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Political mediation vs disciplinary mediation

Pierluigi Properzi

The Italian culture of urbanism planning was developed mainly during the fascist period, when the Italian school of urbanism took shape from new faculties of Architecture growing away from the model of hygienist engineers of the European tradition. A strong disciplinary statute considered in such a way especially by the society in which operated and to which was fully recognized a role of disciplinary mediation.

The metamorphosis of urban dynamics and its traditional forms (city centre-suburbs) that happened and produced posturban morphologies that modified the structure of the city and Italian landscapes, corresponds to the fragmentation (segmentation) of the social model of post war re-edification with all its related weaknesses. These new forms of settlements don't find appropriate interpreters neither in the disciplinary statute nor in the class of urban planners, either for an original and stubborn 'introversion' in the exclusive landed character of urban facts or for the progressive subordination of the original 'planning' character to the 'regulating' nature of plan that is landed and guaranteed itself.

Jurists have explained this regulating character of plan, establishing the so-called urbanism law just based on the planning-form and on a rational-comprehensive functional system interrupting in the limits of this tight structure, any our possible disciplinary evolution. Urban planner had to abdicate to their own 'planning' character regarding to either the 'economists' solution or that of 'jurists'.

In the years of centre-left government (1963-92) an alliance of fact was achieved between two weak concepts, based on a 'progressive' interpretation, but often translated purely in quantitative terms of low standards. A disciplinary weakness, that gave up to be involved in searching and in elaborating new patterns, taking in maintain, with this 'ideological' agreement, its own mediation role to left politics that shift the battle, just at this stage, on social demands and on rights enlargement (divorce law, abortion law, family law, public health, labour law) leaving behind its early policy.

But it is also a weakness of that political part that is unable to express this great potential on a urbanistic reformism level keeping any conceptual renewal attempt, even suggested on many different fronts, apart from that attacks land revenue. From this one can infer that urban studies-urbanism takes on mainly the role of a compression tool on land revenue, giving up all researches on the urban structure (as in the Rossiniana vulgate based on the Muratoriana research) and its purposes confined in technics teaching of engineering Faculty.

Urbanism studies has got involved into this event, so much that often one can talk about zone planning scandals in situations in which there's not much about urba-

nism when it was only a case of bribes regarding only to political decisions where urbanistic choices (purpose-project) are minor issues. In the meantime that minimum culture coverage guaranteed before by urbanistic founding fathers, then was satisfied by our local 'Arch-Stars' that overexploit very easily much more cubic metres of concrete and journalistic appeal than Piano does, who still requires anyway elaborate forms in sharing and distribution of costs and land revenue. A remarkable rendering based on a concept blinking at ecology and at skyscrapers virility is surely easier than of a plan that is hard to do and to make it understand and that however involves advanced forms of public knowledge that foment a conflict with progressive and guarantor aspects. On end we can underline three main crucial points about this discipline and we suggest some solutions to ignited a debate.

Crucial points

Permanence of outdated disciplinary purposes. Combating situation rent as main aim of urban planning is a residual urbanism planning subdued to an 'opponent' politics. Discipline for its part understand no more people's wishes which merge no more into a shared social system but they follow consumerist and individualistic models far away from disciplinary statute.

Perhaps it deals with pursuing not only policies of change but also a policy of stabilization, that is stability of costumes, stability of places reasoning out on giving a meaning and therefore a value that is connected to policies of stabilization not corresponding necessarily to policies of conservation. Available means are less and less coherent with purposes.

Predominance of urban-landed features compared to those of 'territorial government planning'. It stands to reason that the city can't be defined anymore in its traditional frameworks governed by a traditional plan but just these empty structures of meaning (historical centre, suburbs, industrial compound, etc.) are yet again only the object of the same plan, on the other hand the mutually influence of urban district with environment and landscape are yet the object of different sectoral urban planning.

Sectoral planning doesn't govern the country that must be reorganized in posturban structures in which act essentially landed revenue. Dependence of plan developments on strict institutional partitions. New developments of built-up areas redefining the Italian landscape in metropolitan dimensions (widespread, ever-growing, endless city) regardless of administrative boundaries are on the other hand lacking of governmental tools. Land planning is not clearly defined by structural project (of new dispositions and landscapes) but by pointing out those supposed 'structural invariants' essentially corresponding to special planning restrictions, are seen as a passive opposite form plays often and unjustly the role of planning. Lacking of a development social model. In a middle-term context the development

of institutional model understood as a new architecture subject to authorities and political powers will be strongly influenced by the establishment of new development social models having now their own remarkable features in those three traditional macro-areas of the country. All this pass for a necessary discipline reconfiguration: training, practice and administration on a great plan of country modernization. Suggestions to ignited a debate. We can work on three levels: that one about alliances building up a network among main actors of territorial government, that one about cultural plan involving a redefinition of some focal points in searching: urban agricultural landscapes, urban knowledge, urban development features, urban stabilization, urban densification, urban segmentation, etc., and finally that about social mediation essentially paid by discipline, that's the point of major concern.

Giving back new credibility to disciplinary mediation has its rise in a consideration that is not limited to institutional engineering, this last one however free falling too, or even worse that is trying to conceive a plan. We cannot stop only to imitate those good european files as a model that come from not landed 'urbanistic' cultures and from strong traditions of contractual public policies.

So, we can start again from a sound 'republican' tradition based on three pillars: austerity, equity, planning, a laic tradition without so much unnecessary prescriptive rules that act publicly in choices, in their reasons and controls. And above able to interact with a urban plan and those architects wondering what remains about the city. (see on P. Ciorra, Senza l'architettura, S. Boeri, L'Anticittà) Disciplinary innovation areas. The knowledge acquired on territory planning (statutes, documents, cognitive frames) go on emerging and establishing in its features and elements, but especially go on achieving its own independence towards planning and trying to clear up 'ever-justifiable' ambiguities of 'internal' analysis in planning project. In view of a constant renewal trend, but essentially moderate, of ordinary town planning, public administration 'projectuality' (of local administration) increases most of all on new themes: a mix of residence-service sector-business, to which adds social housing, movability and public transport, public areas and green belts often declined together.

Compensatory and equitably methods gain strength even in lack of a relevant law as a real answer in equitable distribution of plan and limitation of revenue due to advantageous positions. All these different notions contributing to territory government need places where knowledge and experience interplays and gain together that neither education and research places (such as Universities) nor special authorities (such as departments of traditional zone planning) can guarantee but they can follow the example of french agences d'urbanisme and can play a leading role in advancing those planning methods used to design new post-urban settlement of italian mega-regions.

It deals with remarkable factors of disciplinary reform

that in lacking of a reference social model on a hand tries to designing one through several attempts and on the other hand finds it hard to leave behind tools and purposes of previous steps. So a reformist experimenter and nostalgic state planner-government controller often can cohabit in one and the same person with fair trouble in suggesting a leading role of disciplinary mediation.