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Zoning, Zooning

Rosario Pavia

The term zoning is derived from the Greek word zone which refers to a belt, a strip or a fence. The etymological roots of the term reveal its deeper meaning: to delimit, to define a perimeter, to mark a boundary.

Urban planning, notwithstanding the developments of this discipline, cannot seem to do without this original function, so passionately recalled by Ildefonso Cerdà, the first modern planner, when he wrote his General theory of urbanisation, in 1867. In this text he investigated the name to be given to the discipline that would define the theoretical and operative system of town planning. Cerdà derived the term urbanisation more or less directly from *urbs*, the physical city, and *urbum*, the handle of the plough. In fact, it was this tool, the plough, that the Etruscans and Romans used to found their cities by defining their boundaries.

Acts of delimitation, circumscribing, the setting out borders and zoning remain the focus of urban planning, notwithstanding the critical opposition and requests to overcome zoning.

Setting out borders means representing them on a two-dimensional surface, on a map of spatial organisation, representing a functional division and proof of possession. The division of land, the recognition of property rights and the protection of one's personal property are the technical aspects at the base of the practice of zoning. This was true in antiquity, and we need only recall the Roman division of the *ager publicus* and the measurement of the *forma regionis*. The division of land, based on a square grid (the *centuria* measuring approximately 710 m per side), maintained the authority of a founding and sacred act.

By studying the initial phases of zoning we can easily understand the symbolic power of this act of division and measurement. The intersection of two orthogonal axes, the *cardus* and the *decumanus*, a centre and crossing defined the starting point for the construction of space and its representation.

The orthogonal intersection as the founding principle of Western space was fully recognized by Le Corbusier, who saw it as the measure of all things. However, this symbolic and founding dimension has been lost over time; zoning is now little more than a banal technique, an instrument for regulating the uses and programmes of urban and built space. It is a tool that is useful for classifying land and real estate values and the different categories of the city. Even at present, a large city such as Bogotá divides land based on the earnings of its residents.

Zoning has now lost much of its spatial value, becoming, on the contrary, a formidable instrument of political power and the regulation of revenues.

If we look closely at the situation in Italy zoning has been

reinforced by a national urban planning law, assuming a greater level of articulation and more defined operative environments (law n.1444/68 introduced the so-called homogeneous zones). Only recently, with the emanation of new regional laws that institute the articulation of the plan in structural and operative terms, together with the application of equalizing procedures, it would appear that a possible cultural and operative transformation of zoning is beginning to define itself.

Within this context, zoning does not disappear, but is transformed. Equalisation, while on the one hand defining a sort of relative isotropy of the ground plane, on the other promotes the continuous use of perimeterization. In fact, there are zones inside and outside inhabited areas, a complex classification of internal zones, zones that 'give up' quotas of buildable area to other zones that 'receive' them. Within these latter, the allowable volumes must then be located in particular compartments, or concentrated in defined implementation projects.

Equalisation, by equally attributing each property with an identical building index (acquired rights and the potential of forecast construction), appears to eliminate any possible disparity of treatment at the theoretical and operative level. Urban zoning may thus free itself of the restriction of revenue, of its power and ability to condition. Zoning can thus return to being the design and planning of the development of the city. This scenario is capable of promoting a new urban quality, a new method of planning that, while regulating the development of the city, does not renounce the interpretation of its identity, the value of its processes of construction and the spatial quality of its transformations.

Zoning does not disappear, but is articulated in other terms: in municipal structural plans it must be given a more flexible role, defined to handle environmental, landscape and archaeological invariants, acting more as a guideline and tool of orientation for the location of strategic centralities, large public and infrastructural works and functional and programmatic sectors.

True prescriptive zoning is rendered precise in the operative plan, in new articulations focused on implementation.

Sector-based and mono-functional zoning disappeared some time ago, negated by the very complexity of the city. Zoning can allow for *mixité* and hybridisation, and many plans place a significant amount of attention on the typological and morphological aspects of urban fabrics. In many cases zoning has assumed a layered representation: uses, typologies of intervention, the use of the ground plane and the treatment of open spaces.

The structural plan may be capable of indicating marginal areas, filters between different zones, between different regimes of land ownership, between the space of infrastructure and urban space, open or built as the case may be. Limits and perimeterization may be interpreted and rendered flexible through design. The line of separation between the historical city of Naples and the state-owned port area has become a filtering line, the

space of a complex project that mediates and interprets the passage from one zone to another in the city.

We must return to investigating the cultural, spatial and social meaning of the act of perimeterization. Zoning cannot be transformed into a banal exercise, into a form of zoning, populated by a plurality of new plans and new programmes that, each in its own way, lead to a reorganisation of the zones already incorporated in the territory.

We need only briefly mention the acronyms of these plans to understand how urban planning is wasting its resources on the search for a progressively more imaginative formulation. In only a few short years we have been witness to the development of a multitude of plans, whose sense and effectiveness often escape us. A renewed legislative and operative approach have brought us: Prusst, Pit, Put, Pum, Drag, Putt, Piu, Stu, Pru ... I could continue with this list, but the impression that emerges is that we are moving towards an ever greater separation between the tools of urban planning and the complexity of urban transformations. The names of these new plans lead us to imagine a parallel and imaginary reality, similar to an urban zoo filled with animals as fantastic as they are useless.

Urban planning must return to reflecting on its structural roots and the founding acts related to the functional, social and symbolic organisation of the territory. Territoriality is the result of an inevitable act of separation and exclusion, as much at the geographical scale as at the scale of local interventions and urban planning. Power, in its institutionalised forms, is expressed through the definition of borders.

The territory is an interweaving of visible and invisible networks, nets and borders. It defines zones of settlement and clandestine zones of inhabitation, located on the margins and devoid of borders, inserted in interstitial spaces or invasively overlapping other zones.

Contemporary space is progressively more dominated by mobility, logistics, nodes and infrastructural networks, and by material and immaterial networks. The underground is crossed and marked by a vast quantity of conduits, cavities and voids.

The territory is widely urbanised, the city spreads everywhere and seems to overtake any form of boundary. In reality, the infinite city conserves its limits, its borders, its demarcations and its walls.

Zoning must be inserted within this mesh. As a result it cannot be reduced to a banal technique, or a reductive practice of simplification. Instead, it must reacquire a sense of responsibility, using the boundary to rediscover the purpose of the sign.

Reform of territorial governance and the new urban order

Michele Talia

After having been through a very lengthy crisis, research in the sector in our country has chalked up some important successes above all in relation to vast area policies, urban renewal and, more in general, the rationalizing of relations between long-term forecasts and choices of implementation, to the extent that the objective of renewing the planning system, which had been defined more than 65 years ago by town-planning legislation, finally seems within reach. In this perspective the approval of a reform of territorial governance has now become an objective that cannot be set aside; even so, the risk exists that the laborious process of drawing up a new law may obscure our perception of a number of particularly urgent questions, as registered by territorial formations and by the environment. It seems in fact that the rift between our awareness of the problems it is necessary to address, and the recipes that technical culture is able to elaborate, has further worsened, also because attention to the form of the plans has had the effect of concealing the radical changes that have meanwhile become manifest in housing structures and in urban communities.

The sweeping and complex transformations that have been a feature of the last two decades have indeed made a deep impression on the organization of the territory.

The link that had been established between population increase, economic growth and urbanization processes has deteriorated, inaugurating a prolonged phase of disorderly settlement in which the strategies guiding land occupancy seem bound to take on the role of independent variables. In the course of this period a very extensive area (estimated by Eurostat to be equal to 2,800,000 hectares only in the last decade of last century) has been taken away from agriculture and earmarked for urban uses, giving rise to a settlement geography in which the existing city is in many cases merely one reference among the many to the choices made by the operators in the building sector (public administrations, contractors, property developers, families). The apparent lack of rationality in the recent settlement pattern is the joint result of the eclipse of large-scale industry and of the continuation of the process that caused employment in agriculture to drop from 8.6 million persons in 1950 to a little over one million in 2003, and the ensuing slackening of the constraints of proximity between accommodation functions and places of work has induced a more and more accentuated dispersion of the resident population. Through the effect of these dynamics, the companies that manage public transport are going through a crisis that seems irreversible, and which consequently accentuates having recourse to individual solutions to the problem of mobility.

Changes at this scale cannot however be confined to just one sector, as they are the reflection and at the same time the cause of the change that is taking place in the social and economic structure of the country.

In an age dominated by uncertainty and individualism, social and working relations become 'atomized', with the consequence of causing an immediate short-circuit between the affirmation of new urban forms and the organization of productive activities and leisure functions. As opposed to the rigidity of old forms, in the relationship between working time and free time, in the modulation of movements, in family structure and in settlement habits, and in lifestyles, contemporary society tends to be structured under the banner of instability (or liquidity, as Zygmunt Bauman would say). Through the effect of urban sprawl and of the attenuation of the location factors determined by post-modern society, significant changes appear in the configuration of settlement systems. Suffice it to think of the presence of mobile boundaries in the functioning of local systems of work, borne out by the very considerable increase recorded by commuting between 1991 and 2001 (+10.9%), and then between 2001 and 2007 (+35.8%), with an overall population of students and workers who make systematic journeys outside of the municipality of residence of more than 13 million, 70% of whom use private cars. But think also of the little importance attached to municipal boundaries in the functioning of the housing market (considering both purchases and rentals), which translates into a progressive increase in the number of families prepared to move away from their provincial capital in order to satisfy their housing requirements. That the geography of the country is changing at a very fast rate is demonstrated by the very dimension of the local work systems, whose average size went up from 315.5 sq.km in 1981 to 384.3 sq.km in 1991, and then to 439.2 sq.km in 2001. Behind this expansion of the areas within which day-by-day mobility takes place is concealed a complex modification of the systems of relation which is occurring with an accentuated fragmentation. Furthermore, the circumstance that many of these systems cross the administrative limits of provinces and regions (167 and 49, respectively) shows that the impetus towards territorial hyperextension and the prevalence of forms of hypermobility are distinctive features not only of metropolitan contexts, but in a large part of contemporary territorial formations.

Moreover, opposed to this long-term trend certain anomalies are not lacking, and are punctually registered by the heterogeneous ways of behaving manifested by the various contexts. Both in the territories of scattered settlement such as Veneto or Marche, and in the concentrated settlements of northern Puglia, the most recent urban transformations shed light on a trend towards suburbanization which by now it seems might threaten even the urban fabrics hitherto only marginally affected by the transformation of the cities. This is a 'behaviour' of economic operators not motivated by variations in cost of construction, which is instead substantially homoge-

neous throughout national territory, but which depends on the different incidence of urbanization costs and the cost of building areas, and which therefore assigns a preeminent role to the collectors of land revenues. In the face of this exceptional source of income, town-planning rules visibly find it difficult to impose a rational use of resources which urban sprawl tends instead to dissipate, and the attempt to direct property investments towards a building product that is more accessible to low-income demand and to better quality often turns out to be ineffective. It is likewise evident that the limits that have emerged in addressing the effective dimension of the country's major emergencies (urban congestion, pollution, energy dependence, the housing problem, safeguarding the landscape) cannot be put down only to the still incomplete nature of the reform plan. Even more than the accrued delay in approving a new law on territorial governance, a negative influence seems to stem not only from the prolonged (and so far useless) wait for the latter, but also the failure to reflect on the contents of the reform plan which appeared too weak, or even lacking. Among the latter the following ought to be mentioned:

- a well-nigh exclusive attention to the themes of local planning;
- the incapacity to achieve an effective regulation of the land regime;
- the extremely feeble nature of the references to vast area problems;
- the absence of any significant references to the role of the metropolitan city;
- the continuing and worrying conflict between the contents to be assigned, respectively, to the structural dimension and to the strategic vision of the plan;
- the tendency to underestimate the role of urban policies in territorial governance.

Until such time as a restricted pool of experts, academics and, obviously, Mps, makes up its mind to give a fresh boost to the innovation of the discipline, it is very probable that the subjects and the actors of planning will go on with that urban-planning bricolage that has been a feature of the last decade, in which the by now very large array of instruments forming part of the planner's tool kit will have been contaminated in sometimes definitely creative forms, but which at other times have appeared all too uninhibited and incoherent. In view of the well-known complexity of the subject, the risk again looming up is that this way will be interpreted as a 'short-cut' able to favour decision-making processes that are quicker and less subject to procedural constraints not only in drawing up certain basic choices, but in all the most significant 'passages' of the planning process. In Italy with its 8,100 municipalities the limit constituted by the municipal boundary to the carrying out of coordinated policies of territorial governance still appears insuperable, contrary to what is happening in the rest of Europe, where already in the mid-Nineties the administrative geography showed 32.7% fewer municipal

administrations than before the reform which, starting in 1956, had favoured operations of institutional centralization. Proceeding by stages in tackling the effects of this 'crumbling away' of the settlement and governance systems that we have already analyzed, the most important problem to be resolved is the congenital weakness of vast-area policies, towards which it seems best to direct specific measures of a financial, legislative and procedural character able to foster the consolidation of the Municipal Unions. Clearly these trends presuppose important technical-administrative innovations, above all in relation to the reference to the strategic dimension of territorial governance. An evolution of this type should not lead to the introduction of a new specialist level of intervention, but should be limited to constituting a sort of value added of planning. If we continue along this road it will be possible to assign to a more up-to-date concept of our discipline the task of establishing a closer dialogue between government and governance, succeeding at least in part in offsetting the negative consequences that have been produced in recent years by the absence of a law on territorial governance.

By the way, what urbanism really is?

Clovis Ultramari

By discussing urbanism and urban planning, it outlines similarities and differences between these concepts and the fact that they are most of the times indistinctly used. The article is organized according to two main hypotheses. Firstly, a conceptual distinction between them according to the distance urbanism takes from art and architecture (the closer they are the further urbanism is from urban planning). Secondly, an understanding of city problems and so urban planning and urbanism's priorities according to time.

This article started with the certainty that urbanism would be strongly linked to physical intervention, altering or building cities with proposals and works of sanitation, transportation, public and private spaces. In some moments of the discussion, this author was led to accept that there were other meanings for urbanism, going in directions that seem to be closer to the concept of urban planning.

Urbanism still carries an antagonism between a pretentious belief that societal changes may be generated by the design of the urban settlement and a belief that these changes result from dialectics in the very same society. Along this article, author tends to accept the idea that the set of characteristics that constitute the concept of urbanism is fond of keeping the first utopian approach; urban planning would keep the second one.

Urban planning is most of the time presented as the act of planning (master plans and land use laws, for example) and urbanism as the act of intervening physically, building, enlarging an area to be occupied, recycling or revitalizing. In the case of urban planning, the required professional has many abilities; in the case of the urbanism, the professional valued is the architect, supported by engineering professionals. Criticism to this approach is discussed in the article, too.

Urbanism was created out of a problem: of a space with facts and transformations felt as negative, unknown and happening at an equally unknown speed. It explains the pessimistic inheritance urbanism carries sometimes expressed by the search of solutions outside the city itself. But such pessimism does not really persist for ever; quite the contrary, it is frequently substituted by optimism, presumption and renewed pessimism. The misogyny that characterizes urbanism originates in the way its object, the city, sees itself. If seen this way, the object of urbanism sometimes believes itself capable of solution, sometimes sees itself as the very main problem of the world, sometimes as the most adequate space for the development of history.

It is, though, evident that urbanism currently presents itself as a science concerned with a phenomenon complex in its essence and understanding, and whose consequences are not restricted to, and thus cannot be

solved, solely in its concrete characteristics. Urbanism, or the science of the city, advances from a scientific marginal position and even from a limited understanding of its object to an aggregator of different fields of knowledge. In this enlargement of responsibilities, the concept until then used by urbanism in its stricto sensu proved not sufficient any more. The concept was forced to enlarge itself, not to be limited to actions with immediate results but to be conscious of the more complex domain. In this transformation towards totality it may need to be renamed. Urban planning would be a more appropriate concept for these new demands.

Urbanism appeared as a science capable of writing critiques on and proposing solutions to urban spaces, but also making clear a concern with the city in terms of built space to be created, corrected, or redone. Classifying, naming and conceptualizing things are risky tasks. Either it is necessary to reinforce the need to differentiate urban planning from urbanism or simply indicate the existence of two kinds of urbanism. In both cases the leitmotif of the differentiation is the priority given to physical intervention versus the priority given to a previous and more comprehensive approach to the urban object by means of plans. In both cases, connectivity with architecture and art is at stake.

From this persistence of original characteristics two concerns arise in terms of urbanism's pretensions. The first is a belief in societal changes triggered by the architect's drawing board. The second concern is about the risk of urbanism, by enlarging the bases of its knowledge and by considering social and economical factors in its proposals, to believe itself capable to alter society. Such concerns may suggest the persistence of a prophetic mission in urbanism.

By adopting the first axiom, we can understand the characterization of urbanism by Choay (1965) as 'heavy with ambiguity'. A science defined by the belief of being able to solve urban problems through its technique and by a pretension to propose an ideal city.

While urbanism remains less multidisciplinary and historically concerned with the design that the city may assume, urban planning is concerned with the conflicts that this use and occupation mandatorily generate. While the former survives in its objectives and responsibilities in a more mono-disciplinary way, the latter shelters innumerable other sciences and interests. The difference between one and the other does not mean that the urbanism may exist without a planning, without counting on a prior moment in which one plans and a moment in which one executes what has been planned. Actually, it does not seem plausible to imagine an urban work, an intervention project, without planning it. But it also seems plausible that one does not plan something that one does not believe can really happen.

So far, one can detect three ways of differentiating urbanism from urban planning. The first is to consider the latter as an enlarged concept, dealing with research, sectorial plans, land use control, and the provision of

basic services and infrastructures (education, health, public safety, water, sewer, paving, transportation). The second is to consider urban planning as a science responsible for tasks that take place before those concerned to urbanism (research, establishment of prognosis, understanding communities desires, consideration of societal discrepancies and, finally, definition of the city one wants). The third, and opposite to the two first ones, is to take urbanism as the enlarged science, as the one that takes under its responsibilities all process, from planning to intervention. As an incongruent science, urbanism allows itself either to adopt or to refuse its original premises. Maybe it deserves to be renamed for urban planning.

Despite the fact that urbanism confirmed itself as a science scared of the new society over which it operates, suffers from incongruence when limiting its tools to simply alter the concrete, the city but not the urban. The failure of innumerable urbanistic attempts justifies a criticism that forced a more comprehensive approach, transforming urbanism into urban planning.

But, we know, urbanism repeats itself in metamorphosis. Current adoption of mega architectural projects to alter cities may justify Koolhaas'assertion (1995): 'Now we are left with a world without urbanism, only architecture, ever more architecture'.

If, throughout history, the so called urbanism or urban planning have different ways of implementing their ideas, the correct conceptualization of the terms discussed here would only be possible if conceived from a historical perspective. 'Currently, the practical activity of the urbanist has some characteristics it did not have in the past ... the responsibilities of the urbanist were unexpectedly enlarged' (Secchi 2005).

Article's conclusion is that either the concept is ample and pretentious or the practice is reductionist.