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From the didactic to the expert city

Paolo Avarello

Most of edition 33 of *Urbanistica* (1961) was dedicated to two things: the "Code of Urbanism" i.e. the proposal for reform discussed at the VIII National INU Congress (INU: *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica*, Italian National Town Planning Institute), and an article about the city of Ivrea by Roberto Olivetti. By 1959 Ivrea had finally adopted its first general town development plan. The text recounts how the approach was not casual, tending to frame the plan and town planning issues in Ivrea in a rather wider cultural conception than typically characterized town plans at that time, for they were conceived as 'simple' regulative instruments controlling construction and building projects. This limit was unaffected by the same 1942 law and the arguments surrounding this limit still affect today's institutional and cultural debate, being a limit which INU has always aimed at overcoming, including, although not only, through legislative reform. The article encompassed the history of industrialization in the valley, dominated and encouraged by Olivetti developments, underlining the close relationship between social and economic transformation and the city's growth in relation to its wider geographical context. A large amount of space in the article is dedicated to the role and function of industry in guiding civic progress, such as the way Olivetti and its special conception have left their mark on social justice, harmony, and stability, even though this has been *ante litteram* 'environmentally sustainable' for which Olivetti wants its operations to be an 'illustrative'

paradigm of quality, not only in terms of sustainable development but also regarding architecture too. Less space is reserved in the article for the plan's specific characteristics. The article only underlines the choice of discrete expansion in contrast to the trend of development around the existing city's edges, mainly exalting functional aspects, and in particular, its mobility. The methods of bringing the new planned settlement nuclei into existence are almost taken for granted, using actuation plans and 'unitary' interventions for which the city had already become a model of excellence, being an outstanding example of those found in European modernism. Even today the specific characteristics of Ivrea as an industrial city and those of its territory are rooted in the reality of the local situation. They are a territory and a city which are no longer an industrial 'colony' for they have suffered heavily from processes of de-industrialization and are now searching for new means of development. From here it was therefore necessary to start over again using a new plan to tackle a considerably different situation from that confronted in the initial stages of urban growth. Even if the term 'strategy' only usually looks to the future, all manuals teach that good strategy is founded above all on resource analysis and on local capacity. And it is exactly this that the new municipality plan concentrate on. In contrast to the 1950s, Ivrea's current relationship with its territory is no longer only a dreamed of application of principle and act of cultural goodwill. The two are now connected in an organic manner within a fairly well defined framework, which is helped by the reference PTCP

(*Piano territoriale di coordinamento provinciale*, Provincial Plan for Territorial Coordination) with which, critically, the comune plan also interacts. Furthermore, the treatment of environmental issues is no longer only a cultural corollary in anticipation of the town plan, but has become a constituent part of it. The models of the past have now been consciously abandoned. Time spent is now measured by the refusal to follow preconstructed models. Instead, specific reasoned and shared objectives are researched, together with setting up and adjusting useful practical instruments and procedures so that the objectives can be achieved. The same old traditional role of the plan ('guarantee' the local variation of an 'optimal' predefined model) is therefore overturned by constructing a real and true planning-activation process that must involve 'actors', both public and private. Therefore, without being simplistically deductive, it is a non-linear process arising out of necessity: it is suitably adaptable, reasoned, and dialectic.