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Federico Oliva A program for INU

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Received books

A strategic challenge

Fabiano Belcecchi, Daniele Olivi

In Jesi the Mayer and the new Commune Council, which has been in office since June 2002, guide a series of policies forming a program for the governance of the territory, whose culmination is the fulfilment of the *Variante generale* (general zoning variance) of the Prg (town development plan).

In September 2003 the Commune Government prepared a "program to fulfil the Prg in force from a strategic and ecological point of view": a plan uniting the dimension of land use regulation with the wider planning of the policies of governance, which are related by the shared aim of sustainability as an necessary presupposition for lasting development. Achieving this decisive choice has been planned by integrating traditional regulation based urban design and planning with two voluntary instruments aimed at ensuring the environmental-participative and strategic-planning character of the choices: Local Agenda 21 and the Strategic plan. Followed by the other important decisions then taken by the Commune Government: appointment of a group of planners composed of young professionals and people from academic university life (specifically DIAP, the Department of Architecture and Planning at Milan Polytechnic, has been appointed as consultant to the strategic plan and town development plan, particularly Sandro Balducci and Patrizia Gabellini, the latter being coordinator responsible for the whole *Variante*) with support from the local Commune offices. There has been considerable discussion, comparison, and further development of Local Agenda 21, the Strategic

plan, and the *Variante generale* of the town development plan so that documents activating the same activities have been produced: firstly, the strategic plan for 'Jesi in 2020' with its four territorial development projects and nine growth promoting actions; secondly, the Piano idea and the *Approfondimenti* for the new city design; thirdly, the State of the Environment Report, the local action plan, the VAS (Strategic Environmental Evaluation) in agreement with the provisions of EU directives; fourth, the environmental accountability of the local authority, that is, the Commune; fifth, starting to gain ISO 14001 certification and EMAS registration of the Commune; sixth, application of European, regional, and local decrees; and lastly, being a local part of a wider network. In short, the use of these operations in the design of the new city has attempted to change the political paradigm in terms of shared and strategic planning, promoting and experimenting with good practice for sustainable and lasting development, applying strategies to the city as a 'strategic territory', playing a part in 'archipelago' systems-economies composed of horizontal and transverse city networks or groups of cities in which small communities like Jesi play a role and enjoy opportunities that would otherwise be impossible.

The experience gained during these three years has led to the feeling that the program, because of its experimental nature, has many strong points but also a great many weaknesses. The strong points include the use of 'local knowledge' in the planning process (in a non-technical sense) provided by citizens and public-private organisations located in a wide area, the systematic return to and

contextualisation of supra-local commune territory transformation projects prepared by third parties and informing the heedless local community on a regular basis, and the osmotic and synergistic use of three differing instruments (*Variante*, Strategic plan, and Local Agenda 21). The weaknesses include the failure of the political decision making system to comprehend the meaning and significance of this innovative initiative. In some difficult situations the political decision making system has seemed to fear lack of respect for its own institutional prerogatives, and there us a lack of specific and modern regional urban design and planning regulation, which is still in the process of being elaborated.