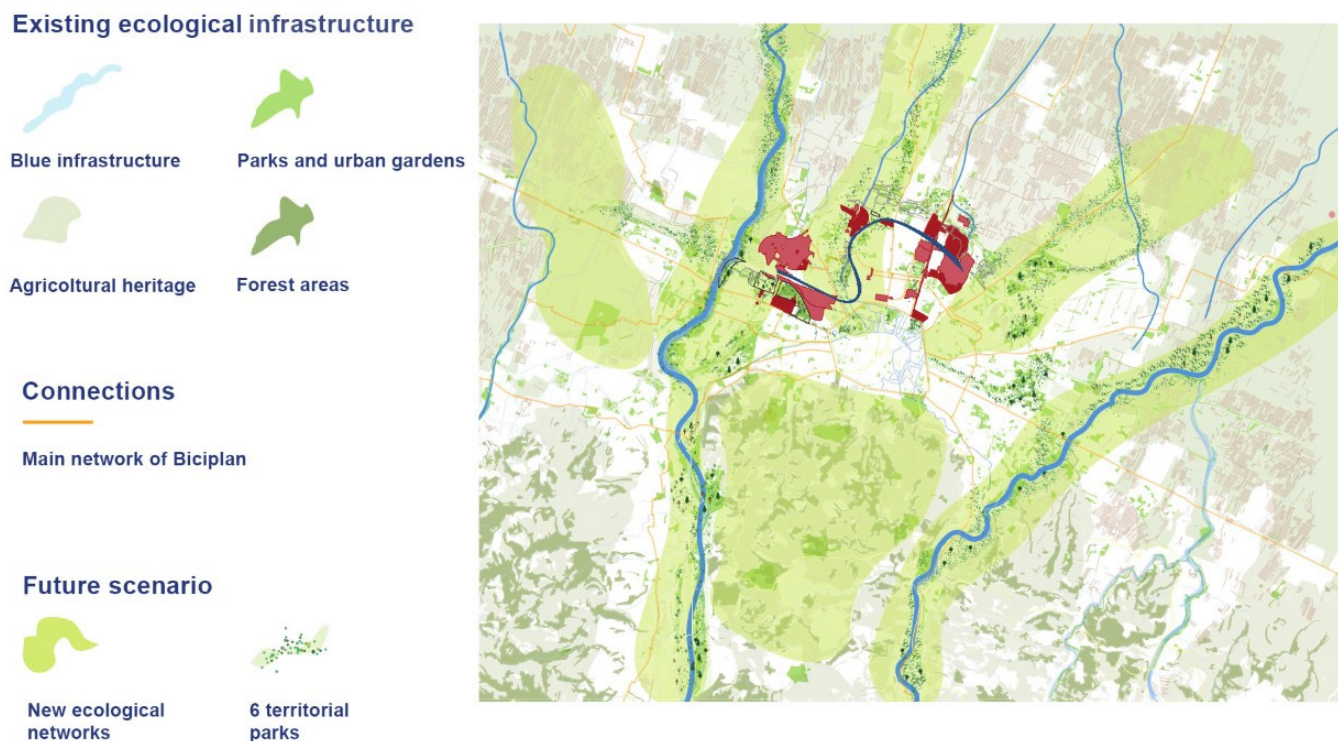


Fig. 3 Interaction between the Green Handprint and the Way of Knowledge (Comune di Bologna, Ufficio di Piano)

must therefore develop, in addition to the ability to implement projects, a strategic attitude in order to accompany the processes.

The “City of Knowledge” identifies science, knowledge and “critical memory” as pillars for Bologna’s vision of the future. This is both a project of policies and of urban redevelopment (Comune di Bologna, 2022). Concerning policies, it emphasizes the importance of strengthening the relationship between all the public and private actors in the field of research, development and advanced training, to reinforce the attractiveness of Bologna and its role as a university and research pole. This task has a significant issues with respect to many urban redevelopment districts [Fig.2], such as the new Bologna’s Technopole, which houses one of the biggest data centers in Italy and is the new seat of European

Center for Medium-ranged Weather Forecasts (ECM-WF), which moved to Bologna from Reading.

The urban redevelopment projects are related to the ambition of becoming one of the most influent cities in the field of data-driven research, but also to the need of reinforcing social inclusion and the civil identity through the realization of a new pole of the Memory and Critical knowledge which has its center in the Railway Station and in Bolognina district. This big project which connects existing buildings, brownfields, redevelopment areas and public spaces in the northern and west part of the city has a strong synergy with the Green Handprint, to which it is linked through the “Way of Knowledge” [Fig.3, 4]. This is an infrastructure for cycle and pedestrian mobility which holds together the most

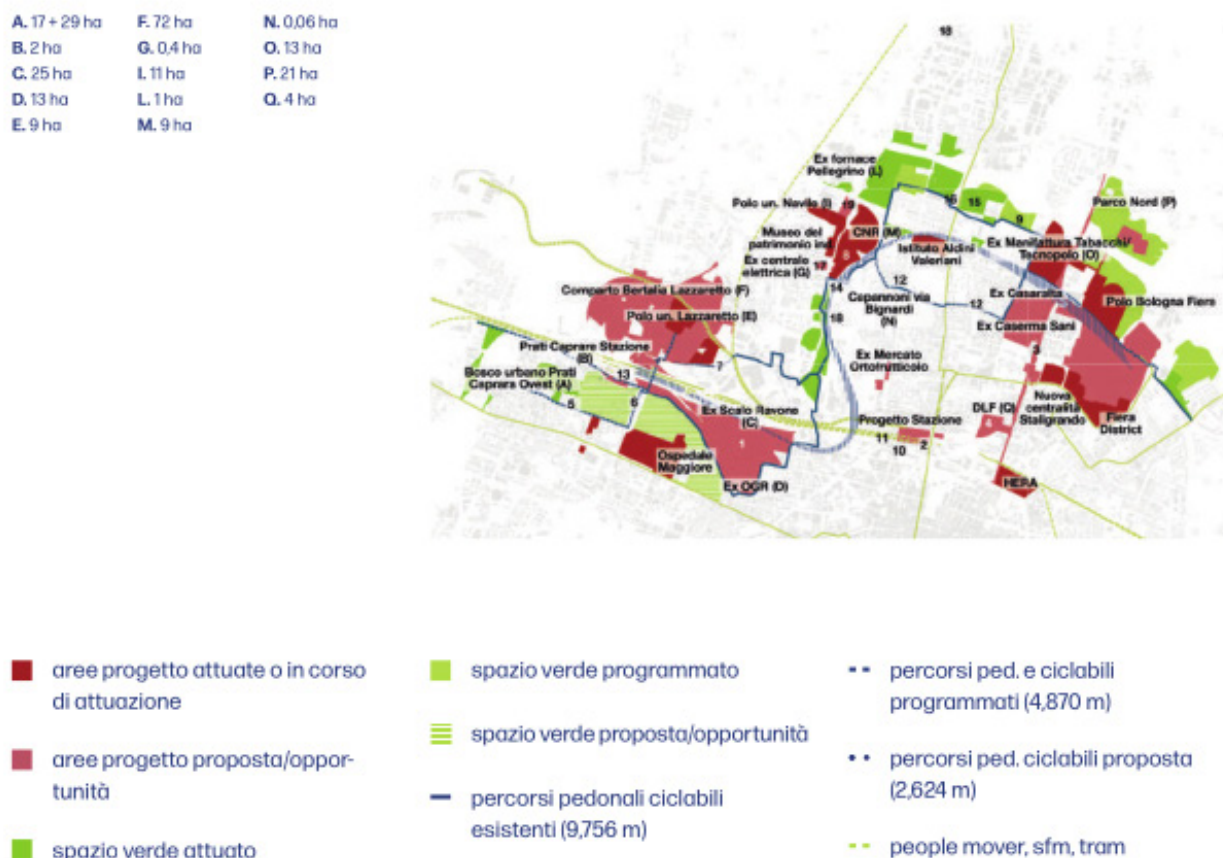


Fig. 4. The urban districts connected by the Way of Knowledge (Comune di Bologna, Ufficio di Piano)

significant places in a sort of “open air science museum” and at the same time it constitutes a part of the Green Handprint active mobility network.

Conclusion

This short description emphasizes a fundamental aspect concerning Green Handprint and City of Knowledge projects: the high degree of integration, both physical and of policies, which is implicit in the vision and necessary for its realization.

The integration does not only concern the public and the private sector, or the different competences and re-

sponsibilities of the municipal offices but it extends to the metropolitan area. If on the one hand, in fact, the Green Handprint has borders that go beyond those of the Municipality, on the other the City of Knowledge is a challenge that affects the metropolitan area globally and connects physical places and actors located in different parts of the territory. The source of funding chosen to start its implementation, not surprisingly, is the “Piano Urbano Integrato” (Integrated Urban Program, a line of intervention of the Recovery Plan) which finances 157 million euros for the metropolitan city of Bologna¹⁵.

¹⁵

The Integrated Urban Plans were provided to metropolitan cities as part of Mission 6 of the

Of these, 118 million finance the interventions of the City of Knowledge in the municipal area of Bologna, while the remainder finance other projects which are coherent with the general target, such as the Osservanza university center in Imola, the Brasimone research center and the redevelopment of the former Burgo paper mill in the Bologna Apennines.

Through this ambitious project, the whole territory of Bologna takes up the challenge of reinforcing its vocation as a “territory of knowledge”, in coherence with the historical choice of the University to establish a widespread and multi-polar settlement, with many seats that embrace the metropolitan city and also the main cities in Romagna.

Working on such large and integrated projects is very challenging for the public administration. It adds a “quality challenge” to the “time challenge” that is already implicit in the PNRR investment, which is expected to be completed in 2026. In general terms, the Italian public administration has not been prepared to support this type of projects, and not even Bologna has the human resources consistent with the ambitious framework of transformations it is putting in place. Added to this difficulty is the need to reform the administration’s way of working to deal with projects that require an integrated and cross-sectoral approach. Finally, integration also concerns the way in which the administration relates to the territory and vice versa, therefore it also affects the harmonization of the many projects led by different actors, almost all financed with PNRR resources and therefore urgent.

The challenge of metropolitan identity; therefore, is not purely linked to the contents of the flagship projects, but is mainly played out in terms of governance and the ability to make the innovation that the Recovery Plan projects are bringing to the city permanent.

PNRR, “Inclusion and cohesion”. Each metropolitan city has decided how to develop its own Plan. The city of Bologna has chosen to concentrate investments around the flagship project “Città della conoscenza”, in order to encourage the creation of an integrated transformation capable of acting not only in terms of the physical redevelopment of the city and not only in the core of metropolitan area.

Reference

- Balducci, A., Fedeli, V. and Curci, F. eds, (2017a), *Oltre la metropoli. L'urbanizzazione regionale in Italia*, Guerini, Milano.
- Balducci, A., Fedeli, V. and Curci, F. eds, (2017b), *Post-Metropolitan Territories. Looking for a New Urbanity* Guerini, Milano.
- Gianfrate, V., Ascari, M., Giordano, R., Orioli, V. and Ginocchini, G., (2023), *Co-design inclusive relations between humans and environments adopting citizen science approach*, in: Ali Sayigh ed, *Mediterranean Architecture and the Green Digital Transition*. Proceedings of the conference Med Green Forum 6th Edition, SpringerNature [under publication].
- Comune di Bologna (2022), *La città della Conoscenza*, Bologna.
- Fromonot, F. (2020), *Territoires en projet. Michel Desvigne paysagiste*, Birkhauser, Bâle.
- Orioli, V., Martinelli, N. and De Leo, D. (2016), *Innovazioni. La riforma del governo locale*, in: Urban@it. Centro nazionale di studi per le politiche urbane, *Metropoli attraverso la crisi. Rapporto sulle città*, ed. by Marco Cremaschi, Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 105-151.
- Orioli, V. and Massari, M. (2022), *Urban planning and Good Living*, in: M. Fantini, S. Farolfi, F. Lazzari, and L. Mazzara eds, *Buon Vivere (Good Living) as Relationship Economy*, Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 49 – 73
- Viganò, P. (1999), *La città elementare*, Skirà, Milano.
- Pacetti, V., & Barbera, F. (2009). Torino: rete policentrica e leadership municipale, in Burroni L. (a cura di), *Città metropolitane e politiche urbane*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 1000-1015.
- Regione Piemonte – CEP (2018), *Chi offre e chi crea lavoro in Piemonte*, Torino.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2018). The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge journal of regions, economy and society*, 11(1), 189-209.
- Semi, G., & Tonetta, M. (2021). Marginal hosts: Short-term rental suppliers in Turin, Italy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 53(7), 1630-1651.
- Sodano M. (2019), Nozze Fca – Peugeot, le attese di Torino: Appendino, “Ruolo centrale per la città”, *La Stampa*, 31 Ottobre, p. 1.
- Vanolo, A. (2008). The image of the creative city: Some reflections on urban branding in Turin. *Cities*, 25(6), 370-382.
- Vanolo a. (2015), The image of the creative city, eight years later: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo, *Cities*, Volume 46, pp. 1-7.

New Alliances with The Environment in The Governance of The Metropolitan Naples

Gilda Berruti¹ and Maria Federica Palestino¹

Abstract: *In metropolitan Naples, environmental issues have been recently integrated into urban planning by experimenting with multilevel governance and encouraging cross sectoral interactions. First responses to climate change, and the promotion of environmental education have offered the opportunity to unblock the stalemate of territorial government, both at the municipal and the metropolitan level. We argue that institutional investments in education and symbolic aspects related to the environment can contrast urban fragilities, responding to dysfunctions of the administrative apparatus, and to economic instability. Urban public spaces, dramatically critical due to climate change impacts, offer an enabling context for triggering integrated regeneration actions, where the role of the University and research can be crucial.*

Keywords: *governance, climate change, urban fragilities, public spaces, Metropolitan Naples, engaged University*

Authors' Profile

Gilda Berruti is an Architect and Associate Professor of Urban Planning at the Department of Architecture, Federico II University of Naples, Italy. Her research interests include the social construction of urban policies and plans, the sustainable city as an aspect of the new urban question, and the relationship between planning rules and urban informalities.

Maria Federica Palestino is an Associate Professor of Urban Planning at the Department of Architecture of University of Naples Federico II, Italy. Her main research focus is on urban fragility, and the public construction of urban visions and collective images. She has a specific interest in the design of inclusive action-research strategies aimed at enhancing mutual learning and shared knowledge in urban plans, programs and policies.

Introduction

Naples is the capital of a metropolitan area of 92 municipalities, with over 3 million inhabitants in 1.171 square kilometers. The city, with about 921.142 inhabitants living in an area of 119 square Kilometers, is the regional capital of Campania (550 municipalities and 5.624 million inhabitants) and is located at the heart of the South of Italy, also called “Mezzogiorno” (ISTAT Data, 2022).

To outline the current condition of Naples as a relevant part of the economy and society of Southern Italy, we refer to the Report by the Association for the Industrial Development in Southern Italy (Svimez, 2019) which

drawing the socio-economic profile of Mezzogiorno, identified a double gap. It consists in the distance between the north and the south of Italy on the one hand, and between Italy and the rest of Europe on the other. Such a distance increased with the pandemic crisis, which emphasized the unsolved structural knots, bringing Italian regions to be united by the crisis and separated by the restart (Svimez, 2021). As reported from Svimez, it is time to tackle the structural deficiencies that have been hindering the national growth for twenty years and exacerbate the territorial inequalities already increasing before the pandemic.

In the latest 20 years, the national economic policy has reduced investments in the South, and eroded the interdependencies of the south with the center-north, thus weakening the Italian internal market and even

¹ Department of Architecture, University of Naples Federico II

the contribution of Italy to the growth of Europe. The interdependency among regions, together with the national implications of the territorial cohesion, seem to be the key aspects to focus on in order to enhance the development of southern regions where gaps in the infrastructure provision and service allocation are massive. Between 2006 and 2017, the strengthening of the GDP in Europe has been accompanied by its decrease in Italian regions. Looking deeper, southern cities are poorer than center-north ones. The phenomenon highlights a complex geography, characterized by a development at different speeds for central-northern Europe, the new Eastern states, and weak regions in the Mediterranean Europe, testifying how far the South is from European standards of living.

In relation to the covid-19 emergency, the Campania Region shows a drop in GDP slightly higher than that registered in the other southern Italy regions, as well as a decrease in consumptions, and a sharp decline in investments (Svimez 2021). In 2020, in fact, the GDP of Southern Italy was still more than 10 points below 2008, and progressively moving away from the more dynamic European economies. A high level of vulnerability emerges if we observe the regional data on the employment rate (less than 60%). Expectations of future for the new generations are not reassuring, as the percentage of people from 18 to 24 years-old who do not work and do not study exceeds 22.5% in the Campania Region and Mediterranean Europe, while the rate of employment of young graduates is less than 60%. In both cases, these values are the lowest in Europe. The same happens for the female employment rate, as the Campania Region, and Southern Italy in general, have the highest gender employment gap in Europe (Svimez 2021).

To the fragile context outlined so far corresponds a similar portrait in the metropolitan area, based on the rise of spatial and social inequalities. Naples is located in a densely and disorderly urbanized area, characterized by a high land take reaching 34,18% in the metropolitan area and 63% in the capital. Furthermore, a low index of public health and habitat quality (Snpa, 2021) testifies an increase in human and non-human diseases (Armiero

& Fava, 2016) and in land degradation (Corona, 2015).

Being strongly affected by the regional waste emergency during the past (Sodano & Trocchia, 2010; Pasotti, 2010; Cantoni, 2016) and, as a consequence, by the socio-ecological disaster known as the Land of Fires (Armiero, 2014; Palestino, 2015), the area is now characterized by a vast amount and variety of wastelands, and a proliferation of wastescapes waiting for regeneration (Amenta & van Timmeren, 2018; Amenta et al., 2022).

Administrative unregulation (De Leo & Palestino, 2017), and the spread of urban informalities (Berruti & Palestino, 2020) are key aspects to understand the context, with impacts on the poor governance model in use, that is marked by fragmentation of decision-making processes, sectoral knowledge and failed integration of stakeholders in policy-making. Pressed by various obstacles and local concerns, institutions such as the City of Naples, the Metropolitan City, and the Campania Regional Authority are subject to the current structural deficiencies. Although, after Rome, Naples is one of the largest Italian cities together with Milan, and Turin, the working of its administrative machine and the governance model in use should be improved.

Governing the ongoing transition requires to tackle some structural problems of the administrative apparatus, such as financial instability, reduction in staff numbers, and limits in horizontal and vertical governance related to difficulties in interinstitutional dialogue (Berruti & Palestino, 2021). Power conflicts between the mayor of the City and the Metropolitan City of Naples² and the governor of the Campania Region have troubled for a long time not only the City but also the Metropolitan City government. Fortunately, this season closed with the results of the Mayor's election in October 2021 and the planning of new alliances with the regional and national government.

According to a legal measure to mitigate the financial instability, from November 2012 the City of Naples

² According to the national law on Metropolitan Cities (Law 56/2014), mayors of Metropolitan Cities coincide with mayors of capital cities.

has been involved in a ten-year financial recovery plan, whose impacts are harshly affecting the staffing plan and, as a consequence, are weakening the governance model in use, and even the working of the municipal machine. The need for containing the public expenditure caused, in fact, a prompt cutting of jobs, passing from 13.901 to 10.474 during 2013. If we give a deeper look at municipal data regarding the staff, we discover that in January 2019 the number of employees decreased to 6.452, while in January 2020 to 5.740³. More than 50% of employees, however, are older than sixty, and more than 75% are older than fifty (Comune di Napoli, 2021).

In particular, one of the most evident inadequacy of the public sector in the government of Naples corresponds to the service devoted to the maintenance of urban greenery. Many public open spaces and parks all over the city, especially in marginal districts, are partially closed or neglected, due to the sharp reduction in the gardeners' number "from 1.000 in 2011 to about sixty" in April 2021 according to De Magistris mayor's oral testimony⁴.

According to Gaetano Manfredi, who would soon run for mayor and win the election, in 2021 the City of Naples showed the following economic and organizational condition: "Liabilities well exceed five billion euros, between debts and bad debts. The subsidiaries are in crisis and difficulties in providing services are expected. The administrative apparatus is understaffed and poor in essential skills. The current spending capacity is reset to zero. We are de facto in collapse» (Manfredi, 2021). After the October elections, in March 2022, a national agreement has been established between the new Mayor Manfredi and the Prime Minister Draghi to settle the budget deficit and relaunch investments. A Pact for Naples was considered the necessary response from the state to the current structural crisis, exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic, that has led to a progressive increase of poverty and the diaspora of young people leaving Na-

ples for better job opportunities. The Pact aims to reduce gaps and social costs and make the city able to catch the opportunities coming from the post pandemic European Recovery Plan. According to the pact the national government is going to allocate 1,3 billion euros for Naples over the next 20 years as part of a program to aid big cities with serious financial problems (ANSA, 2022).

The Environment as A Lens to Analyze Urban Governance

From 2018 and 2020 the governance model of the metropolitan Naples has been explored as one of the five case-studies selected by the Environmental Humanities Lab at KTH Royal Institute of Technology of Stockholm in the framework of the "Occupy Climate Change!" research (<https://occupyclimatechange.net>). Urban political ecologists from New York, Malmö, Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro, and Naples have accordingly put local movements, civil society and public actor's perceptions, aspirations, and know-how under the lens of the climate governance (Armiero et al., 2023).

As for Naples, the welfare crisis, with difficulties in diluting the pervasiveness of government and strengthening the role of civil society in the delivery of public services displays dysfunctions, disservices, and inequalities among urban areas. These inequalities result to be harsher in peripheral districts, where public open spaces and parks are often neglected and climate impacts are more devastating, calling for experimenting with mixed partnerships between public and private actors to manage urban green areas. This portrait of the city explains why environmental issues cannot be considered a priority for the Naples public agenda. The most urgent issues to face, in fact, are concerned with the current financial crisis, the welfare crisis and difficulties in managing ordinary business (Berruti et al., 2021). These factors prevent local administrations from addressing global environmental concerns.

In recent years, national and international media have basically ignored the impacts of climate change on the city, focusing on the still unsolved waste management

³ These numbers are based on the "single programming documents" approved by the City Council and available on the City of Naples website.

⁴ The words of the mayor De Magistris reported here are transcripts from an interview edited by Il Mattino, April 15, 2021 (translation by the author). https://www.ilmattino.it/video/glocal/de_magistris_parla_privatizzazione_villa_comunale_non_ha_capito_niente-5901069.html

crisis and the effects of the disaster known as ‘Land of Fires’. In the meantime, due to the increase of extreme weather events, media begun reporting on the lack of ordinary and extraordinary urban maintenance, linking the effects of climate change to the irreversible deterioration of urban public spaces. The media debate on climate change started in February 2019 after the first Friday for Future’ urban routine in to prepare the global strike of March. However, from February 2019 on, the issue of climate change has taken a symbolic emphasis, not only for the most sensitive citizens, but even for the role it has gained in the improvement of the City and the Metropolitan City technical competences, know-how, and the upgrading of the governance model in use.

Fortunately, creative reactions by local organizations, social cooperatives and civic groups have a long-term story in Naples (Palestino, 2022). Here, in fact, they have been working as a lever to stop the decline during structural crisis and environmental emergencies. Civic involvement, indeed, together with universities’ support, have been offering a social capital on which we presume the public sector is going to invest in order to design policies tailored to the context (Berruti & Palestino, 2021).

Addressing Climate Change in The Urban and Metropolitan Agenda

At the beginning of 2019, the growing media coverage of global struggles against CC led to the progressive involvement of officials and technicians in climate strategies, subsequently followed by local politicians, who had been previously inattentive to the issue. This sudden awareness started thanks to the partnership of the City of Naples in the Horizon 2020 research Clarity “Integrated Climate Adaptation Service Tools for Improving Resilience Measure Efficiency” (www.clarity-h2020.eu), upon request of the Plinius Study Center of the Federico II University of Naples. Entering the research made possible for the municipal urban planning staff to keep climate change on the city government agenda and move it up the list of policy priorities, bringing to the center the need to acquire integrated technical skills on the subject.

In the framework of the Clarity research the City of Naples had a double role: as end-user, involved in the co-design and assessment of climate services; and as data provider, engaged in the input data collection of simulation models, and in the definition of urban plans and projects (Comune di Napoli, 2020). In particular, the integrated work of municipal officials within Clarity, including urban planning, public housing, mobility, and the environment, proved to be very useful for updating the ongoing Urban Plan and reinforcing the environmental strategy called ‘Safe and Sustainable City’ (Comune di Napoli, 2019).

The collaboration between the City of Naples and the Federico II scholars began to bridge the gaps in environmental skills of the administrative apparatus, allowing public officials to properly pursue the Preliminary Plan and the Environmental Report. This fruitful interaction provided a meaningful framework for discussing with the designated actors and approving these documents at the beginning of 2020. Urban strategies could be consequently refined as the focus of climate mitigation and adaptation, starting from urban regeneration and public facilities.

The consequence of this fortuitous alignment of interests and objectives recently led the City of Naples to overcome sectoral environmental policies and reorient itself towards the implementation of the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan not addressed so far due to the lack of resources.

The media wave coverage of climate change, starting in February 2019, has also conditioned the decision-making of the Metropolitan City where, from 2017 onwards, the mayor was undertaking a political battle to give space and visibility to environmental concerns. The attention on climate happened mainly through legal instruments such as the Strategic Plan of the Metropolitan City and several formal acts, in particular metropolitan resolutions.

At the end of 2018, the Metropolitan City of Naples approved the ‘Guidelines of the Strategic Plan’, with a

double specific focus: the 'Economic and Social Development of the Territory', and the 'Enhancement of the Quality of Life through Environmental Protection'. The Strategic Metropolitan Plan making could start due to the recovery of a budget surplus by the Metropolitan mayor. The sum of 500 million euros, quite significant for a fragile administration like the Metropolitan City of Naples, allowed to distribute economic resources to the 92 municipalities in the area, and to launch the Strategic Metropolitan Plan. Based on these premises, on March 2019 it was possible to approve the resolution "Oxygen Common Good - Naples metropolis 30/50" which has been leading the Metropolitan City to the implementation of measures to protect the territory, working on the oxygen production and the containment of gases responsible for overheating, according to the UN 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development. The resolution, coming after a long-lasting political dialogue with research bodies and representatives of the civil society, presents a program of activities to be implemented through the strategic metropolitan plan with the aim of promoting urban, and infrastructural transformations capable of containing the process of global warming by 2050. In addition, in August 2019, the Metropolitan Council approved the motion on climate and environmental emergency, committing to implement within six months initiatives for the reduction of emissions, the implementation of building resilience projects, the introduction of renewable energies, the revision of urban planning and mobility projects, developing urban forestation. The Metropolitan City of Naples involved experts and scholars in urban forestation on the 'Oxygen Common Good' strategy with the aim of planting three million trees and restoring equilibrium conditions for inhabitants' well-being.

In July 2020, the Strategic Plan was adopted by the Metropolitan Council (Città metropolitana di Napoli 2020). In October 2020, an institutional agreement was signed by the Department of Architecture of Federico II University and the Metropolitan Council in order to organize first experimental activities for implementing the

'Oxygen Common Good' resolution n. 98⁵. The resolution promoted a great educational campaign regarding the about 352 high schools managed by the Metropolitan City all over the metropolitan area of Naples against the effects of climate change on the urban fabric. The idea to build a participative vision, and involve teachers and students in learning by doing laboratories was aimed at re-naturalizing the public offer of schools' open spaces as a practical way to combat heat waves and pluvial flooding.

The result was a strategic investment in the potential role of teaching/learning communities as living hubs of socio-ecological regeneration. Being the resolution aimed at training teachers and students to motivate them on the creative adaptation of their schools, the collaboration could take advantage of the Climate Action Laboratory funded by the Department of Architecture under the umbrella of the Occupy Climate Change! research. Three experimental courses were held from 2020 to 2022, involving professors and students of urban planning and evaluation at the second year of the Undergraduate Program in 'Sustainable Development and Territorial Networks' (Palestino et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Climate change has been recently integrated into urban planning by promoting multilevel governance models and encouraging cross sectoral interactions, thus opening dialogues among actors not used to collaborate in policy-making. In short, the responses to climate change and environmental education have offered the opportunity to unblock the stalemate of some territorial government tools, thus to start the preliminary Municipal Urban Plan, to resume the Urban Plan for Sustainable Mobility and to guide, thanks to the Oxygen Common Good strategy, the Metropolitan Strategic Plan.

The willingness by institutions to invest in educational and symbolic aspects that offer the basis for building

⁵ The Oxygen Common Good axis of the Strategic Plan aims to increase urban resilience through the conscious management of resources supporting climate change adaptation. See Berruti & Palestino, 2021.

policies and regulatory devices has been functional to fill the gaps in environmental skills, and the organizational dysfunctions of the administrative apparatus, well beyond the problems related to the ongoing economic instability. It is no by chance that the fabric of urban public spaces has become the hook for these policies: both because it is on space that the impact of climate change insists dramatically, and because urban public spaces constitute the enabling context for integrated regeneration actions.

After these experiments, the Federico II University is becoming increasingly ready in offering a kind of public service that allows the limits of a dramatically fragile metropolitan area such as Naples to be exceeded.

References

- Amenta, L., & van Timmeren, A. (2018), "Beyond wastescapes: Towards circular landscapes. Addressing the spatial dimension of circularity through the regeneration of wastescapes", *Sustainability*, 10 (12), pp.1-25.
- Amenta, L., Russo M., & van Timmeren A. (2022) (eds.), *Regenerative Territories. Dimensions of Circularity for Healthy Metabolisms*, Cham, Springer.
- ANSA (2022) "North-south divide must be bridged says Draghi", online at: https://www.ansa.it/english/news/politics/2022/03/29/north-south-divide-must-be-bridged-says-draghi_96c558aa-87ab-4ec0-9697-1c017532ee72.html
- Armiero M (2014), "Garbage Under the Volcano: The Waste Crisis in Campania and the Struggles for Environmental Justice". In: *A History of Environmentalism*, edited by Armiero Marco and Lize Sedrez, London, Bloomsbury, pp. 169–184.
- Armiero M, De Rosa S, & Turham E. (2023, forthcoming) (eds.) *Urban Movements and Climate Change: Loss, Damage and Radical Adaptation*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.
- Armiero M, & Fava A. (2016) *Humans, Sheep, and Dioxin: A History of Contamination and Transformation in Acerra, Italy, Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 27(2), p. 67-82. DOI:10.1080/10455752.2016.1172812
- Berruti, G., Laino, G., Mattiucci, C., & Palestino, M. F. (2021), *Napoli: i beni comuni come dispositivo per accompagnare le transizioni*. In: A. Magnier, M. Morisi, & C. Perrone (Eds.), *Urban@it Settimo Rapporto sulle città*,
- Berruti G., & Palestino M.F. (2020), "Contested land and blurred rights in the Land of Fires (Italy)", *International Planning Studies*, 25(3), 277-288, DOI: 10.1080/13563475.2019.1584551.
- Berruti G., & Palestino M.F. (2021), "Exploring the Governance of Naples, Italy, Through a Climate Responsive Approach". In: Peker, E., Ataöv, A. (eds) *Governance of Climate responsive cities*, The Urban Book Series. Springer, Cham, pp.43-58. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-73399-5_4
- Cantoni R. (2016), "The Waste Crisis in Campania, South Italy: A Historical Perspective on an Epidemiological Controversy", *Endeavour* 40 (2), pp.102–113.
- Città metropolitana di Napoli (2020), *ImmagiNA. Napoli Metropoli 2019/21. Il primo piano strategico della città metropolitana di Napoli*, online at: https://www.cittametropolitana.na.it/documents/10181/5501259/PSCM_Web_LQ-26ott2020.pdf/486fdd05-139c-4fec-9c3d-f01790964a61
- Comune di Napoli (2019) "Napoli 2019-2030. Città, ambiente, diritti e beni comuni", online at: <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/1%252Fe%252F9%252FD.194f8300c-dfa79d96fa4/P/BLOB%3AID%3D37912/E/pdf?mode=download> (November 2022)
- Comune di Napoli (2020), *Rapporto preliminare di vas-vi*, online at: <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/1%252F9%252F2%252FD.e7456b9ad07748a-c7a95/P/BLOB%3AID%3D37912/E/pdf>
- Comune di Napoli (2021), *Documento Unico di Programmazione 2019-2021*, online at: <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeAttachment.php/L/IT/D/1%252Fa%252F4%252FD.c64dda-2593dc183a504f/P/BLOB%3AID%3D39974/E/pdf?mode=download> (November 2022)
- Corona G. (2015), "Questione meridionale come questione territoriale. Il caso della Campania", *Parolechiarve*, 54, p.153-165.
- De Leo D., & Palestino M.F. (2017), *S-regulation matters*, in Balducci A., Fedeli V., Curci F. (edited by), *Post-Metropolitan Territories. Looking for a New Urbanity*, Routledge, London-New York, pp. 274-280

ISTAT Data (2022), Campania: Popolazione e famiglie, online at: <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=18563> (December 2022)

Manfredi G. (2021), “Lettera alla città”, la Repubblica, Napoli, 19 maggio.

Palestino M. F. (2015), “How to put environmental injustice on the planner’s radical agenda. Learning on the Land of Fires-Italy”, 29th Annual AESOP 2015 Congress “Definite Space – Fuzzy Responsibility”, July 13–16, E-book of Proceedings, Prague, Czech Republic, pp. 2576-86.

Palestino M.F., Berruti G., & Quagliano S. (2020), “Climate change as a lever for place-based regeneration policies: The case of Naples, Italy”, in Istanbul Policy Center (ed.) Production of climate responsive urban built environments Proceedings book, pp.83-89

Palestino M.F., Amore M.P., Cuntò S., & Molinaro W. (2020), “Reinventare le scuole come hub di rigenerazione socio-ecologica. una ricognizione sulle potenzialità degli spazi aperti degli istituti superiori di Napoli”, BDC Bollettino del Centro Calza Bini, 20(1), 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.6092/2284-4732/7550>

Palestino M.F. (2022), La forma dell’invisibile. Per una ecologia politica dei territori fragili, Clean, Napoli.

Pasotti, E. (2010). Sorting through the Trash: The Waste Management Crisis in Southern Italy. South European Society and Politics, 15(2), 289-307.

Sodano T., Trocchia N. (2010), La peste. La mia battaglia contro i rifiuti della politica italiana, Rizzoli, Milano

Snpa (2021) - Sistema nazionale per la protezione dell’ambiente - Consumo di suolo, dinamiche territoriali e servizi ecosistemici, Report di sistema, 22. https://www.snpambiente.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/IT_Sintesi_Rapporto_consumo_di_suolo_2021.pdf

Svimez (2019), “Il Mezzogiorno nella nuova geografia europea delle disuguaglianze” Note di sintesi, on-

line at: http://lnx.svimez.info/svimez/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/rapporto_svimez_2019_sintesi.pdf (November 2022)

Svimez (2021), Sintesi del Rapporto SVIMEZ 2021, online at: <http://lnx.svimez.info/svimez/sintesi-del-rapporto-svimez-2021/> (November 2022)

The Reshaping of the City-Port Interface in Palermo: A Case of Successful Urban Governance?

Ignazio Vinci¹

Abstract: *In the last decades, various port cities in western countries have developed policies to make shipping activities more compatible with the urban environment and organization. This paper provides a critical interpretation of the process that is leading to the regeneration of the waterfront area of Palermo, the Italian fifth largest city by population. In a first part of the paper the events and economic factors that have negatively impacted on the city-port spatial relations are outlined. Subsequently, in the light of the new governance relations established between the city and port authorities, the strategy and main interventions of the port masterplan that is currently reshaping the city-port interface are described in details. In the light of the changing structure of local economy, the paper concludes with a discussion of the threats and opportunities the current regeneration process can provide on the city's future development.*

Keywords: *Waterfront regeneration, local governance, urban regeneration, urban planning, port development, Southern Italy.*

Author's Profile

Ignazio Vinci is Associate Professor of Urban planning at the University of Palermo. His research focuses on urban development in Europe and Italy, urban policy and local development, spatial planning and territorial governance. On these topics he has worked on research projects funded by national and international programmes, including the Italian Ministry of Research, UN-Habitat, EU's Interreg, ESPON, Jean Monnet. He has also served as consultant for national, regional and local authorities in the design, implementation and evaluation of plans for territorial development. He has been invited to give lectures at the University College of Dublin, RUDN University of Moscow, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Technical University of Madrid. His latest books include *The spatial strategies of Italian regions* (Angeli, 2014), *Progettare lo sviluppo sostenibile nelle città* (Carocci, 2020), *The role of sharing mobility in contemporary cities* (Springer, 2020), *Urban change and regional development at the margins of Europe* (Routledge, 2022). Since 2021 he's vice-President of the European Urban Research Association (EURA).

Introduction

Like that of other Western port cities, Palermo's modern urban development has been significantly bound up with the evolving needs of its harbor (Porfyriou and Sepe, 2017). During the 19th century, in particular, the growth of the port economy was accompanied by an expansion of its infrastructure, turning its quiet coexistence with the urban area into a more complex interaction and, later, a source of conflict.

A first step in this process was the creation of a large

shipyard within the port area at the beginning of the last century. Started by the Florio family, the leading business family of the period, the construction of the manufacturing plant ultimately pushed shipping activities from the north side of the harbor to an area closer to the city center. To support freight transport to and from the harbor, a number of rail lines were built around the port in the first half of the century, resulting in the first material separation between the city and the sea front.

A second stage in the reshaping of Palermo's city-port interface was a side effect of the mass motorization process that took place in Italy after the Second World

¹ Department of Architecture, University of Palermo

War. In the 1960s the national navigation company started to board cars onto ferries connecting the main ports of the country and, over the decades which followed, the Ro-Ro market development brought growing numbers of heavy vehicles within the main port area too, in addition to cars and passengers. This business rapidly changed the port infrastructure and its relationship to the built environment, as the harbor needed to be efficiently connected to the regional road networks (Inzerillo, 2017; Pedone, 2019). Its close spatial relationship with the Palermo city center meant that the port's activities ended up disrupting the quality of life in the districts around the port area, as well as limiting pedestrian access to the waterfront.

With this historical process as a background, this paper provides a critical understanding of the process that is reshaping large waterfront areas in the city of Palermo, the Italian fifth largest city by population. Starting from the new governance relations established between the municipality and the port authority, the central part of the work is devoted to describe the strategy and main interventions of the port masterplan that is currently reshaping the city-port interface. The paper finally analyses to which extent the waterfront regeneration can affect the city's future development and which threats and opportunities, deriving from the changing nature of the port activities, should be addressed by local policies.

A new urban governance of the city-port relationship

The historical process outlined above, which led to the current waterfront area, is essential to any evaluation of the planning initiatives of the last decade, as described in section 3 of this paper. At the same time, understanding the magnitude of these projects within the city's development process also requires evaluating recent city-port governance relationship developments, after decades of separation and conflict.

This changed relationship is the outcome of the new powers granted to the port authorities in the Italian

government system leading on from two main reforms.

The first of these – started in 1994 with Law 84 – set up the above mentioned port authorities, giving them special port infrastructure management powers and key planning responsibility in the port's development. Moreover, the reform also granted a special advisory role to a 'harbor committee' formed by various local stakeholders, including the mayor, the president of the chamber of commerce, and others. The harbor committee has to be consulted in any port authority planning and is responsible for approving the port masterplan.

The second of these governance innovation derives from the reform passed by the Italian government in 2016, which transformed the former port authorities into sub-regional port authorities ('System Port Authority'), with management powers over nearby ports with integration potential. Furthermore, this type of port authority now has increased autonomy over a number of relevant port economy development decisions, including attracting new operators to the cruise market, the effect of which will be examined below.

The implications of these reforms for a large port-city like Palermo are significant from various points of view.

On one hand, port development strategy is finally no longer separated off from that of the city as a whole. In fact, the Palermo port masterplan (finally approved in 2018 after a lengthy planning and consultation process begun in 2008) reflects a new awareness of the interdependency of the port infrastructure and the surrounding built environment. This changed approach is especially tangible in the design of the city-port interface (described in section 3), which generated new bridges between city and port area development.

On the other hand, joint management of the new authority's four ports helped the port of Palermo to move network activities no longer compatible with its own development strategy to other ports. This is the case of Ro-Ro traffic, which is being gradually transferred to the nearby port of Termini Imerese, leaving space

for Palermo port's core-business, increasingly tied to passenger traffic and the cruise market.

Planning the city-port interface

A different port infrastructure planning approach – which, in turn, is an effect of a different approach to government – is key to the huge transformational process taking place in the Palermo port area. This process has been marked by a range of planning initiatives, with a leading role being played by the port authority, with not only land-use control over a wide waterfront area, but also the financial resources to fund regeneration projects.

The reshaping of city-port interactions is a process which began when the port authority decided to update its former harbor land-use plan dating back to 1992. To this end, the municipality and the port authority agreed to set up a permanent workshop – called 'Officina del Porto' – tasked with providing technical assistance to the authority in its plan preparation work. In addition, the Officina was also a multidisciplinary think tank designed to help local stakeholders grasp the port's future in the city's economy, exploring their mutual relationship and potential conflicts. The events organized by the Officina, for instance, were some of the general public's first contact with the complexity of city-port interaction and, in some ways, their first opportunity to access decisions that had historically been dealt with through a strictly 'siloed' approach.

From this perspective, the most significant outcome of the Officina's work was its outlining of an innovative city-port interface sustainable regeneration strategy in the context of attempts to increase the port's competitiveness within the emerging shipping market. This meant creating the new facilities required for the growing passenger traffic and, at the same time, removing the barriers that have historically blocked local people's relationship with the sea. These barriers consisted in waterfront areas out of bounds to public use as a result of their dereliction, the existence of mixed (and often conflicting) economic activities or, more simply,

because gated.

In 2008 these general objectives were transferred to a masterplan, adopted via a joint decision agreed with the municipality in 2011, but finally approved only in 2018 after the required regional approval was granted. A distinctive feature of the masterplan was the importance given to the areas now potentially 'open' to public use and, conversely, to the urban fabric which might have been affected by the new port role (Carta, 2012). To deal with this significant challenge in future sustainability, in city-port relationship terms, the masterplan identified six 'interface areas' and accorded them specific roles and functions.

The first area – with a stronger historical identity – encompasses the oldest part of the harbor (the Cala) and the ruins of the Norman castle (Castello a Mare), existing until the Second World War. This is the area in which the regeneration process began immediately after the port masterplan was first approved, with the creation of pedestrian areas connecting to the Foro Italico garden (interface area 2), a five-hectare green area opened in 2000 by the municipality.

The third section of the city-port interface is, perhaps, the landmark of the whole waterfront regeneration strategy. This is the reconversion of the Molo Trapezoidale – a three-hectare dock cleared of existing port activities (e.g. small shipyards and abandoned loading areas) – into a leisure district. This area is to be redesigned in the plan to mark the outline of the no-longer-extant castle, while its new open spaces will be complemented by a number of retail activities. After this project is completed – planned for 2023 – a waterfront open to public use will consist of around 2.5 km of (continuous) pedestrian areas and public spaces.

The fourth interface area coincides with the gates to the port area from the city, perhaps the most challenging element in the overall strategy designed to 'repair' the city's broken relationship with the sea. This will be the site of a range of new facilities for travelers (including a large cruise terminal) as well as public spaces on

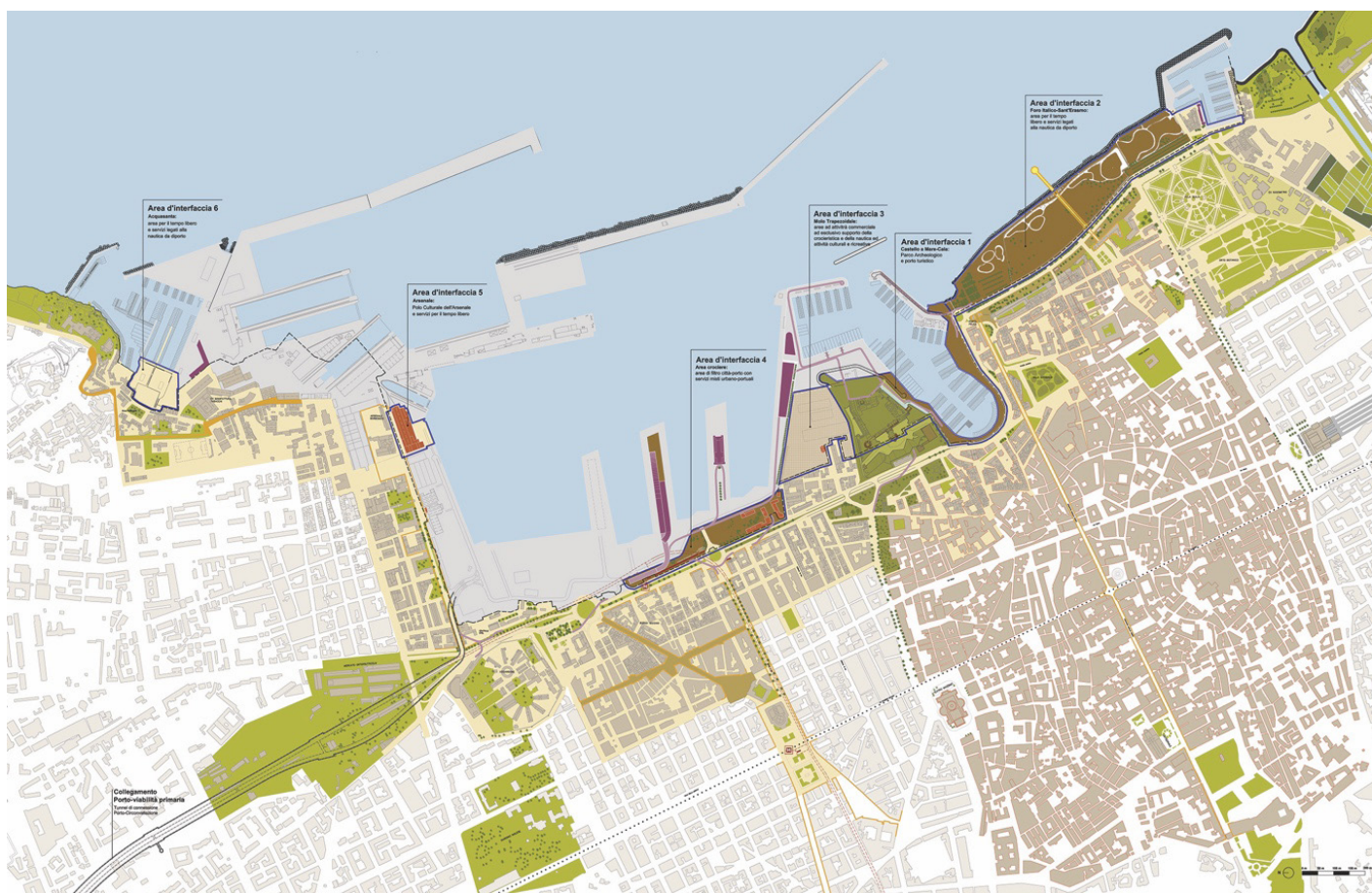


Fig. 1. The port masterplan with the six ‘interface areas’ with the city (Source: Palermo Port Authority)

the sea-front, part of which will be elevated to give pedestrians a sea view. Plans for the remaining two interface areas (5 and 6), located to the north of the harbor – where other amenities and small public spaces are to be created to help revitalize the neighborhoods on the waterfront –, are of lesser significance.

In accordance with the overall objective of ‘repairing’ the city’s broken relationship with the sea, these interventions are also inspired by concrete – direct and indirect – economic interests. The largest direct economic benefit is clearly the revenues the port authority expects from infrastructure like the cruise terminal and its related business. At the same time, waterfront areas under port authority jurisdiction will be occupied by other leisure activities designed to attract customers of

a different kind, including local night life. The revenues from this will be shared by the companies running businesses within the harbor and the port authority itself, via its concession charges.

Huge – although less measurable – economic impact is also expected to come in from port authority investments, whose beneficiaries will be other economic stakeholders and the city as a whole. These potential benefits derive from the challenge of making the city not only a gateway for tourist destinations across the region (as it currently is for many passengers) but a sought-after destination in its own right as well. In other words, this means readying the city to draw as much as it can from developing port activities, in the context of a tourism sector that is already changing the



Fig. 2. The city-port interface area 3 – ‘Molo Trapezoidale’ – according to the port masterplan
(Source: palermo.mobilita.org)

local economy.

The literature shows that the mutual effects of these economic drivers have the potential to rapidly reshape port city local economies. At the same time, there is an awareness of the risks involved in increased port activity pressure on fragile urban infrastructure, especially where the public policy groundwork is lacking.

Dealing with the risks involved in a changing port economy: concluding remarks

With issues such as these in the background, preparing the city for the changing role of the port/waterfront will be one of the main local government challenges in the years to come. The potential implications for the city of such a huge transformation process can be examined from a wide range of perspectives. I will select some of these here, focusing on the following effects: (1) the city's material structure; (2) its cultural-economic identity, and (3) local government innovation.

(1) The austerity measures of this last decade have led to reduced investments in many significant qual-



Fig. 3. Render of the city-port interface area 3 – ‘Molo Trapezoidale’ – project (Source: Palermo Port Authority)

ity-of-life and regeneration-of-the-built-environment policies in Palermo. Abandoned building sites, and poor maintenance of public spaces, reflect the recent crisis in urban policy. The rise of activism in the private and tertiary sectors has not compensated for this lack of public policy, although it has played a key role in kick-starting the recovery process in some urban areas. For example, it is local businesses, non-profit organizations and local people themselves who have been the driving force behind the pedestrianization process under way in many areas of the old town.

It is likely that the increased visitor volumes bound up with the cruise sector will further speed up the city center's pedestrianization process. This trend may exert pressure on the fragile built environment of the old town, but also constitute an opportunity to reshape wider accessibility into and out of the center. For instance, an efficient network of paths and cycle tracks

might be of considerable help in reducing traffic in the old town, which is the destination of many city-users as well as tourists. This work may thus speed up the transition to a post-car future for a city which still ranks as one of Europe's most congested.

Examining the specific cultural identity conveyed by means of commerce, it must be acknowledged that the growth in visitor numbers has already changed the profile of entire old town neighborhoods (Picone, 2021). Here, food and retail businesses are increasingly targeting tourists, replacing former businesses even within traditional historic markets. Combined with a rapidly growing short-term rentals market, this phenomenon is drastically reshaping the social and economic profile of the historic districts, with risks for residents that are already well-known in other Southern European cities (Cocola-Gant, 2018; Seixas and Albet, 2012).

Although some cruise passengers head out to sites outside the city center, visitor number increases resulting from the port development can impact further on these processes. The waterfront regeneration led by the Port Authority, on the other hand, and the large-scale retail facilities currently being built in the port area in particular, may be a source to balance out the tourist pressure on the fragile economy of the old town (Bonafede and Napoli, 2015). Many experiences Europe-wide, however, suggest that this scenario may never come to fruition if it is left to the ‘invisible hand’ of the free market, as it requires new commercial regulation respectful of local communities and places.

The quest for more effective planning frameworks to guide the implementation of large infrastructure projects within cities is a well-known Italian urban policy issue. The extent of the problem is clear in Palermo, too, where massive infrastructure projects are underway as a result of a wide-reaching plan to reshape the city’s transport system launched in 2002 (Vinci and Di Dio, 2016; Vinci, 2019). The effects on city’s organization of the (1 billion euro) metropolitan rail network redevelopment plan led by the national rail operator (RFI) is a case in point here. The project is nearing completion and enhancing accessibility to a wide range of districts previously poorly connected to the transit system. The impact of the new infrastructure on the quality of the built environment around the new transport nodes, however, is very poor, as RFI’s responsibility is limited to the stations and no regeneration framework has been agreed with the municipality.

The lesson to be drawn from this case and, by contrast, from the waterfront regeneration project is that the future of large cities increasingly depends on the ability to establish effective cooperation between those with key responsibilities for urban functioning. This cooperation should be oriented to achieving a convergence of interest in large-scale development projects, in an attempt to make economic interests compatible with social and environmental sustainability. Generally, this implies additional pressure on municipalities, often the weaker party in this kind of political negotiation, in

addition to their structural weaknesses in the wake of decades of austerity.

The risk is a ‘two-speed city’, with planning opportunities lost due to the diverse approaches, missions and interests pursued by those involved in the local development process. New pathways to change are possible, however, as the planning experience described in this paper amply demonstrates.

References

- Bonafede G., Napoli, G. (2015), "Palermo multiculturale tra gentrification e crisi del mercato immobiliare nel centro storico", *Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali*, XLVI(113), 123-150.
- Carta M. (2012), "Palermo Waterfront, the fluid city planning", *Portus*, 24, 88-95.
- Cocola-Gant A. (2018), "Tourism gentrification", in Lees L. and Phillips M. (Eds.), *Handbook of gentrification studies*, Elgar, Cheltenham, 281–293.
- Inzerillo S.M. (2017), *Urbanistica e società negli ultimi duecento anni a Palermo*, 40^{due} Edizioni, Palermo.
- Pedone F. (2019), *La città che non c'era. Lo sviluppo urbano di Palermo nel secondo dopoguerra*, Istituto Poligrafico Europeo, Palermo.
- Picone M. (2021), "Shifting imageries: gentrification and the new touristic images of the inner city of Palermo", in Banini T., Ilovan O.R. (Eds), "Representing place and territorial identities in Europe", *GeoJournal Library*, 127, Springer, Cham.
- Porfyriou H., Sepe M. (Eds) (2017), *Waterfronts revisited: European ports in a historic and global perspective*, Routledge, London-New York.
- Seixas J., Albet A. (Eds.) (2012), *Urban governance in Southern Europe*, Ashgate, Farnham.
- Vinci I., Di Dio S. (2016), "Reshaping the urban environment through mobility projects and practices: lessons from the case of Palermo", in Papa R., Fistola R. (Eds), *Smart energy in the Smart city: urban planning for a sustainable future*, Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 291-305.
- Vinci I. (2019), "How the EU regional policy can shape urban change in Southern Europe: learning from different planning processes in Palermo", *Urban Research and Practice*, 14(4), 445-470.
- Vanolo a. (2015), The image of the creative city, eight years later: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo, *Cities*, Volume 46, pp. 1-7.

IGLUS MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)

Management of Urban Infrastructures

The MUI MOOC provides an introduction to the principles of urban infrastructures management. In this MOOC, you will receive lessons from practitioners (City of Geneva, Veolia, Boston Consulting Group, CarPostal), experts (The World Bank) and academics (EPFL, CUNY). More information below.

iglus.org/management-of-urban-infrastructures-mooc/

Smart Cities

Smart Cities is a Massive Open Online Course that offers an introduction to the principles of management of smart urban infrastructure systems. It addresses the main challenges in management of Smart Cities during the transition and operation phases in the life-cycle of a Smart City.

iglus.org/smart-cities-mooc/

The “Innovative Governance of Large Urban Systems” is now live !

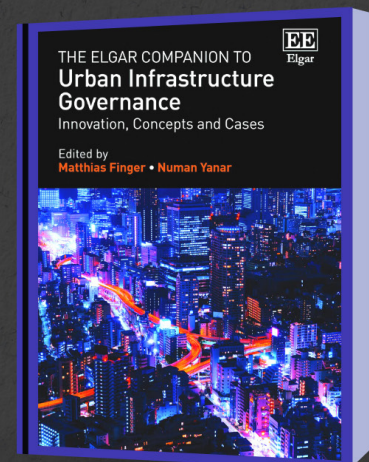
This course addresses the three phases of the urban value chain: planning, governance and regeneration. With lecturers from all around the world and concrete case studies, this MOOC will give you a comprehensive overview about the “Innovative Governance of Large Urban Systems”.

<https://iglus.org/innovative-governance-of-large-urban-systems-mooc/>

The Elgar Companion to Urban Infrastructure Governance: Innovation, Concepts, and Cases

“Our latest book entitled *The Elgar Companion to Urban Infrastructure Governance: Innovation, Concepts, and Cases*, gathers 8 years of our IGLUS action-research program in 22 high-quality chapters. Thanks to these excellent contributions from our urban experts from all over the world, we offer a synthesis of the main challenges large urban systems are confronted with, with answers to these challenges thanks to illustrative case studies from cities such as Detroit, Nairobi, Istanbul, and Mexico City. Our book will serve as a resource for students, scholars, urban infrastructure managers, city officials, and policymakers worldwide.

[Learn more](#)



Latest Issues

Vol 8 Issue 3 (December 2022)

Integrating green and blue infrastructures, for the socio-ecological transition of urban systems

.....

Vol 8 Issue 2 (July 2022)

Housing Challenges in African Cities

.....

Vol 8 Issue 1 (March 2022)

Urban Air Mobility

.....

Vol 7 Issue 4 (December 2021)

Planning for Sustainability:
A View from the Global South

.....

Vol 7 Issue 3 (November 2021)

Population and Public Management in
South African Cities

.....