



Urbanistica n. 130

May-August 2006

Distribution by www.planum.net

Paolo Avarello

The plan is not enough

edited by Marco Cremaschi

Albino Caporale

Fabrizio Barca, Marco Magrassi

Marco Cremaschi, Nataša Avlijaš

Marco Bellandi, Annalisa Caloffi

Marco Cremaschi, Anna Paola Di Risio

Francesco Gastaldi, Giulietta Fassino

Pietro Elisei

Massimo Bressan, Armando Dei, David Fanfani

Problems, policies, and research

Innovation and urban competitiveness in Ob. 2 regions of Italy

Competitiveness and urban policies

Towards a metropolitan agenda in the new programming

Urban policy: an only partial assent

Cities, districts and regional innovation systems: the intersection between innovation policies and territorial policies

The concentration of high-level jobs in the cities

Piedmont

Lazio

Tuscany

edited by Maurizio Marcelloni

Maurizio Marcelloni

Carmela Mariano

Francesca Rossi

Laura Valeria Ferretti

Yannis Tsiomis

Bruno Gabrielli

Interview with Manuel Salgado

Federico Oliva

Projects and implementation

An urban project for the Romanina

The centrality of the periphery

The preliminary studies

The history of a competition

Description of the preliminary layout

An approach to the urban project

The competition for the Romanina master plan. The challenge of the centrality

Creating a centre in the Romanina area

Strategies, rules and decision

Francesco Rubeo

Yodan Rofè

Giovanna Fossa, Robert D. Yaro

Cristina Bianchetti

Patrizia Gabellini

Luca Gaeta

Profiles and practices

Recovering historic centres: an urban project for Beijing, Baimixiejie, the White rice road

Making liveable and sustainable major urban streets: a renaissance for multiway boulevards

A comparative study of the New York and Milan convention-trade fair centers

The crisis of the relationship between power and authority in the changing city

Ludovico Quaroni: urban planning concepts before their time

Public land as leverage for urban projects

Anna Maria Colavitti, Giancarlo Deplano

Methods and tools

Museum-city and museum of the city: reflections on an utopia

Received books

Towards a metropolitan agenda within future development programming

Fabrizio Barca,
Marco Magrassi

Over the last fifteen years, several indicators have highlighted a further strengthening of the metropolitan-wide dimension of demographic, social and economic phenomena in Italian urban areas. While population continues to fall in cities located at the core of the metropolitan system, neighboring municipalities and the outer belts consistently gain new residents. The same systems, however, show an opposite dynamic in relation to their economic base, as core cities are experiencing an striking increase in business activity and employment levels. For example, in the 1991-2001 period, the city of Rome lost over 6% of its population although employment increased by almost 15%. This dynamic also characterizes medium-size cities, such as Verona that gained 13.5% in employees while losing 1% of its residents. Recent research also shows that the contribution of metropolitan systems to the national economy is substantial and constantly growing in the crucial sectors of innovative, clean and high value-added industries (such as training and research, publishing and culture, high-tech production, financial services). Although these industries increasingly concentrate in core-city areas, their employees often live in first, and second, belt municipalities. The consolidation of these dynamics should induce clear and timely changes in public policies, such as: adjustments to a range of mobility and transport systems; social and business services;

environmental protection; and, more in general, in the production and location of collective goods and services that require a metropolitan vision, strategy and institutions, which are currently still lacking.

The need for a metro agenda is hardly a novelty in the Italian planning debate. In the late 1970s, a group of high-profile scholars and policy-makers launched the so-called *Progetto '80* that, among other analysis, articulated early insights on 30 metropolitan systems. This ambitious (though mostly top-down) planning initiative did not translate into concrete investment programs and gradually vanished.

It was not until the early 1990s, before a metropolitan agenda reemerged. The second wave of reforms came from new legislation that formally recognized 14 metropolitan cities:

- in 1990, National Law n° 142 defined as "metropolitan areas" the core cities of Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Bari and Naples, later joined by Trieste, Cagliari, Catania, Messina and Palermo. The law, however, did not clarify which other municipalities would constitute the agglomeration;
- in 2001, Constitutional Law n° 3 attributed constitutional relevance to "metropolitan cities" providing them with the same potential status and entitlements of regional and local governments (e.g. on taxation, property rights, intergovernmental transfers, etc.).

Despite this substantial legislative backing, however, the public authorities with the formal mandate to implement the law (municipal and regional governments) have so far been unable or unwilling to establish metropolitan institutions, to adopt metrowide planning, and, in

half of the 14 cities areas, even to define which municipalities around the core city would conform the metro area.

Why these national legislator's intents did not turn into decentralized political action? The answer lays in a combination of different factors.

First, due to central government's delay in approving more detailed implementation guidelines, the legal framework is still incomplete. Regulatory uncertainty on key procedures hampers cooperation, nourishes institutional stalemate and, in some instances, creates open conflict: smaller municipalities in the urban belt fear dominance from the core city; regional governments are alarmed by the potential political weight of future metropolitan institutions; and, lastly, some provincial governments harbor ambitions of 'conquering' from core-city administrations the leadership of the metropolitan authority. In the face of this government-failure, an organized coalition of civic interests to proactively support the agenda has failed to emerge and to help breaking the *impasse*. Other obstacles came from demographic patterns tracing continuous growth in outer-belt municipalities and the consequent weakening of the urban form, which further complicated decision-making over the geographical (and therefore, administrative) definition of metropolitan boundaries. Also, those borders established 10-15 years ago for some of the metro areas were overcome by functional, social, and economic change, and no longer respond to planning needs. Finally, no clearcut criteria can be devised to define the metropolitan area, as different cities have different needs in metropolitan policy, ranging

from the broad mandate and functions required to properly manage large agglomerations such as Naples or Milan, to the more limited needs of smaller conurbations (e.g. Trento or Messina) that simply aim at building more effective intermunicipal coordination.

In the last decade, regional development funding from the EU and central government has often played an important, at times decisive, role in leveraging institutional reform and territorial innovation (e.g. improving environmental standards or water management systems). We argue that, confronted with the metropolitan challenge, development policy for the 2007-13 programming period can be explicitly aimed at breaking institutional deadlock and in supporting the metropolitan agenda. In this respect, the first signals are encouraging: while 2000-06 programming only targeted core cities, several Regional Strategic Documents for the upcoming investment period (among which the large regions of Piedmont, Veneto, Tuscany, and Campania) identify metropolitan cities or polycentric urban agglomeration as a policy priority. In early 2006, the national programming document for 2007-13 (the National Strategic Reference Framework: NSRF) established a national priority for *Competitiveness and attractiveness of the cities and the urban systems* that identified metropolitan areas as the main unit for urban development programs financed with EU and national grants within regional policies. Building consensus over this explicit metropolitan option was not easy as several administrations (particularly, smaller regions of wealthier Central-Northern Italy) opposed the

concept during the cooperative planning process, which generated the NSRF. The arguments that ultimately made this important result possible were constructed around a simple idea: if given the appropriate policy tools, metropolitan cities can set more innovative and ambitious goals, and leverage higher returns on development investment. Based on this consideration, the NSRF establishes that, in designing their investment plans, regional governments should provide metropolitan cities with adequate financial resources, high flexibility in multiannual investment programming, and strong design and implementation autonomy. In turn, the NSRF underscores that metropolitan cities will have to create effective intermunicipal partnerships for program management, ensure substantial municipal matching funds, leverage private sector involvement and cofinancing, and guarantee high valueadded investments to boost the performance of main cities in extraregional and international markets, positively impacting the country's competitive position.

While this strategic shift is relevant, because it provides with a real window of opportunity for policy innovation, it is still unclear whether institutions will exploit this chance to produce the concrete results in terms of more effective development planning. Only pragmatic and farsighted political determination can respond positively to this challenge through operational and financial decisions. While national government has already done its part, this opportunity is now in the hands of regional governments, that are fully responsible for the definition of multibillion development programs for the 2007-13 period.