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Reggio Emilia: project, perequation and implementation
Anna Campeol

The strategies of Reggio Emilia's town-planning scheme, adopted in april, 1999 and which came into force in july, 2001, are based on the enhancement of the ecological-environmental quality of the builtup and free areas, urban requalification, and the reorganization of the mobility system. The new face of the city depends on the development of the transformation zones and areas outlined as requalification sites ; those already built up or free but requiring a requalification in order to grant them a more formal and functional quality, also helping as a rebinding or joint nodes for the city, specific polarities interconnected between themselves according to a complementary logics. The ecological-environmental dimension represents the central aspect of the choices developed in the project and it embodies the following subjects: the increase in the permeability of the urban soils and their use as green areas with a greater number of trees, shrubs and hedges; the integration of road and railway infrastructures into the landscape; the integration between both edified areas and technological networks; the implementation of a system of open spaces, services, environmental and cultural resources; functional integration in order to avoid the risks arising from the monofunctionality. Finally, the new infrastructure system, foreseen in the Prg, assumes an important role in the reorganization of the territory on both a vast and local scale. Since local philosophy and praxis have always been, to

a certain extent, oriented towards a process approach, integrating different thematic levels, the choice was to treat the passages towards the implementation of the 'plan of action' with a specific method. Creating a situation where implementation implies constant controls regarding consistency and coherence with local programmes and strategies, as set out during planning. Consistency, but also constructive feed back, within the flexibility margins set out by the Prg, together with a warning that this text 'explodes' perhaps a possible way of reading and interpreting the Prg: the city of the transformation and perequation. The decision of implementing the Prg, by applying the practice of perequation to all the transformation areas, named in this way because most of them (62%) result from changes in the previous Prg, was based on the pursuance of better environmental tenability, in all its social, ecological and economic aspects. Although perequation represents a method of activation and implementation, such a procedure, if properly interpreted, contributes to building a vision of the city that a community both wishes and expects. In the case of Reggio Emilia, the process of perequation also allowed to resolve some of the issues existing in the disciplinary praxis and to improve urban quality, in accordance with the local political program. In particular, the principal issues that have arisen within the territory of Reggio are as follows: The perequation process as an attempt to resolve the previous lack of public green areas, as well as a way of meeting the necessities of new settlers; The overcoming of the traditional idea of "minimum standards", connected to

the implementation of zoning plans, with an approach which greater deals with private and public necessities; a realistic approach to existing problem of reiterated constraints, which set expropriation limits at 65 hectares for green areas re located in zones deemed free from rules of the compensatory perequation; Perequation offers a great opportunity of urban regeneration, especially when it is applied to abandoned areas set within those urban tissues quite densely populated, where the volume concentration is limited to 30% of the total area and 70% is allocated to public and private green areas; the need of a different design and functional approach, in order to overcome the low quality urban structures, badly integrated within the environment and mainly mono-functional; the need to affront the problem of subsidised rental apartments within the perequated areas to meet the needs of the middle classes (i.e. young couples) which, due to their income, would not have access to either public housing but on the other hand have difficulties buying or renting on the open market. Reggio Emilia is a city already in quite good state and it offers efficient services well diffused through out it's urban tissue (the excellence of the nursery schools are an example): the new Prg will complete the network of services, both public and private, provided by the city to the citizens. The real difference in quality will be obvious with the increased in green areas. The outline in the new town plan for approximately 578 hectares (besides the 35 squared metres/per habitant, versus 13 squared metres/per habitant in 1999), of which only 65 hectares is to be acquired

through expropriation and the remaining 329 hectares from free concession, will make a real breakthrough. Perequation allows the implementation of a true project for a public city, following the idea of 'network' which connects existing and planned public areas (parks and urban gardens, public and equipped green areas, public services and facilities) through tree-lined avenues, cycle tracks, and the design and integration for the road system. The individuation of passage ways for environmental connection is supported too by natural passages (water ways), artificial passages (the cycle tracks already existing and those planned, the belts set for the new road system, the existing road system that will be requalified, etc. and green networks, in order to permanently connect the existing public green areas with the planned public green areas (granted and expropriated) and the areas for services and public facilities. From this point of view the perequation plan for Reggio Emilia assumes an even greater strategic value, since what matters is not only the implementation of the project, in accordance with the rules already set down, but, above all the idea that such implementation must be consistent with declared assumptions. Such implementation represents a planning process, and because many projects will result from this process including private interventions, these must also be oriented towards the construction of a city of quality: both structurally and environmentally. The Pp for parco Ottavi, approved in 2005, provides a free disposition of (public green areas) equal to 44% of the territorial surface (more than 230.000 sm), which in part will form a city park in the West city area.

Half of the remaining area include that suitable for building (Se) and the other half is assigned as ecological private green area: essentially 70% of that area is assigned as green area, both public and private, along with site development and sports facilities. The owners, in agreement with the Town Council, called for a tender on this area and the project won by competition, by Studio Isola and latter joined by the Ccdp, is the result of a a truly shared construction of the project.

Since this area is of great strategic value, among the projects themes it should be outlines: the important integration of the master plan within the existing context, the construction of private buildings and of subsidised housing, the execution of a new rail stop, the internment of the high voltage electric line, the relocation of some public services (crèches and primary schools) which will act as a centre point and create a certain identity to this large area of the city.

A very interesting project, both for the quality of both public and private buildings and areas, and for the fertile collaboration between private and public subjects towards communal aim: greater urban quality.

The public administration, aware of the fact that transformation of it's territory is of general interest, and in order to solve the problem of management and foresight, outlined ad hoc a special procedure on which the authorization to submit private development plans must be based beforehand on the production of an accurate and agreed pre project plan (which follows the town plan act).

Some of the most relevant experiences, demonstrating the delicate role of public direction, have had (due to their location, dimension and context) a special strategic importance for the

city, because they contributed in affronting existing needs and, at the same time, anticipating too future town-planning, social and environmental needs. Perhaps the most relevant one is the area called 'Parco Ottavi', located in the west quadrant of the city, this area has been always considered as suitable for building and it has been changed by the Prg according to the perequation rules.