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Urban regeneration: fundamental strategy of the new structural Plan of Prato

Gianfranco Gorelli

The project presented in the following, shows well defined elements and is the result of the analysis of morphological, dimensional, and procedural aspects which assimilate it to an experience of urban planning. Nevertheless it has to be considered mainly as a view of one of the fundamental strategies of the new structural Plan of Prato. When around the year 2006 the Comune of Prato decided to start a general revision of the structural Plan, which was operating since about ten years, the social and economic scenario was dominated by a rapid increase of the textile crisis and of the quick growth of the chinese population and their relative economic activities. The textile industry has historically been the major manufacturing sector of the Prato district.

The economist Gabi Dei Ottati writes in his report on the research preliminary to the revision of the structural Plan and commissioned by the Comune of Prato: "The long crisis of the textile heart of Prato has now contaminated a big portion of the other activities, both manufacturers and tertiary, so to determine, in the recent years, not only economic results below the national average, but even a negative growth", and also "the growth of the clothes industry is connected to the chinese immigration and to the increasing number of their small companies producing 'fast fashion'. This process produced in a few years the formation of a chinese economy at an international level but also separated from the rest of the local economy". This scenario and its evolution times could not be considered by the previous structural Plan, even if the relative studies were made a few years before.

The readability of the complex and dynamic relationship between social and urban spaces organization is a peculiarity of Prato, as acknowledged by the wide literature discussing the distinctive features of this peculiar town. As a matter of fact the transformation of the town and territory in its physical and spatial aspects derives from a complex relationship among the existing social practices. This complex relationship should never be seen as a trivial and deterministic reflex of the social and economic actions, (as it was happening in the past for the reductive concept of factory-town).

The morphological and spatial organizations of the town account for "the humors, the tensions, the social and cultural modifications, the technological and organizational innovations, the deep and superficial movements of the population ... the social practices can only affirm vested interests while the urban condition is a collective building expressing cohabitation values, social and cultural relationships not resulting from the summation of the particular interests. The governing action collocates in this continuous reconstruction of the collective dimension" (translation Indovina 2007).

The mixed areas of the town: resource and critical feature

One of the distinguishing characters of the town of Prato is the particular industrial promiscuity existing for long times between productive activities, textile supply chain and the residence.

An evident identity feature of the Prato society has settled in this promiscuity scenario involving both spatial-urbanist and social-economic aspects. This identity feature has been considered first in the structural Plan in force, then in the territory Plan of the Provincia of Prato and in the end also in the almost finished new structural Plan, as a solid value to preserve in future transformations of the town, endowing the town in this way with density and multiplicity of social and spatial relationships and also with safeguard of the architecturally meaningful themes.

For a regeneration politics of the mixed areas

The social and economic perspective conclusions that Gabi Dei Ottati gives to the Comune of Prato as support for the structural Plan, state that "whatever will be the vision of the future that the local forces will choose as a target, it will have to take into account of the presence, important by now, of the chinese immigrants and of their companies. Furthermore, as, differently from the past migrations, the chinese immigrants have originated to a social and economic system largely separated from the social fabric, it is necessary that the collective action aiming to manage the change will be able to transform the presence of these immigrants in a resource for Prato ... also the urban image of Prato should be modified: the 'factory town' could be transformed into 'atelier town', improving the quality of the old textile factory buildings, so to be able to accommodate highly specialized handicraft companies, show-rooms, commercial activities, companies offering services production quality oriented, designers, graphic designers, publicist, artists studios..., so to make this area become an urban environment not only characteristic but also vital, stimulating and appealing".

In this context the new structural Plan defines specific strategies of urban regeneration and rehabilitation extended to wide portions of urban tissue in particular in the western sector of the town, i.e. the Macrolotto zero region, via Pistoiese and S. Paolo. With the word regeneration we intend to mean an action more complex than the recovery or substitution of outdated functions and that is directed to reassemble in dynamical and more advanced terms a mixture of activities and urban elements which deriving from the ancient 'mixitiè' made by houses and fragments of the textile business, will pose again a new mixitiè in which will still be present the living and the working in the textile and clothes fields having nowadays to include creativity, laboratories, communication, technology, etc., held together by a net of public spaces.

Such a strategy tends to achieve the following goals:

- the safeguard of the manufactured articles of historical architectural value which have been identified and registered;
- the individuation of complex areas of interest for the intervention to be controlled by unitary planning instruments;
- the proportioning of the functions (residential, productive, commercial, public spaces and services) in order to guarantee an adequate complexity and social-functional diversification;
- the resulting reduction of the building cover also through the employment of the development right and of the compensation and introduction of massive doses of public space;
- the spatial, economic and social regeneration through the reinterpretation of the recognized identity characters that in the structural Plan are assumed as structural invariants;
- the evolution of the productive aspects for the high profile of the textile-clothes production chain also through the introduction of additional functions (formation, promotion, etc.): from the factory town to the atelier town;
- the accessibility in all its possible forms with particular attention to the handling of the goods and to the mobility for bicycles and pedestrians;
- the social and cultural differentiation according to balanced and coherent proportions with the Prato context;
- the creation of a consistent offer of social residences with specific attention to young couples, students, temporary town users, etc., in the multiple forms nowadays available (different types of renting, public housing, etc.);
- the recreation of ‘friendly’ urban scenario, able to constitute the public spatial context suitable for the execution of working and living various practices.

The identified actions

The achievement of the afore mentioned goals is obtained through the massive employment of development right and compensative methods through which compensate the free spaces necessary to build a significative offer of public space which from a fine texture spread inside the block of houses gets to a dilatation in an urban park which surrounds the southern area. At large this is a very complex operation both for the planning and procedural profiles, demanding large investments and a clear guiding role both from the local administration and from the public subjects in general.

The Prato case differs significantly from many cases of real morphologic and functional substitution of urban parts realized in many parts of Europe and Italy in correspondence of the collapse of productive settlements generally of unique property. On the contrary this concerns with an intervention more similar from a methodology point of view to the recovery of a complex building, substituting or modifying the parts of which are devoid of historical-architectural qualities and preserving those of value articulating the functions again.

The ‘factory town’: a problematic reality

Paolo Maria Vannucchi

Prato urban context has a general and widespread promiscuity among productive and residential buildings. The matrix of this peculiar morphological characterization, that countersigns the wool industry town, finds its origin in the distant Middle ages, when massive water projects are realized in Prato territory, not only to irrigate the fields, but also to create the strength necessary to operate the mills and the many fulling mills, the first cell of the actual production system.

In places where the ancient canal system is closed or crosses the main roads, already in the second half of the 19th century are built the first textile factories, that use the waterways not only to drive the hydraulic machines, but also for the necessary operations of dyeing and washing of fabrics.

These first factories in the primary production system are as real small towns, containing within their borders the various stages of textile processing, with a composition of pavilions, with their own internal distribution network, having many similarities with the nearby and historic residential localities, from which, at least at the beginning, are separated by wide agricultural areas.

This extremely fragile and precarious equilibrium between production and residential sites gradually passes into a crisis after the Second world war, when the new development of the wool industry attracts an impressive migration to Prato, not only from the surrounding areas of Tuscany, but especially from southern Italy, resulting in a dizzying building development.

The impressive and progressive expansion of the town out of its historic center is initially handled by the town Council on the basis of schematic lattice roadways, with open and repeatable mesh, which promote the intensive use of the territory without distinction between different uses and without offering any area, even thought of small dimensions, for equipment or services of collective interest.

The basic urbanization methodology is supported by the first town Planning drawn up by Baroni (1946-54) who, as well aware of the precariousness of urban disorder that in those years was being formed, does not consider any possible improvement.

Savioli’s town Planning (1954-56) for the first time deals with urban issues on a territorial scale, trying to overcome the centripetal pattern of the town and to reset the vital relationship between center and localities, however is not able to change the town bond where residential, handcraft and industrial functions are mixed up in the same areas to combine a balanced, functionally complete and considered inseparable system.

Marconi’s town Planning (1961-64), based on statistical data which show the exceptional increase in population, proposes a huge expansion of the town where the dif-

ferent functions are placed in specific areas, however strictly in compliance with the board of public works provisions.

The urban reorganization proposed by Marconi is the prior formation of industrial areas along the southern part of the city, the macrolotti, over a range of nearly 500 hectares, necessary not only to accommodate new business initiatives, but also to transfer the factories situated in the central areas of the town and restoring the central areas to residential use.

Marconi's Planning finds great difficulty in its practical realization, being subject to the preparation of detailed plans of public initiative of improbable achievement.

Sozzi and Somigli's town Planning (1975-81) is the first concrete proposal for renewing the town, granting to private citizens the opportunity to intervene directly with implementation plans.

The limit of their operation planning, the fragmentation of nearly 200 branches in an area of almost 100 hectares, is the providing of interventions characterized by building replacement in the same form of those of the expansion areas and with constant building parameters, with no reference to existing urban contexts and, therefore, formal results often contrasting with them.

In Secchi's town Planning (1993-96), the issue of disused sites is evaluated in quite different terms because of the great interest of the urban planner for the morphology of the 'factory town' whose change should happen following a clear settlement rule, which may last because the replacement process relates to a long period of time. Since the late 90's the town's socioeconomic landscape has undergone a profound and sudden change. The market globalization has led to a substantial contraction in Prato manufacturing textile industry, not balanced by the remarkable and surprising success of the recently immigrated Chinese entrepreneurship, which is limited only to the manufacturing, final segment of the production chain.

The firms' number drastic decrease has quickened the dismantling of many factories, especially in the central part of the town.

At the beginning, the local building market has considered convenient the conversion of industrial buildings in residential through the restructuring, taking advantage of the existing high volume, but to loss of design solutions that are often very deficient in form and function and still inconsistent with the urban contexts of reference.

The ruling of the built town transformation is still highly problematic, as the town Planning, developed in the second half of the last century, drew up rules of operation mainly aimed to implement a proper expansion of the city on not built areas, relegating implementation plans for specific interventions rehabilitation on sporadic and isolated areas of degradation.

Of much greater size is the issue of renewal of an urban contest like Prato, where promiscuity between residential and production is affecting large parts of the town, where infrastructures and volumes were made and cali-

brated as a function of industrial activity. Any action that the administration intends to set up, will also rely on a deep innovation of regulatory instruments for implementation, or at least their different management.

The traditional town Planning is rigid and static and does not consider the territorial management, since the built town needs to be managed during the time, analyzing the specific places and with a close and continuous relationship among public and private.

Today is considered more suitable the idea of a territorial transformation 'in progress' which, although strictly ruled, anticipated by the structural Planning, and defined by the building Code, nonetheless allows for the reorganization and recovery of extensive backgrounds in the town, with different and flexible solutions, involving external areas through the instrument of equalization of building capacity. (perequazione) Recovery Plans no more conceived as isolated and specific building operations, but as pieces of a single management strategy for different but homogeneous and interdependent interventions, can be used, as provided by Rule art. of law 1/05, as a middle course between planning and building further formulation.

This kind of management requires continuous monitoring and updating of the various measures of conversion and a subsequent dynamic processing decision by the town Council, which can be considered whether a proponent and guardian of the town Planning or a real manager, checking the regeneration of its territory during the time.

The project (pre)view

Michela Brachi, Pamela Bracciotti, Massimo Fabbri

The Macrolotto Zero is the image of the 'factory town'; here more than anywhere else we find the essence of what has been the emergence and consolidation of the textile manufacturing district.

The presence of symbiotic houses and warehouses, the result of the close combination of a time to live and work in Prato, and high rates have led to the maximum exploitation of land areas, were the years of the huge industrial growth and this was, if not allowed, at least tolerated under the cover of employment and collective economic impact on the city's social fabric.

Today, the area sees out the pulse of the industrial and the establishment of the Chinese community, who found the conditions in the neighborhood to live and work.

The degradation observed today requires a comprehensive regeneration of the urban fabric, but without the loss of significant signs of the place.

The project maintains distinctive characters and rearranges them into a new urban language that suggests the transformation of large industrial areas, use of the existing manufacturing base, and an impressive range of public spaces including a new urban park.

The analysis of existing industrial buildings has led to the maintenance of some of them; recognized the value passed the only architectural value of buildings, to also take the value of the role, importance and recognition of a truly unique urban landscape, which aims to not so much to maintain the consistency of the places and artifacts, but the significance and the way it takes in this part of the city with outstanding characters.

Industrial buildings restored, torn from the isolation which the single-purpose production relegated for years, fit into the new urban context and complement the new contemporary buildings and the construction of large public open spaces that would receive the entire project officer. Equalization is accomplished through principles detailed verification of development rights are translated into design surface outline of the intended function. The project area is partially used and the maintenance of existing buildings (18% of the total), and in part spent in the construction of buildings put to diverse marked on many levels, this allows to achieve a double objective: to create a new 'mixity' of features and significantly reduce the consumption of soil releasing and use public spaces public.

The surface area increased from 510,500 sqm to the existing 263,500 sq m project is thus released approximately 50% of floor space which, together with the intended public use of most of the ground floors of buildings, permits a continuous system of paths that are wedged between the existing and built new buildings, allowing the permeability of pedestrians and cyclists the entire district and reports to the outside.

The functions provided for the residence for about 40% social housing for around 4%, according to the Joint Industry - Commercial - Services - Crafts for the remaining 56%.

The reorganization of the mobility system, also in view of the birth of the new hospital in the area adjacent to the district, proposes a new local road that branches off from the highway north-south and collect the new traffic flow actually going to relieve traffic on the delicate structures via Filzi and via Pistoiese.

The path from structure Plan to urban design

Riccardo Pecorario

The images show the project to pay for the lack of comparison with the factors that actually affect the viability of urban developments: subdivision of real property, different levels of use of buildings to be processed, estimate of needs in the period defined for the implementation of the plan; investment capacity and interests of stakeholders, both public and private.

This raises the question of the usefulness and fairness disciplinary and relationship between the suggestions that accompany the communication strategies of the structure Plan and the outcomes that will result from the definition of implementation planning.

The correspondence between the strategic visions with the possible outcomes, must necessarily be found in the elements that the Plan identifies as essential contents of the implementation phase: functional reorganization according to the criterion of the compatibility and optimization of infrastructure support, confirming a trend now well established in our urban area and supported by participatory meetings and event Town meeting, which accompanied the formation of the structure Plan.

Together with the functional reorganization and infrastructure, also the images shown the importance of keeping industrial and craft witness construction of our city, such as typological and architectural values, which are well placed to take on new production functions, but also services and other tertiary activities. A new element that emerges from demands of citizens is the ransom from physical and social deterioration, from illegality linked to economic and social practices of the new chinese immigration.

Another element that will find continuity in the project is another factor that will find continuity in the project is the planning of equalization, in order to find areas to relocate the buildings to be transferred to a relaxation of the density of the neighborhood and a project that could break free from the constraint of the reconstruction on site.

The experience of participation from which come the strategic vision and common purpose to which they relate, define a path that is complemented by a strong community involvement in the preparation of urban design.

The tuscan structure Plan proposes methodologies to those aspects that clearly derive from the same strategic planning for its content, more attracting than regulating, more addictive than imperative, more visionary than governing, more political than technical.

You can then summarize the elements of continuity linking the strategic visions of the structure Plan to the possible outcomes of the various operational plans that you have to enforce:

- territorial relocation of industrial activities incompatible with residential development;
- marked functional mix, with the reuse abandoned indu-

strial buildings of most interest;

- urban equalization to facilitate movement of the buildings to be processed;

- urban design careful integration with the existing, but also able to propose new settlement systems, new infrastructures, in the environmental field and in terms of mobility;

- an urban setting open to different social practices, which promotes cultural and ethnic integration;
- enhancement of local community projects.

A structural plan for a 'City of the wine': the Ps of the Municipality of Bomporto

Carla Ferrari

Inspired by the guidelines of the wine cities' Masterplan, the municipal structurally Plan of Bomporto is 'a nice concretization' of the work that the wine cities bring forward from long years, for the protection and the enhancement of the wine territories from a landscape and environment point of view, and the demonstration how the viticulture and agriculture can be concrete instruments to preserve the peculiarities of each territory, to the benefit of tourism and of the citizen's high quality of life.

With this motivation the municipal structurally Plan of Bomporto was awarded as the 'Best wine cities' Masterplan' at the national competition of Urbanpromo, in Venice, October the 27th, 2010.

The Municipality of Bomporto has joined the 'Wine cities association's' initiative to draw up a municipal structurally Plan of the wine cities, and assumed the methodological lines for the quality wine area's enhancement in the discipline of territorial and urban planning in rural areas of which it shared the purpose and the application methods.

The cognitive examinations, developed in coherence with the 'methodological lines', have enriched the cognitive framework of the municipal structurally Plan, featuring better the agricultural areas, compared to what was done in the Preliminary document of the municipal structurally Plan, where the agricultural areas were articulated and defined with reference to the regional law 20/2000, in the light of the environmental, historical and rural connotation factors, but without considering sufficiently the farms' characteristics and the areas dedicated to the cultivation of the vineyards from which the Doc wine 'lambrusco of Sorbara'.

The thematic maps were also crucial to point out that the corridor of the infrastructure provided by the territorial coordination Plan of the Province of Modena had a very significant impact on the system of the vineyards north of the built-up area of Sorbara and in general on the most suitable areas for cultivation of vines, interfering by the way with the optimal climatic situation for the ripening of the grapes. Considered that the urbanization and the roads with significant traffic load may contribute to higher thermal summations, the creation of a new infrastructure corridor would have a negative impact on the system of the vineyards.

In view of these insights it was possible to review this chosen infrastructure, identifying an alternative solution, however, coherent in transport terms, with the corridor indicated by the territorial coordination Plan of the Province of Modena, but compatible with the system of the vineyards and the areas dedicated to their cultivation.

The insights that were carried out consequently led to the revision of some planning options advanced by the Preliminary document of the municipal structurally Plan,

with particular reference to the articulation and the perimeter definition of the agricultural areas and the location of a new road infrastructure, which were thus modified in the final version of the municipal structurally Plan (adopted in July 2010).

The insights that have been developed on the basis of the methodological guidelines for the wine cities' Masterplan is therefore an important added value for the municipal structurally Plan of the city of Bomporto, because they allowed to weigh up more carefully some key policies of the plan, containing the critical aspects and enhancing the excellences.

The municipal structurally Plan has acquired among its objectives, to work, specifically, for the promotion and the preservation of the wine production areas and of the environmental, scenic, historical, architectural and touristic resources of the rural areas.

Based on the identified objectives, the legislation of the municipal structurally Plan is articulated on recognized specificities by directing the actions and the policies in rural areas also to safeguard the areas suitable for viticulture and the landscape order.

The recognition of defined agricultural areas in the light of the identification of land more suitable for the cultivation of vineyards allowed to begin a participatory process with the agricultural associations in order to build a 'book of rules', as much as possible clear and shared, based on the fundamental premise to preserve as much as possible the land more suitable for the cultivation of vineyards and the areas of high landscape connotation, strictly limiting new constructions to the needs of specialized farms and avoiding improper uses, that are directed towards low-value agricultural areas.

Giampaolo Pioli, president of the national association of the Wine cities, writes: "The work done now for 13 years by the association on the 'Wine cities' Masterplan', marked another important stage of his journey with the book *Wine and landscape*, moves from a basic consideration: the vineyard and rural landscape heritage is of primary and strategic importance, worthy of being protected and enhanced. It is a common good, an essential component of the history and the culture of a community, and is a primary factor in the competitiveness of a region. So it has to become subject of the public planning activity.

The municipal structurally Plan and the urban planning rules of Bomporto are explicitly inspired by those principles, they represent the most advanced and most complete experience on this path of analysis, processing and proposals, that the Association has done and will continue over the next years, on an issue that we consider vital to our wine cities. The essential elements why the region and the rural and vineyard landscape become an 'added value' for a community are found in it: careful and detailed analysis of the vine-growing and wine-producing potential, but also the limits of use, to draw on them an harmonious and coherent development project, therefore sustainable, the identification of suitable areas

on which to exercise an active protection to avoid inappropriate locations of urbanization and invasive infrastructures, the consultation and the sharing of the rules with the community and the production world; the rules for a sustainable use of rural land, for environmental protection and for the conservation of landscape aesthetics. For all these reasons, the Wine cities' association considers the urban planning of Bomperto a clear example of those 'best practices' that must be made known and shared, to be transferred, with the inevitable and appropriate adaptations to different local realities in the vast network of wine cities.

Which also exists as a platform, a meeting point, where exchange of the many virtuous practices that our municipalities realizes, with immense difficulty, is possible. With the objective, common to all of us, to capitalize on the extraordinary field of products, cultures and landscapes that make up Italy. Our battle now is to not allow that the many small towns, dramatically proven by the gradual reduction of resources, are forced to give up their great work for the promotion and enhancement. Thus would be for the whole of Italy an historical mistake of an incalculable importance".