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The image of the urban planning

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The role of the cities in structural funds programmes for 2007-2013

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The new European cohesion policy, and its implementation by member states, is being drawn up in the framework of a whole and comprehensive sustainability approach, towards social cohesion and economic goals (Lisbon strategy) and environmental quality (Goteborg strategy). In this context, the role of local territorial systems is crucial: cities have been identified by the European Commission as *motors for growth and jobs* and the new funding policy has the function to support this role, following British sustainable communities model. In synthesis, the European Commission brought out a vision of urban policy, to be implemented through structural funds, deeply related to complex programmes held on in the recent past programming years, such as Urban programme. This kind of tool interlinks the three spheres of sustainability all along its elaboration and implementation, even in the audit phase. In the new programming period, programmes such as Urban are not anymore considered as single identities and flow into the big container of cohesion policy. The scope of this assimilation is the transmission of their innovative contents into ordinary Commission policies, although the effectiveness of this transmission is to be demonstrated. Referring to urban areas, the main concern seems to be the setting up of integrated projects, able to face a complex urban reality, not circumscribed to administrative boundary, and to interpret urban structure and territorial interconnections to

formulate adequate answers. In carrying out the interpretation of territory processes, the Italian Strategic Reference Framework identifies two territorial models, *metropolitan city* and *territorial systems*, which structural funds operations should refer to. This complex level of interpretation, could enable the formulation of complex answers, so as to take into consideration and face urban sprawl and design or redesign the role of the networks, of every kind and specie. It also allows thinking that integrated answers will be formulated to deal with cross-border phenomena between city and its *rounding universe*, recognising and strengthening functional, environmental and economic relations. In this framework, some issues still remain open. First the role of institutional partnerships for urban areas. Local actors ask for a complete involvement into the whole programming cycle, from elaboration to implementation. They feel that demanding the drawing up of rules and methods for partnership to regions will cause a restraint of their involvement to the implementation phase. Secondary, the role of the *metropolitan cities* should be clarified. They are several times mentioned as territorial dimension, but never taken into consideration as juridical subject for institutional partnership. It is also still unpredictable which relations structural funds financed projects will engage with the other plans and programmes operating on the same urban area. In particular, an interaction with urban strategic plans seems to be desirable. Finally it will probably be necessary to draw up new tools for implementing the audit and evaluation process in urban areas, as

requested by structural funds programmes.