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Towards a new political reform and social and environmental welfare
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Modern town planning originated from the concept of public interest and the need of protecting it in relation to physical organization of cities. The assumption was that definition and pursuit of public interest and related processes and needs were easily manageable in the standardized societies and communities created by the economy, in particular the industrial economy, of mass production and consumption. It was an important change, mostly at organizational and dimensional level, compared to the charitable efforts of fighting against poverty that had always been promoted in territories and in cities, especially in the large cities more than others attracting populations often desperate (Ritter 2003).

In the XX century a new path of development and wealth in the western countries and of fights for survival in the rest of the planet, the emerging of an environmental global crisis, a shift to industrial, service, and information economy increasingly taking distance from mass society and Fordism, and the appearance of a completely new fragmentation of the social and cultural profiles of cities and territories undermined the monolithic certainties of the elementarily reform-oriented town planning of the origins. This happened in tune with general processes and trends, of political, economic, sociological, cultural, and technological type. Even if its emphasis mostly featured developed countries because of their particularly accentuated phenomenologies, this new uncertainty and plurality in

processes and approaches to city government and building is a structural datum of communities, at the bottom independent of levels of development and wealth and instead linked to the diffusion of new spirits and visions of communities and their futures.

As time went by, it has been understood that public interests and needs are as variegated as individuals and groups of the appearing societies and communities, that immaterial interests and needs go alongside with material ones, that 'beautiful' are the cities which promote both citizenship ethical virtues and aesthetical ones, have houses, schools and hospitals (the classic triad of the well planned and designed city of modern town planning) and at the same time offer an atmosphere propitious for the development of persons and in general of living beings as individuals or groups.

The urban and town planning welfare which started with the couple charity-and-assurance of the fight against poverty in the large British cities of the XIX century, with the construction of houses, schools, health unities, today presents relevant novelties, in those cities as in their analogues in the rich minority of the planet. But that basic welfare largely remains a not solved goal in both rich and poor cities: in the poor ones because they are taken in the vise of basic needs affecting populations that increase in figures and poverties, in the rich ones because everywhere, close to the old poverties never completely defeated, pockets of new poverties appear, made of intriguing endogenous or exogenous social fragments.

New goals and organizational frames enrich the above cited basic triad

of the traditional urban welfare: care and education oriented to the emerging fragmentations and precariousnesses, operating in both concentrated and diffused ways in cities and territories (new decentralized and specialized health services, services for drugged, injured persons, elderly or in general disabled persons); culture, tourism, and leisure services easily manageable by a market-oriented third sector made out of social co-operatives and no profit firms operating in subsidization with the traditional public structures of the welfare state, not conventional person-oriented services, proximity solidarity activities in urban districts or villages, specialized health attendance and rehabilitation, pollution prevention and monitoring, environmental re-covery, urban wastes recycling, alphabetization and retraining policies; finally, in the face of more advanced situations and problems, protagonism of public services co-ordinated in new ways in sectors like informatics, collective transport, sanitary products and equipments, territorial recovery, restoration of historical centres; all this scanned by reorganized time of life and work (Trentin 1996; Pennacchi 1997).

In the Scandinavian and in particular in the Swedish welfare town planning experience, discussed with up-to-date analyses and case studies in this issue of *Urbanistica*, an experience extra-ordinarily lasting in time which according to the experts was even more successful than the Roosevelt's New Deal in the Usa of the 1930s, the public works theme intriguingly appears.

It is known that in Sweden a corageous politics of public works was the keystone,

which generated an economic and occupational engine, no matter its simplification when compared even to the levels of complexity of that age, of the precocious welfare of the capitalism-in-production-and-socialism-in-distribution socialdemocratic compromise (Girotti 1998, p. 213) on which an original regulative, distributive, and redistributive model could be theorized and validated in practice. The Swedish one was an institutional-redistributive model integrating active job-oriented politics with a powerful triad of fiscal reform, development of public housing and urban planning, support to families and women, in the end resolute direct support to the development of the human person.

In the Great Britain of the post II World War period, too, in the powerful architecture of the Beveridge Report of 1942 (quoted also as Plan for its extreme operativeness) with its liberalism-oriented fight against 'the five giants' bringing violence to mankind (need, illness, ignorance, poverty, and idleness), wise policies of urban and territorial development and integration of health services and public housing, pursued by both the Labour and the Conservative parties, constituted an extraordinarily successful experience and an influential model for western countries.

In Italy in the 1960s, just before the radical decentralization in the 1970s of planning powers to the regional administrations, the fundamental planning law of 1942 was changed to host new welfare provisions oriented to the needs of the urban populations: the key of this change was normative and 'universal', imposing minimal (identical for any Italian city or village,

in a country at that time, perhaps, even more variegated than today from North to South) per capita endowments of areas for elementary social services and equipments (green, schools, social equipments in general, and parking areas).

The results of that town planning reform (perhaps potentially more incisive should the radical change of land property rights proposed by the Christian-democrats leading the government have defeated a wide raising up conservative alliance) have substantially incised in the urban and territorial political regime in Italy. Many Italian regions and cities today benefit from more balanced ratios between built and open spaces (also beneficial from the environmental point of view), of newly created, maybe not immense but however relevant, estates of public areas deriving from the compulsory transfers operated by the private proponents of urban transformations according to procedures of agreed detailed plans (lotting plans); a public juridical defence has consolidated and without exceptions converged on the assumption of the intransgressibility, by anyone and for all transformations of urban space, of the social tax consisting in the reservation and gratuitous cession to the public property of part of the intervention area, suited to a legally predefined standard, at expense of the actor of transformation.

Even the ongoing shift in the second half of the XX century from a first generation of reconstruction plans (1940s and 1950s) to a second generation of reform-oriented and welfare plans (1960s, 1970s, and partially 1980s), and finally to a third one of plans oriented to quality more than quantity and to environmental protection (Campos Venuti 1987; Campos Venuti, Oliva 1993) can largely be explained with the structural effects of that reform.

The delegation of planning to the Regions in Italy has prevented in recent years from national uniformity, now perceived as essential, in reorienting welfare policies, for populations increasingly diffused in cities and territories, towards ecology and nature: some more lucky and far-sighted regions are already moving towards relegitimating themselves by a kind of welfare intertwining innovative issues to the traditional ones, this sometimes happening in a political frame where aspirations to extensive taking care of society and individuals are not undisputed (Morisi, Magnier 2003); in the meanwhile, many Italian regions are facing strong difficulties in promoting even traditional levels of urban and territorial welfare. Normative reflexions like the ones developed above appear useful also due to the "surprising incapacity of learning", from both successes and failures, showed by the welfare systems (Girotti 1998, p. 359).

A reflection on the need of a new urban and territorial socio-environmental welfare, on its new problems of ambit and destination, economic and financial sustainability, public and private ethics, can appear unjust and senseless if one looks at the galaxies of poverties and needs surrounding the richest countries of the planet Earth, at the metropolises of favelas, slums e bidonvilles devoid of all (houses, water, electricity, sewerage, schools, safety, health, etc.) which from Kogorocho-Nairobi to the huge slums of Mumbai today face enormous tasks of city building only armed with shabby and perspectively unpromising investments and budgets. A glance to the whole set of human settlements in the planet, through which immense populations move with increasing intensity and velocity, makes clear that, even due to different reasons, a comprehensive human condition is at risk and differentiated welfare politics remain everywhere at the order of the day. Likewise, perhaps more than in, other parts of the rich Europe whose model of democracy and co-operation is generally admired, Italy's concentrated or diffused settlements, from villages to metropolises, are in large part not equipped for the coexistence of the basic welfare still demanded by the new poor, endogenous or immigrated, with the post-Fordist, post-acquisitive, and sometimes post-materialistic and oriented to new sacrednesses and spiritualities of public spaces (Scandurra 2003) welfare demanded by both societies of fragments and minorities remained until now out of attention and individuals and groups already fairly protected but unwilling to renounce something in favour of new weaker subjects.

Numerous shortages of new socio-environmental reform and welfare provisions coexist: houses for people who, disabled by the emerging precariousnesses of jobs, are not able to enter markets whose prices are increasing everywhere due to the persistent attraction of real estate investments, as indicated also by the diffusion of real estate financial funds, a phenomenon which furtherly boosts those markets; houses for new emerging demands (disabled people, integration with nature, ecological coherence, etc.); articulation of social equipments, starting for instance from the ones for taking care of children and infants in relation to female work in potential expansion; services for free time, in primis green areas, also to fight against the repellent cities and the continuous escapes from them (in search of better environments, landscapes and territories) which are causing traffic pollution and pervasive anthropization; environment-oriented equipments and infrastructures adequate to social aspirations to progress and development; qualified (lifelong) educational services; multicultural integration services; articulation of urban and territorial places designed for both communities and individuals, for both meeting and isolation; urban and territorial spaces hosting the coexistenxce of different species of living beings; public and citizenship spirits retailored in the light of new social and community pacts, what is essential to refound the equity bases of the new welfare in the urban and regional areas that are the terrain of the human settlements of the contemporary age; reintegration of work-places and houses, an operation made today possible the spread of Its and by the fact that reproductive activities are now seen as important as traditional productive activities; etc.

A long list, which apparently evokes typical dreams and utopias of planning tradition. It has to do instead with stringent needs in both rich and poor societies. If bolds reports and plans and absolute public spirits have been distrusted because of their systematic defeat by the virtuous hidden hand of the market, a new political reform and socio-

environmental welfare for cities and territories still deserves priority in the political and planning agenda everywhere.

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