

15TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE ITALIAN SOCIETY OF URBAN PLANNERS

Pescara, May 10-12, 2012
Facoltà di Architettura, Viale Pindaro 42

Urbanism on the move
Risks and values

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 15th Conference of the Italian Society of Urban Planners (SIU) will focus on the changes and risks that are affecting urbanism today and which will affect it even more in the near future. Changes that go to the heart of planning action and of the fundamental values that underlay the choice of plans and projects. Risks which threaten contemporary towns and cities and have to be prevented and addressed with new disciplinary approaches. The conditions under which modern urbanism was constructed are changing radically. If its duty is, today as in the past, to help finding answers to the concerns and needs that people express with regard to their living environment, then we need to go back and think critically about the fundamental concepts underlying the activity of urbanism, in order to reformulate them in the light of new urban and regional scenarios.

Modern urbanism is based on a society which no longer exists. The problems and demands of this society were deeply different from those of today and were addressed with an ethical concern and social commitment which it would be difficult to reproduce. In an age of great hopes and trust in the future, the dominant model was that of unlimited urban growth accompanied by commanding and deterministic urban government, performed primarily by the public sector. This approach was associated with the conviction that primary needs could be met and forms of social hardship erased through redistributive strategies based on the use of space. These principles played a determining role in the construction of the discipline of urban planning and constituted the inspiration for its theory and practice.

Today in countries such as in Italy, the crisis of urban governance still largely relates to those fundamental principles. Many critics complain about the failure of the original programme of the discipline, with regard to the profound distortions in urban development that it has not been able to prevent. The principle of hope is thus turning into its opposite, the principle of despair becomes the refuge of those who denounce the impotence of urbanism to build a contemporary city based on ethic and social values.

Such positions require courageous answers. The crisis of the very legitimacy of urban planning, which is widely perceived today as an irritating bureaucratic procedure, apart from real practice, cannot be solved with a reassuring *appel à l'ordre*. A return to the past, which nostalgically re-proposes an approach whose outcomes appear controversial, is out of step with the huge transformations that society, economy and planning institutions of urban governance are undergoing while placing themselves at the crossroads between globalisation pressures and the respect of local roots.

New contents and values must be found, in order to face social demands and environmental, economic, cultural and living conditions, which are extremely different from those of Europe in the first period of modernity.

In fact the arguments used to support recent planning and design decisions are increasingly based on issues which have hardly ever been addressed before: how to act in conditions of random processes and uncertainty even over the objectives to be pursued; how to defend against climate change; how to pursue sustainability and avoid the consumption of non-renewable resources; how to maintain social cohesion and integrate social differences within increasingly multi-cultural societies; how to address the dramatic cuts in government investments in services and the welfare crisis; how to make urban spaces safe; how to redesign urban and regional governance in order to simplify procedures, rationalise functions and contain public spending. Professional practice is also changing: new tools are being added to or are replacing traditional ones.

But beyond contingency, a stronger effort to rethink the aims of our discipline is necessary, starting with a recognition of the risks and values to which planning practices have to refer.

Risks. Towns and cities are increasingly called on to meet a large variety of challenges: the growth of inequalities with the emergence of new widespread forms of poverty affecting the middle classes; the serious economic and financial crisis of the "Great Recession" that is increasingly threatening traditional forms of local democracy; the enormous consumption of land compared to the growing underuse of the residential housing stock; the urban sprawl that is generating shapeless and anonymous settlements, and leading to the marginalisation of existing centres; the growing disparity in the conditions of mobility and access to

networks of tangible and intangible services; pollution, energy scarcity and natural disasters.

These challenges lead to the emergence of totally new types of risk, or rather “insecurities and randomness induced and introduced by modernity itself” (Beck, 2000) that produce new contexts for action and force us to rethink established paradigms and to seek new ways to approach planning and design, in terms of both content and processes.

Values. In addition to new risks, changes are also generating new values (or different ways of understanding the underlying principles of urbanism). New environmental values are related to the ecological governance of cities and to the quality of landscapes; they require a new understanding of the relationship between culture and nature based on Jonas’ ethic of responsibility and going beyond anthropocentrism in order to achieve a new balance between the artificial and the natural worlds. Other values include the systematic recycling of goods in the name of a less predatory development, more attentive to saving resources; the social integration of individuals and the ability of different cultures to live together in a context of genuine cosmopolitanism; the involvement in and the consensus over the management of forms of democracy that makes citizens more responsible; professional ethics with the assumption of new responsibilities for the consequences of one’s decisions; and, last but not least, the return to a public action that is influential, capable and efficient, against the anti-government tendencies that now prevail and are dramatically lacerating the fabric of civil society.

Critical thinking on risks and values offers new keys to the interpretation of the social role of urbanism within new frames for the responsible governance of urban and regional areas. It also enables us to verify the current relevance of the principles subscribed to by the SIU in its founding charter, offering the opportunity to critically update them in the light of new conditions.

Conference Structure

The conference will be organized into plenary sessions and workshops.

Plenary sessions

Discussion meetings where academics from various disciplines are invited to speak.

Workshops

Further opportunities for deeper discussion, where a co-ordinator and a discussant reconsider the questions that emerge from the papers.

Nine workshops will be held:

1. Bio-Logic City: the smart ecological city;
2. Accessibility as citizenship right
3. Planning theories and practices and conflicts
4. Seismic risk and the complexity of reconstruction planning
5. Urban planning between government and market
6. Containment of land consumption, approaches and ways of reusing land and buildings
7. Heritage and urban and regional planning
8. Landscape as the framework for contemporary urban planning
9. Geography of risks and the environmental impacts of plans

Massimo Angrilli

Bio-Logic City: the smart ecological city

Can it be hypothesised that, in analogy with what is being done in cybernetics and informatics with the development of bio-computers, the urban planning of sustainability networks and digital networks may come to determine significant changes in the urban models of the future? The ecological city and smart city paradigms underlie the choices of urban planning and design increasingly today and environmental and information values are proposed as being capable of improving quality of life and the ability of towns and cities to compete, avoiding the risks connected with the ecological crisis and the digital divide. The workshop uses research and case study analysis to investigate ways in which we may evolve towards ecological and smart towns and cities, equipped with a new generation of infrastructure which improves ecological performance and provides constant flows of knowledge and communication.

Roberto Bobbio

Accessibility as a citizenship right

In a composite society, urban planning which endeavours to identify new needs runs the risk of furnishing partial answers and justifying the division of citizens into categories with little permeability. One alternative is to pursue the aim of reinforcing the capacity of individuals to find answers by themselves, by assuming that equal enjoyment of the goods and opportunities provided by towns and cities is a citizenship right. Accessibility of services must therefore be broadened with regard to different age groups, to the disadvantaged (physically, socially and culturally or due to religion, gender, life style) and to people (immigrants and others) who wish to pursue a new life plan.

Daniela De Leo

Planning theories and practices and conflicts

Urban planning theories, research and practices have long recognised the importance of unveiling the conflicts, and of a more aware and detailed treatment of them. Certainly many planning practices are obliged to deal on a daily basis with numerous conflicts that new protagonists of the urban scene, new questions and demands, that we are asked to address in terms of risks and values.

In this sense the 'Atelier' is going to collect and discuss original contributions on the following issues:

- the features and variety of urban conflicts (actors, issues, strategies, crucial geographic areas);
- possible paradigm's innovations recently introduced to deal with conflict situations (conflicts of interest, power, visions of the future, etc.);
- urban adaptation and resilience as effects of irresolvable and/or violent conflicts.

Matteo di Venosa

Seismic risk and the complexity of reconstruction planning

While the complexity of reconstruction planning requires critical thinking on the limits of conventional urban planning, above all it invites us to explore the possibilities for innovation in current forms and practices of urban and regional planning. In this sense, the experience of reconstruction plans currently in progress for town and city centres hit by the earthquake of 6th April 2009 lies within the framework of a shared strategy for the regional development which, by grasping the opportunities offered by extraordinary government investments, aims to reverse the processes of abandonment and deterioration of numerous urban contexts.

The workshop will discuss the following key issues: safety; seismic risk and urban vulnerability; multi-disciplinary and interscalar aspects of intervention

and the governance of multilevel processes which regulate reconstruction activities in areas hit by earthquakes.

Luca Gaeta

Urban planning between government and market

The financial independence of local governments has become precarious in the aftermath of the global crisis. The risk of using property development as a source of revenue to supplement tax cuts is real. While market instability prevents forecasts from being made, the failure of risky developments shifts the burden of permanent costs onto the local community. The workshop intends to discuss the following with the aim of reconciling the values of economic freedom and social cohesion under conditions of weak growth:

- the legitimacy of contractual forms of planning;
- the combination of contractual and regulatory forms;
- the ability to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of transformations.

Elena Marchigiani

Containment of land consumption, approaches and ways of reusing land and buildings

Containing land consumption has now become a leitmotif. Nevertheless the reuse of large military and railway sites, brownfields, abandoned manufacturing and scattered areas within the urban fabric still finds it difficult to transform them into a driver of experimentation for new urban and regional configurations. The workshop will discuss many questions that involve the reuse of land and buildings and that are not easy to bring together:

- how to transform a planning "formula" that is often site specific into a strategy for the construction of new holistic visions;
- how to govern processes that can also involve temporary periods of reuse, avoiding the risk of property speculation and gentrification;
- how to identify new tools and ways of co-operation and joint planning by the public and the private sectors.

Daniela Poli

Heritage and urban and regional planning

The morphological features of towns and regions are still considered as the product of a sectorial approach. This approach makes the passage from the regulation of land use to the governance of "territory" seen as common wealth (in an integrated and trans-disciplinary way) difficult. Territorio (i.e. land-community), considered as a highly complex social construct, should be the center of a new conception of planning based on solidarity, cooperation, inclusive governance, mobilisation of endogenous resources, self-sustainable

local development. The workshop will discuss these issues with reports on theoretical research and international case studies.

Michelangelo Russo

Landscape as the framework for contemporary urban planning

Landscape is a structural dimension of urban planning thought: together with the territory, it can be regarded as a "common good", with its risks and values. Landscape is a transversal and inter-sectorial notion, which opens to social interaction, communication and consensus-building practices; it addresses innovative paths for planning and design and allows us to work the notion of sustainability out, in a less generic perspective.

It deals with change in the contemporary city, mainly of public spaces, and it calls for an innovative role of infrastructure systems as networks of continuity between the different components of territory, including relationships between nature and culture on a metropolitan scale.

Maurizio Tira

Geography of risks and the environmental impacts of plans

One of the open questions of urban planning practice is the environmental impact of plans, which although assessed by means of defined procedures, is still lacking in agreed upon references: no targets, types of measurement or real monitoring procedures are set for many environmental components.

One particular aspect of assessing environmental impacts is that of natural risks. It is an opportunity to consider the exceptional character of a situation which highlights the need for a different approach to surveying and planning. Thinking is therefore required not just on ways of making the environmental assessment of plans and programmes effective, but also on broader issues. More specifically, it is important to redefine the following:

- the relationship between the constants of a local area, the common good and the private sector interests;
- the relationship between acquiring knowledge and design in a plan;
- the relationship between risk assessment and perception;
- the border between determinism in choices and scenario development.

This stands against a background which includes thinking of the spatial aspects of risk, both in terms of the spheres of influence of plans and of new territories defined on the basis of the physical components of space.

PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE

Abstracts must not be longer than 3,000 characters (inclusive of spaces) and they must contain the following information:

- (i) title, authors, the relative workshop, key words (three);
- (ii) the thesis presented;
- (iii) field in which the thesis is discussed;
- (iv) work prospects.

Failure to follow this format will constitute grounds for exclusion.

Abstracts must be received at the following email address by **5th February** for prior approval: **siu.conferenza2012@yahoo.it**

The academic committee of the SIU will inform those concerned if their proposals have been accepted by **29th February**.

Final papers, not longer than 20,000 characters (inclusive of spaces), in addition to figures and tables, must be received at the above email address by **15th April**.

CONFERENCE FEES

Conference participation only

Senior 100,00 € / Junior 60,00 €

Conference participation only for 2011 SIU members

Senior 60,00 € / Junior 40,00 €

SIU membership cost for 2012 (facultative)

Senior 100,00 € / Junior 60,00€

Conference participation + SIU membership cost for 2012

Senior 140,00 € / Junior 80,00 €

INFORMATION

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