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A city that has experienced development stress

The city of Reggio has in the last few years been through a process of demographic growth due to immigration of exceptional dimensions, underpinned by a mixture of favourable economic trends that have meant a constant demand for labour by the firms, by the high quality and capacity of the local welfare system, and by a housing situation by and large still positive.

In the period 2001-2005, the foreign population doubled, and now represents 10.4%: absolutely one of the highest values in Italy. All this is regarded by the community as a phase of radical, swift change, which generates immediate upsets, with respect to benefits (large new urban parks, greater accessibility) that are not yet visible and available.

The need for a fresh equilibrium

Should the current trends continue, the population would go on increasing, with 30,000 more inhabitants in the next 15 years, and one-quarter of these would be foreigners; between 30% and 40% of the 18,000 new families might not find accommodation at costs compatible with their economic capacity. Viable reasons, of an environmental, social and also economic type, are emerging to promote actions aimed at slowing down the rate of demographic expansion and at the same time rebalancing the growth of the 'public city' with that of the 'private city'. Hence the political assumption of a number of strategic lines, of certain passwords to guide a priori town planning choices: the city must not go on

expanding, but must be transformed and renewed. The town planning instrument cannot, by itself, act directly on demographic and social phenomena. It can however make a contribution, a partial but an important one; it is assigned the task of contributing towards some demanding objectives:

- slowing down the rate of housing development,
 - providing the resources for a lasting and more effective housing policy,
 - guaranteeing the maximum environmental quality of settlements to be established;
 - contributing towards economic competitiveness with a quality urban landscape and a proper balance with natural and environmental resources.
- In consequence, Reggio's municipal administration has assumed the policy aim of making the most of what already exists by means of transformation and upgrading actions and at the same time by keeping the spread of the city more or less within the limits already drawn up.

'Poles' of excellence

From the standpoint of urban design, the backbone of the Psc (Municipal structural plan) is constituted by its 'network of poles of excellence'. This is the name given to those places of quality which represent the most interesting and concrete opportunities to be taken as the basis for building the future of Reggio.

The 'poles of excellence' that have been identified are the Historic centre, the system of the Ducal Villas, the San Lazzaro university centre, the former Reggiane Workshops, the pole of leisure pursuits and services around the Giglio Stadium, the cultural and working centre in which are grouped a series of executive and cultural activities, and lastly two new city 'gateways': the new railway station for High

speed trains, and the new motorway tollgate with the viaducts designed by Calatrava.

Upgrading

The Psc identifies a number of large sectors, in addition to those already foreseen some years ago in the Master plan, in which to programme a substantial upgrading through the Psc, in order to recover deteriorated urban identities or to construct new ones. Among others, there are three operations to be evidenced for their strategic value and for the duration and complexity of the process to be started up.

- 1) The historic axis of the Via Emilia (Emilian Way), the matrix of urban development.
- 2) The vast abandoned area of the former Reggiane Workshops (26 hectares) which represents the fulcrum of a larger portion of the city earmarked in the Psc for upgrading; this has a total area of 120 hectares, extending along both sides of the central railway station.
- 3) The Mancasale production area, the largest one in the city, set up over a period of many years, which is today in an unsatisfactory state from the standpoint of the services for the firms and for the workers.

Social housing

Under this heading the objective is to allocate at least 20% of the entire new production of houses in the areas of transformation to social housing.