Urbanistica n. 136
May-August 2008

Distribution by www.planum.net

Paolo Avarello — What plan for what town planning?

Problems, policies, and research

edited by Biancamaria Rizzo — Ecological network and planning
Manuela Fornani — The project of ecological network in Ptcp of Mantova
Tiziana Masuzzo, Luigi Iorio — The system of the provincial green. The ecological network of the Province of Novara
Paola Altobelli, Giuseppe De Togni — Strategies of riqualification: planning ecological network. The case of Province of Bologna
Maria Valeria Erba, Mina Di Marino — Ecological network in the urban design

Projects and implementation

edited by Antonella Bruzzese, Antonio Longo — Beyond the Company town. Plans and projects for San Donato Milanese
Alessandro Balducci — A plan for Mattei's city
Marianna Giraudi, Linda Cossa, Dina Acocella — Shared neighbourhood planning. The structure of the 'Laboratorio Quartieri' and its activities
Antonella Bruzzese — Planning with the inhabitants: open issues of a shared experience
Francesca Cognetti — Starting from the neighbourhood to reach the neighbourhood
Antonio Longo — Form and contents of the 'Strategy and framework document'
Paolo Bozzuto, Lorenzo Fabian — San Donato. Four images of change
Gabriele Rabaiotti — Closing the gap and maintaining tension
Alessandro Alì — The Services plan project
Antonio Longo, Antonella Bruzzese — The Area management plan for San Donato Milanese: legislative architecture
Francesco Infussi — Plans for deciding: speed, goals and forms
Antonella Bruzzese, Antonio Longo — Work on the plan. Interview with Achille Taverniti
Antonella Bruzzese, Antonio Longo — Coming closer to the town, experiencing life in the town. Interview with Mario Dompè
Gabriele Pasqui — Politics and policies
Maria Chiara Tosi — San Donato Milanese a workshop on innovation
Paolo Galuzzi — In search of a working dimension

Profiles and practices

Harald Bodenschatz — Town planning in the new Berlin
Giovanna Bianchi — Practices and instruments for the quality of the 'Space of day-to-day life'
Davide Ponzini — Public real estate appreciation as a local development opportunity
Yodan Rofé — The white city of Tel Aviv

Methods and tools

Giovanni Laino — The crisis in Campania waste. A short reconstruction of the story
Gian Paolo Corda — The real challenge for Expo 2015

San Donato Milanese a workshop on innovation

Maria Chiara Tosi

Some years ago Marcel Smets commented that, instead of being "the instrument that makes it possible to accomplish operations within a clearly defined urban policy", town-planning schemes in Italy were quite frequently just one aspect of an 'ideological challenge'. Having taken this criticism to heart, the series of town-planning instruments drawn up for San Donato Milanese seems to have tried to liberate themselves from this condition by clearly stating their aim to create a framework for policies to transform the area, into which each individual urban intervention can be slotted to create a unified idea of the future. This brings them to address, in real terms, the change towards a city that is easier to live in.

I can provide at least three reasons to back this affirmation.

Firstly, the simultaneous but not overlapping use of two instruments: the scenario and the project.

On the one hand, the elaboration of the scenarios known as 'San Donato 2020', which enable us to take a long-term view of building throughout the area and to talk to a wide public using a non-technical language; on the other, the exploration of the 'formal willingness to change' in some parts of the city for which aims and services have been defined, and whose role would clearly be to influence the arena of players involved in the transformation, prompting them towards a shared future.

In this sense, the effort is focused on giving each instrument a precise role: the scenario is charged with 'describing the possible situations' that can develop through a hypothetical sequence of events, where what is crucial is the capacity to make 'common sense of thinking about the future'; instead the project should be precisely that 'tool for exploring the degree to which a place can be transformed', to be offered to those interested as a basis for discussion.

Secondly, the search to make the city, and the array of spaces and interrelated systems that make it up, more habitable. What is important is the convergence of different instruments drawn up in San Donato on a single theme: the need to extend the environmental quality and central urban space throughout the city, and beyond its boundaries.

The work with the inhabitants through the neighbourhood workshops, the survey of the consistency of the area, the scenarios, the services plan and the projects drawn up for specific parts of the city all seem to be moving along the same line of thought, namely to make the city less hostile and tiring for those living in it. More generally speaking, the aim to draw the city and its inhabitants closer together, and to think of urban space as an infrastructure for boosting collective wellbeing is influencing numerous plans and projects throughout Europe, from Lyons to Antwerp, and from Ferrara to Copenhagen. In San Donato this topic is common to all the instruments, to the extent that it virtually seems to be a password.

Thirdly, there is the awareness, or rather the conviction announced right at the start of the Plan document "that the future of an area and a community cannot be planned without taking account of the heritage of knowledge and the experiences of the local population, and without considering the real willingness of the players in change to take part". This means lessening the lack of involvement felt by citizens in building the future of their own city, narrowing the gap between the instruments used to bring about local change and the parties who, in various ways, are involved, be the sponsors, operators or consumers of change. Recognising the urgent need for greater awareness of these aspects does not just involve creating consensus; rather, it means making available cognitive support aimed at reducing the ambiguity of the role played by each instrument and each party involved in the transformation process of the area.

Taken together, these three reasons make the experience of San Donato an original 'test of emancipation', a workshop on innovation in town-planning in Italy. It may not be a coincidence that this has happened at a time when changes are being introduced to the regional town-planning legislative framework and to the range of spokespersons for the city's town planning policy, a moment that may be less protected and less controlled by parties interested in blocking new experiences capable of altering the status quo.