



**Urbanistica n. 137**  
September-December 2008  
Distribution by [www.planum.net](http://www.planum.net)

---

Paolo Avarello      An ocean of houses

---

*edited by Mariavaleria Mininni*  
*Alberto Clementi*  
*Pierre Donadieu*  
*Mariavaleria Mininni*  
*Arturo Lanzani*  
*Pier Carlo Palermo*

**Problems, policies, and research**  
The planning for the landscape  
Landscape. Betrayal, innovation  
Landscape studies in Europe: a difficult harmonization  
A culture for the landscape  
Between two shores, looking for a land in between  
Dilemmas and divisions in the landscape culture. Disciplinary consequences

---

*edited by Paolo Galuzzi*  
*Graziano Delrio*  
*Ugo Ferrari*  
*Maria Sergio*  
*Giuseppe Campos Venuti*  
*Giuseppe Campos Venuti*  
*Rudi Fallaci*  
*Maria Sergio*  
*Giuseppe Campos Venuti*  
*Rudi Fallaci*  
*Maria Sergio, Elisa Iori*  
*Oriol Bohigas*

**Projects and implementation**  
The structural plan of Reggio Emilia  
The Municipal structural plan (Psc) of Reggio Emilia and the challenges of a new citizenship  
For a city of person  
The stages of the process  
The reformist strategy of Reggio Emilia  
A revolution in drawing up the plan  
A new instrument for new policies  
Services plan: the experience of the municipality of Reggio Emilia  
Town planning equalization  
'Rue', the crucial instrument for urban quality  
Environment and ecological network  
A new planning hopei

---

*edited by Giuseppe Scaglione*  
*Michelangelo Tripodi*  
*Maria Grazia Buffon*  
*Rosaria Amantea*  
*Alberto Ziparo*  
*Giuseppe Fera*  
*Giuseppe Scaglione*  
*Alberto Clementi*

Calabria in transformation: to project the future governing the present  
A new season for town planning in Calabria  
Guidelines of regional planning in Calabria  
Competitiveness and attractiveness of Calabrian territorial systems  
Substantive landscape and territorial sustainability  
Structural planning in Calabria: some reflections  
Snapshot: light versus shadows  
Between strategies for the territory and regional plans

---

**Profiles and practices**  
Luca Fondacci      The future is dependent on the offering of the projects

## An ocean of houses

Paolo Avarello

In the wake of the 'labour conflicts' (1969-1970), which stressed the problem of housing, not only for the very poor, but also for those who earned ordinary wages and salaries, the housing census (1971) evidenced the 'housing waste', that is, a quantity of houses well above the standards of the time, which was also taken as the basis for the master plans, even though the 'forecasts' of the number of inhabitants in the plans always turned out to be exaggerated. Also in 1971 law 865 was passed, destined to relaunch social housing, blocked by law 167/1962, which had assigned competence for the task to the municipalities, attempting to reduce the cost of expropriations. Subsequently more accurate analyses of the broken-down data brought to light a number of phenomena, including that of 'second houses' and the use of dwelling houses for studios, offices, temporary residences, etc. Meanwhile the regions had taken shape, and competence for town planning was transferred to them (decree Dpr 8/1972), followed by that for social building, which substantiated the contents of the plans, as the 'districts' in social building proved to be the only structured parts of urban expansions. Perhaps also due to the inertia of certain regions, the state continued passing laws in the field of social housing (and of 'town planning'), with measures aimed at facilitating the actions, but without any precise design, or any real reform. A partial reform of the housing sector, both social and otherwise, came however with Law 457/1978, which reorganized the matter, finally addressing the

question of restoration and rehabilitation, in the conviction that 'demand' derived also from old, rundown or in any case inadequate houses. The same year saw the introduction of law 392/1978 ('controlled or fair rent'), which aroused certain hopes of a possible expansion of the rental market, but with rather disappointing results. Nevertheless, law 457/1978 did provide an important guideline, which produced some interesting experiences, although without reducing the production of new houses, nor significantly promoting the renewal and upgrading of rundown, underused or derelict 'parts of towns', or the 'holes' in the disorderly expansion of the peripheries, unauthorized and otherwise, or of those districts of social housing with boundaries 'in conformity with' those laid down in the plans. Housing in this new expansion remained in fact the core business of Italian house building and the centre of attention of town planning. From the eighties onwards the activities of renewal-rehabilitation definitely became more widespread, but in a minute, concentrated manner, enabling the 'small-scale' operators to overcome a difficult period and giving hope for a future of (more) significant urban transformations, which among other things would have led to a radical reformulation of the classical themes of town planning. Convinced that they were still lagging behind other European countries, many glimpsed a future analogous to that which we could see elsewhere, with grandiose programmes of urban transformation, with the participation of private investments, but with precise choices and attentive management by the public decision-maker

operator. Such activities in those countries played an important role in relaunching the national economies, proved by the difficult passage from an 'industrial' to a 'postindustrial' economy, while in Italy endeavours were made to emerge from the tunnel by means of borrowing, inflation and devaluation (now inhibited by Community regulations) with a bill that we are still paying. The passing of law 457/78 marked the resumption of the debate on housing, but the social questions historically linked with the theme remained in the background, compared with the economic and employment issues, and that of the allocation of the 'passive remainders', namely of the very large sums obtained but not spent, while the retentions on wages and salaries intended for the purpose were suppressed. In that period there was a certain downturn in the prices of real estate, and law 142/90 saw the start of a debate that was to lead to the 'Bassanini reforms' and to the modification of the Constitution; moreover, along the lines of certain European programmes (e.g. Pic Urban), the Ministry of public works launched the first 'complex programmes': a further boost for a substantial reform of Italian town planning, all too long tied to law 1150/42, and not only for the limits connected with the question of expropriations. The complex programmes, programme agreements, etc., were however also overwhelmed by waves of new houses in areas of expansion. No functional mixes, new housing types, new ways of being placed on the market or new 'environmental qualities', nor spaces of social life, urban quality and quality of life, but an ocean of houses occupying areas that were previously free, filtering out

of the matrix of the urban development plans. And someone always buys them, although complaining about the price.