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## French ideas for the Turin urban project

Patrizia Ingallina

The French notion of urban project is not of one exclusive discipline, but an all inclusive one of economics, sociology, law, urban geography, architecture, etc. It's like a kind of 'general culture', a shared vision of the city and the territory as an entity whose complexity has grown out of its moving instability, with flexible scenarios always 'representing' its future through participation and time. It is essential for all aspects to be preconfigurations so that a debate can be outlined linking the variations which arise so that they can on occasion act progressively through small changes, allowing margins for negotiation between actor/decision makers and financiers, the authorities involved, and 'informed' social subjects. Town planning is therefore a process involving a multiplicity of participants who intervene at different times, in different ways, and on different scales. This French notion of urban project is not improvised, but is the fruit of a culture possessing its own reference points, interpretations, and organisations. Two of this culture's strong points have had a notable impact on town planning: the strength of an extremely centralised and well structured top down institutional organisational system which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each subject; and clear attribution of the project's public offices in the distinction between the responsibility of the *maîtrise d'ouvrage publique* and that of the *maîtrise d'oeuvre*. Since it is more complex, the Italian situation seems difficult to understand in that

it does not fit systematic processes, but is entrusted to a step by step approach. In this context, the PRG of Gregotti and Cagnardi ('83-93) presents, in the guise of a strategic plan, the attempt to move from 'spoken' town planning to a vision of an urban project as 'the global and future prospective'. The project is structured around a forceful idea, the Central spine, a kind of urban *boulevard* obtained by planning and laying railway based transport coverage i.e. trains, trams, underground railways. Fortified by a striking slogan, the Turin urban project has inspired a series of chain reactions and the PRGC has been a factor *déclanchant* further initiatives which have profited the city. The indisputable stimulus provided by the launch of the Strategic Plan in '98, for which the PRGC provided numerous ideas, was transformed into strategic directions by the document of 2000. Other projects have been triggered on this basis, with the additional support of complex and structural programs (Torino internazionale, ITP, etc.) created to demonstrate the credibility of the Turin project and for newcomers to judge, among which the 2006 Winter Olympics catches the eye. It is useless to worry about the inevitable difficulty associated with managing 'ordinary' and 'exceptional' (Olympic) projects side by side for they require different time scales and draw upon different resources, mostly mixed. There may also be decisional difficulties such as the choice between project priority, as well as choosing between short term and medium-long term projects. Beyond the inevitable operative problems introduced by this proliferation of projects, there arises the central role played by the PRGC, conceived as a

knowledgeable *mélange* of strategic elements. The privileged role given to the local scale rather than the intercommunal in Italy can be seen from this, in contrast to the French approach in which the 'strategic' has priority and requires a form of governance suited to negotiation and co-operation between neighbouring local municipal authorities.