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Planning as a problem

**Open spaces
and collective places**

Luisa De Biasio Calimani

In current practice, instruments of implementation, even at private initiative, are assigned the task of designing the urban fabric, the solids and spaces, dimensions and form. These plans can put volumes in the commercially best places and the collective open spaces in the residual places. The public agency is left the task of seeing that the constraints, indices and parameters are respected: the consequences are there for all to see. It is a mistaken system, today reinforced by the concepts of compensation and 'merit awards' which leave the city at the mercy of cubic meters, not defined in quantity or in location. This is the idea of the non-city.

We have rejected this in the plan for San Benedetto, addressing the key points of 'urban quality', going into the complexity of the design of the places, of the quantity of public space, of the solutions that transform empty spaces into urban spaces.

'Architecture is the space enclosed in the box of the walls' said Bruno Zevi; paraphrasing this, one could say that the city is the space determined by the container of the buildings surrounding it. It is the voids that almost always represent the collective space, used by all, and in the plan we have attached priority to this, inverting the custom of assigning to open spaces a subordinate value compared with the built part.

The criteria and the rules of the Project sheets

These have been constructed so as to enable every citizen and every operator to compare, from the standpoint of costs and benefits, the project solutions envisaged for the

single areas to be transformed. The guidelines on which the preparation of these Project-sheets was based are the following:

- evaluation of the availability of the territory to be transformed and to increase urban quality;
- comparative evaluations of investment costs, to increase the transparency of the objectives and of the proceedings, and to enable the public administrator to know, judge and choose ;
- renewal of the surrounds of the 'project area', which every new building measure should produce through the provision of additional standards and of green spaces;
- definition of the territorial indices as 'derived' from a project hypothesis verified and compatible with the conditions of the area and not chosen a priori;
- environmental sustainability, a strategic factor, not only in naturalistic areas, but also in those urbanized, a leading element in all urban transformation.

The ecological corridors that run through the town, the green belts along the banks of the water courses, and safeguarding of the naturalistic values still have acted as guidance and a design stimulus for the measures.

Social building: a new standard

In addressing the problem of public housing, the Masterplan has foreseen that in any urban transformation process part of the building area and of the volume shall be earmarked for social housing, considered *de fatto* (pending national laws) as a new standard. The equalizing system can be a useful instrument for the city, also helping to reduce urban inequalities.

Urban rights and equalization

Equalization is applied in

the sections of the Project sheets. It is a fair measure, significant if not accompanied by other measures foreseen in the Masterplan: the provision of a larger quantity of public services than needed within the area, the free transfer of urbanized areas to be used for services and social housing, and environmental rehabilitation. Part of the revenue generated by the variation of functions assigned to the areas by the Municipal plan is in this way removed from the real estate operators and consigned to the town.

The public services, collective spaces, the fulcrum of social life, are an expression of urban rights and make citizens more equal one to another. The Plan has given great emphasis to them, regarding them as a motor of quality and development. Equalization should increase the production of services making them duly available with the Convention instrument, but even before that with the rules contained in the Structure plan.

In the application of the equalization system in the project areas, the plan has inserted also some areas outside of the boundary of the section, attributing to them indices equivalent to those inside the section in question, while maintaining the no-building status of the area. The areas concerned are situated in densely built zones, where there are no free spaces, which are precious for making a garden or a parking place, are difficult to be expropriated and are subject to the attentions of speculation even if for long earmarked as standard.