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Piedmont

*Francesco Gastaldi,
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For many years Piedmont has been interpreted as a monocentric region, at least as long as the image of Turin as a one-company town held strong. From the end of the seventies, the economic and demographic transformations of this area began to have a profound influence on those of the territory on a vaster scale. The regional urban framework now appears decidedly restructured; roles and functions have been redistributed and the relations between the urban centres have changed. Especially in the southern part of the region, a progressive strengthening of settlement systems at sub-regional level has emerged, originating from a widespread mesh of minor centres that were once agricultural areas and urban outskirts.

Piedmont, unlike other regions specialised in traditional made in Italy production, is hardest hit by the challenge of economically more advanced countries in the sectors of medium-high tech. The attempt to respond to this situation would appear, *inter alia*, to be the transformation of the district productive structure of Piedmont (composed of the sharing of generic area resources and the stratification of identifying features in territorial systems protected by a relative isolation) into specialised systems, production chains organised by groupings of enterprises defined not only on a local basis, but increasingly more connected in territorial (extraregional) systems which are recognisable and comparable in terms of district history.

In the sphere of urban policies, the processes of production conversion have brought into play a large

number of areas where innovative forms of urban renewal and regeneration have been experimented by means of partnerships, complex programmes, and ministerial and European funds.

Within this framework, the watchword of the latest SPDs has been 'to aim at a diversified regeneration'. All the regional programmes have hinged on the strengthening of the fabric of the small and medium enterprises through the promotion and diffusion of innovation, with attention to processes, products and facilitation of access to credit. In parallel, strategies to strengthen the infrastructures and services have been implemented, directing the location choices of numerous productive investments. Particular attention has been paid to territorial protection and valorisation through projects of environmental remediation and rehabilitation of degraded sites.

According to the SPD, beyond the improvements that have taken place, the economic framework of Piedmont continues to reveal certain problems concerning the economic and productive reorganisation. With reference to the strategic lines, and in line with the Programme of regional development, the SPD illustrates a series of processes correlated with the general objectives towards which the financing is to be converged; these are designed to support, strengthen and render structural the mechanisms of conversion already launched, in both the industrial and the agricultural sectors, to enable the restoration of the environmental and territorial equilibriums, and to reorganise the resources present in a rational key. In the sphere of environmental protection, the SPD devotes attention to the issue of the

disposal of solid and liquid industrial waste, and concentrates financing on the construction, modernisation and expansion of plants for the treatment and valorisation of 'special' and 'hazardous' industrial waste, composting plants, and various initiatives for the delivery of waste originating from selective collection. After the major experience of local concertation developed in the Piedmont region through the territorial Pacts, in the SPD this experience is being followed up through the Integrated Area Projects (PIA), plans for socioeconomic development driven by the objective of valorising portions of the territory through actions which emphasise their specific characteristics, and distinguished by the integration of different types of action and by the involvement of a number of stakeholders. The adoption of a local-scale approach to integrated planning marks the pregnant significance which the Piedmont region has attributed to this type of development programming. The SPD invests in the integrated projects little more than 13.6% of the total 1,026 million Euro. The state of implementation of the Programme (at 31/3/05) highlights satisfactory progress in financial terms: 76.5% of the total of available resources have been assigned and the disbursements have reached 40.6%. It should be noted that the Programme offers a fairly diversified scenario in terms both of the types of action to be implemented and the implementation/management processes envisaged (the aid measures have been activated through public notice, and the infrastructure or services initiatives through regional ownership or management).