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Paolo Avarello The image of the urban planning

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Problems, policies, and research

New infrastructural and transportation scenarios for the Mediterranean
Mediterranean ports: models, functions and outlook
The dynamics of international trade
The Meridian corridor as a connective armature of the productive platforms in Mezzogiorno
Intermodal logistics and motorways of the sea

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Europe for the cities
A thematic strategy on the urban environment
The role of the cities in structural funds programmes for 2007-2013

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Projects and implementation

The structural plan of Siena, or prudential innovation
A new paradigm to test
The city concept and strategic vision
The form of the plan and its components
Policies for the historic city
From vasta area policies to SP strategies
The settlement system
The landscape of 'Buongoverno'
The landscape ecology in territorial governance
Structural plan in the Tuscan Regional Law
The SP of Siena and town-planning innovation in Tuscany

*Gabriele Comacchio, Paola Loglisci
Claudio Greppi, Paolo Jervis
Carlo Blasi, Vincenzo De Dominicis, Leopoldo Michetti,
Riccardo Copiz, Chiara Centi
Annalisa Cauteruccio, Wladimiro Gasparri
Gianluigi Nigro*

Biancamaria Rizzo, Anna Laura Palazzo, Valter Fabietti

San Marino territory. Guideline for settlement

*Mariolina Besio, Daniele Virgilio
Ugo Baldini*

Profiles and practices

Culture and identity in the strategies of a medium-small sized town
Local Agenda's contribution to new provincial planning cycle in regional programming system
Changes undergone by the legal framework of town planning schemes and the evolution of the discipline of town planning. Part II

Chiara Mazzoleni

Methods and tools

Marichela Sepe Contemporary territories: methods of analysis and tools of representation

Received books

A new paradigm to test

Andrea Filpa, Michele Talia

After a relatively short incubation period, lasting less than three years from the start of the proceeding to its adoption by the Municipal Council, Siena now has a new urban development plan. The differences between the preceding Master Plan, drawn up by a group of planners coordinated by Bernardo Secchi, and the new Structural Plan (the result of efforts which, although with some outside contributions, has been carried out by the Municipality's Planning Department) are indeed enormous although it would be a mistake to put down the distance separating the two instruments to the peculiar features, evident as they may be, of the respective *planning forms*. In the ten years separating the two technical-administrative processes, in fact a resolute modification of the planning system took place first in Tuscany and then in the rest of the country, and this, while on the one hand more effectively limiting the margins of freedom within which the town planner can exercise his culture and his talent, on the other hand identifies sectors of research and experimentation which hitherto did not seem feasible.

Along the apparently narrow path outlined first in Regional Law 5/95, and further defined by LR 1/05, the SP work group moved with unsuspected freedom, not only finalizing a procedure able to ensure a constant balance between the *statutory dimension* and the *strategic dimension* of the Plan, but also identifying concrete grounds for the application of two components of the planning process that had by now become crucial, namely having recourse to

assessment techniques and seeking a greater involvement of the public. Thanks to an ever more effective tool kit, the planner can today submit town-planning choices to increasingly more severe checks, which translate in fact into the possibility of grasping the idiom of the evaluator and of the communicator, and at the same time of visualizing the feasibility, the impact and the possible sharing of his own draft plan.

In the SP of Siena these new working capacities have been developed in three complementary sectors. In the first place recourse was frequently had to the institutions of equalization and of compensation, useful in offering a way of implementation both to the objectives of environmental or landscape protection and rehabilitation, and to the policies of economic development and of support for the housing demand of low-income families. At the same time great efforts have been made to secure the participation of the citizens, and this has translated not only into activating a privileged relationship with the girls and boys of Siena, assigned the responsibility of a design table, but also foreseeing a City House in which to hold, on a permanent basis, the debate on urban dynamics and on transformation projects. Lastly a planning process solidly based on the programming method was envisaged, such as to associate the single phases into which the planning operation will be subdivided with a careful consideration of the balance sheet constraints and of the implications deriving from an integrated management of the discipline of land use and sectoral measures. Thus far even the innovative choices were able to take off substantially in keeping with the fundamental

inspiration of the regional legislative framework, but occasions were not lacking in which the need was felt of a broader-ranging reform of territorial governance, which could enable the spatial and temporal constraints stemming from the current legislative context to be overcome, including for example the lack of attention given to vast area policies or the absence of prospective references and elements with which to give concrete form to the widely demanded strategic projection.

At such moments as these the paradigm of *prudent innovation*, and hence the undertaking to avoid inconclusive choices and leaps in the dark which a wisely conservative community such as that of Siena would not be able to understand, has been sorely tried, but has proved able to stand up to it.

This is witnessed, for example, by the decision to draw up a territorial reference framework not foreseen in regional legislation (SMAS), to assist in the formation of the new SP; this made it possible to involve the five adjoining municipal administrations in a co-planning exercise, testing the solidity of choices in the sectors of housing, infrastructure and environment, and so proposing a model that may usefully be referred to during the forthcoming revision of the provincial plan.

But it is also thought of having recourse to the technique of scenarios and adopting a long-term perspective (the city idea) in dimensioning the plan, indispensable for introducing that vision of the future able to motivate the most exacting decisions, and therefore improving the coexistence of citizens and institutions.

After the season of *elite planning*, also *prudent innovation* is able to open

up horizons of a certain depth, in particular attributing to the local government a crucial role in disciplinary research. In the experience of the SP of Siena, the result of individual or small-group elaboration, formed part of a process of collective maturing of the institution, with the effect of perhaps reducing its visibility, but with the undoubted advantage of attributing to it a noble paternity which enhances its legitimation and transferability.