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**Many projects in Milan
but only a few of them
are urban***Federico Oliva*

Milan today is living through the greatest process of transformation in its modern history thanks to the policy of deregulation applied by the current right of centre government. In some cases the projects now approved or underway have reached the standards of the world architecture star system and are many in number, so much so that they have brought the media to talk of a 'rebirth' of the city, or even of a New Milan. According to the *Comune* (local municipal government) there are nearly one hundred new projects, almost all approved under the town planning procedure of 2000, covering over eight million square metres of the city.

It all seems to be a success for the Milanese political administration. But beneath the data there are those who question the strategy, or rather the lack of strategy that follows the Milanese *laissez faire*, in addition to the 'exhibitionist and publicity seeking character' of its architecture. The reality is a city burdened with problems for three strictly connected reasons. Firstly, in substance the deregulation policy has provided every transformation opportunity possible, increasingly filling in all the old and new 'empty spaces', without correlating the new town planning functions with a suitable context of infrastructure or the preexisting phenomenon of congestion and its consequent environmental conditions. Secondly, from the development point of view, the lack of strategic town planning which selects and localises the functions developed, and the subordination of the regulations to the real estate market, has

produced almost identical results in every intervention, the same mix and recurring absence of excellence, exactly that which is most difficult to impose on this market and which is most necessary for the city's development. The third and most important reason is the substantial myopia of the Milanese town planning policies during the last thirty-five years. Milan is not only the city identifiable with the present *Comune* in which a little over 1.3 million people live, but is also a much larger metropolitan city extending continuously, without solution, for over 45,000 urbanised hectares and in which over 4 million live: an even more extensive polycentric regional city. Continuing to aim investment only at significant centres penalises the rest of the area, which is thus condemned to a peripheral role. The condition essential for such development to take place is therefore put through a comprehensive plan for the city and its metropolitan areas, being based on structural choices for mobility, the environment, and new settlements, which form the indispensable points of reference for true 'urban projects', guaranteeing it concrete sustainability and favouring the application of indispensable urban policies.