



Regional and Local Brownfield Strategies in South East England Workshop

A RELEMCOM UK workshop with SEEDA and ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS

19th – 20th MARCH 2007

Local Involvement at the Former Fruit and Vegetable Market, Bologna, Italy¹

“BOLOGNA: A CHANGING CITY”

The experiences described here start from the supposition that participation by citizens, including individuals, in the processes of transformation is an important element in planning. It is, of course, only one of the elements and it can from time to time assume a varying extent and relevance. In this case, the experiences relate to a number of experiments that are currently being carried out by Bologna City Council, and in particular the Market Workshop project and it is sought to highlight the various stages and instruments used in this process.

Bologna City Council has set up various activities to encourage participation and involvement in the planning and transformation processes in the city².

A traditional and codified programme is that of information and consultation in the city districts, with decentralised institutional units. These have been supported at the same time by activities of an institutional nature, pursuant to Law no. 20/2000, the Emilia Romagna Regional urban planning law, which involves consultation with business and community associations and co-planning with institutional bodies, some of which are in charge of approving the plans.

On the other hand, programmes of an experimental and optional nature have included the “Bologna: A Changing City” Forum, relating to the redevelopment of the city centre, and the district urban planning joint workshops set up to look at several important areas of transformation.

It is interesting to consider the more innovative and experimental aspects, which have not been provided by legislation but have been voluntarily set up by the Administration.

The Forum on the Municipal Structural Plan has been in operation for around a year. The Administration decided to launch a programme involving public participation at the time when the strategic guidelines of the Structural Plan were being drawn up, in order to obtain the views of the various community groups in the city upon various subjects: the transport system, the environment, the urban system. This programme led to the creation of a document that the Administration has undertaken to adopt in various parts while, for other parts, it has responded explaining its reasons for various positions that could not be shared and adopted by the new plan. Here are a few figures about the Forum: 153 associations, 265 individual participants, 10 meetings of work groups on specific subjects, 6 full sessions, 2 "walks" (visits to the areas of the city that exemplify various planning criteria), as well as 50 written submissions received by the City Council. An internet forum was also launched in which around 250 messages were exchanged but, above all, approximately 2,500 messages read. One of the results of this work is the mapping of places. This seeks to highlight the hot spots of the city, where the debate has been most intense, subdivided by subject matter and by the type of observations.

¹ Bologna delegation attending the workshop: Giovanni Ginocchini (Planning area, Municipality of Bologna), Inti Bertocchi (Planning area, Municipality of Bologna), Giovanni Bertoluzza (Planner, Studio Scagliarini, Bologna) Luisa Lazzaroni (Katia Bertasi Neighborhood Center, Municipality of Bologna), Carlo Santacroce (District Navile Planning Commission, Municipality of Bologna)

² details of the various programmes can be found on the web site <http://www.comune.bologna.it/partecipazione/>

The “neighbourhood workshops”, on the other hand, are local actions where those involved in transformations (citizens, associations, administrations, experts) can bring together various points of views on the city and different areas of expertise (technical or otherwise), searching to reach quality solutions which are shared as widely as possible³.

At present there are numerous local workshops in Bologna: in addition to the workshop on the former fruit and vegetable market, there is one on the area of via Larga in the north-east of the city (along with a competition for ideas), another on the San Donnino area in the north of the city, while a fourth concerns the relationship between air quality and energy needs in other districts to the west of the city – the latter being unusual because it deals with an environmental conflict, a new energy co-generation centre which has been the subject of much protest by local residents and over which a public debate has opened up.

THE “MARKET” WORKSHOPS

The Former Fruit and Vegetable Market area is of strategic importance for the city of Bologna. Close to the railway station and in particular to the area that will soon house the high speed terminal, the Market area in the Bolognina district was developed in the 1920s and is separated from the city’s historic centre only by the railway line.

As often happens, various requirements for the development of a city converge on this area. On the one hand the Administration has a series of legitimate needs, in particular constructing links between the new station and the new central headquarters of the City Administration, and using the area, which is half public, for the new residential “social housing” plan.

At the same time there are the needs of those living in the Bolognina Neighbourhood (Navile district) who, after years of waiting, would like the former market to provide them with new services and green spaces. Finally there are the private landowners who have their own profit interests. Each group therefore has different (and entirely legitimate) hopes and, as often happens, great difficulty in communicating between each other.

The first project for the market area, which covers over 321,000 m², dates back to 1996: The first joint urban plan, the DUC, provided for an area of 186,149 m² available for construction. Another project was drawn up in 1999 and a third in 2002 which, after numerous modifications, was adopted in 2004. Along the way there was a progressive reduction in the area of usable space, due also to a series of conflicts that the transformation process in this area had opened up. However, the residents and district associations were interested not only in protesting against these planning choices but also in putting forward their own proposals, through questionnaires, observations and written submissions.

The Market workshop⁴ was set up by a resolution of Bologna City Council which establishes the project workshop with public participation but imposes some limitations. The city authority declares that it regards the workshop to be a useful instrument, and asks it to examine various aspects of the plan which were the subject of disagreement. This is an important event because it gives institutional importance to the workshop: it is created not only out of the wishes of the local inhabitants but those of the Administration itself.

Following the launch of the workshop there is a remarkable response: indeed hundreds of citizens, as well as experts, commissions and 15 district associations, take part. It is important to point out the variety, ranging from Parish groups, the CGIL trade union, as well as construction companies, the River Reno Water Committee, the Coop, XM 24 a youth self-managed centre, and therefore without doubt a very heterogeneous group.

The communication instruments that the workshop has adopted from the very beginning are a periodical newsletter, which includes articles by the Administration but also from district

³ “as widely as possible” means here that not everyone is necessarily in agreement with the final choices

⁴ details can be found on the web site <http://www.comune.bologna.it/laboratoriomercato>

associations, a web site and a series of explanatory panels that are set up at the centre for the elderly (Katia Bertasi neighbourhood centre), which is on the outskirts of the area and has become a sort of informal info-point.

THE PROGRAMME AND RESULTS

The programme begins with discussion of the previous project, subdividing the meetings by subjects, working in small groups, requiring that in each individual work group the project planners (from the office of Scagliarini Architect, Bologna) are present to listen to the discussions.

After this initial phase a document of questions and recommendations is drawn up which the workshop presents to the Administration and to the project planners for the revision of the plan.

Here are some of the objectives that the inhabitants have suggested to the project planners and the Administration:

- a new “public centrality” (with new facilities for culture, recreation, sport, social help,...) that is accessible and available to everyone
- the new project as an opportunity for revitalising the entire district
- the possibility of creating various types of green space (with a big park near the “old” district)
- a positive example of environmental sustainability for the city (energy saving, water saving, etc)
- the new district as an integral part of a new strategy for the territorial transport system.

Finally, during the meetings for the redefinition of the plan, the project planners presented their initial ideas to the workshop, by way of designs that were simplified but which highlighted the various elements that the local inhabitants demonstrated to be of particular importance to them.

This initial stage of ideas and approaches, which are discussed and broadly agreed, is then followed by other activities such as, for example, guided visits to the area, the presentation of a model that helps in understanding and therefore in discussion, and various meetings with small groups who have expressed particular concerns, for example slow transport or the positioning of service centres.

In November 2005, eight/nine months after the beginning of the workshop, a new project is validated. Since, compared with the initial inputs, it radically modifies the previous plan, it has to be readopted and is finally approved in July 2006.

For ten years, up to the creation of the workshop in 2005, there was a succession of numerous projects concerning this area. Thanks also to the programme of participation, it would seem that a solution has finally been found for a project that had been in a state of impasse for over ten years.

Today this workshop continues, thanks also to funding obtained through the European project Grow-Relemcom, which has recognised the quality of the process and of the project. The new objectives are to examine with the inhabitants various elements of the public city that are provided in the plan: the park and the green spaces, the school, the cultural centre, the “pensilina” which is a sort of covered piazza, part of the pre-existing market which it has been decided to retain and which could have an important role among the public spaces of the new district.

As one might imagine, there have been varying assessments of this programme of public participation. In general there has been broad satisfaction from among those taking part, above all from those who had initially expressed the greatest doubts and reservations.

THE PROJECT

As written before the Market Area occupies an area of around 30 hectares, situated to the north of the historic city centre, stretching between the railway line to the west, the nineteenth century

district of Bolognina to the east, the High Speed train terminal to the south and an important intermediate bypass road to the north that will be partially below ground. The re-elaboration of the plan has also been due, in addition to the results of the workshop, to infrastructure projects changes that have occurred, determining the form and organisation of the new territorial model.

The area is of strategic importance for the city by reason of its position and because a half part of the area is owned by Bologna City Council. The project provides for the creation of important city infrastructures, including a new north-south axis route across the city.

The district, which will provide accommodation for around 7,000 people, will include a large residential area with around 1,200 housing units, as well as businesses and services, public buildings and green spaces to alleviate a chronic lack of services in the Navile district.

Four criteria have inspired the urban plan.

- . the dense layout of the district will find its identity in a new polarity: the "emptiness" of the central park provides the link between the new and the existing urban layouts.

- . the urban road network of Bolognina continues into the Market area, defining the urban contexts to be constructed and guaranteeing the continuity of the urban fabric and its relationship with the surrounding areas.

- . communications links, above all for bicycles and pedestrians, with the surrounding areas are a priority theme in the definition of the project.

- . the continuity of the urban character is guaranteed by the fundamental mix, by a dense network of public spaces with varying characteristics (the park, the retail thoroughfare, the residential road with services to local inhabitants, the piazza) and by the direct relationship between private buildings and public road.

Furthermore, the plan makes "energy choices" that are capable of achieving high environmental standards. The requirements adopted include: energy certification of all buildings; the use of energy sources that are comparable with renewable energy (co-generation) and as well as renewable sources (solar panels for the production of hot water, provision of photovoltaic cells); the use of passive solar support through the correct siting of the buildings; a dual network of water collection for recycling and reuse in irrigation; the collection of urban refuse through underground ecological islands.

The sum total of such factors is capable of producing an energy saving of around 60% compared with traditional buildings.

Research on energy themes has also looked at the question of environmental sustainability and economic feasibility: the choices made seek to find a correct balance between those requisites that are obligatory and advisable, taking into consideration public financial resources and the construction market that will carry out the new development.

CREDITS

The Market Workshop is a joint support and re-planning project involving collaboration with citizens, associations and groups who are involved in the area concerned, the Navile District and Bologna City area. Those formally taking part included over 100 citizens, 20 experts (City Council and other authorities), 15 district and community associations, the three commissions ("Peace, Participation, District Reform", "Mobility, Territorial Layout, Housing, Production Activities", "Environment, Health, Citizen training" for the Navile District.

The workshop was promoted by the Bologna City Council Urban and Territorial Planning Committee. The general co-ordinator is Giacomo Capuzzimati Director of the Bologna City Council Urban Planning, Environment and Mobility Department and Director of the Urban Programmes - Building Department. Giovanni Ginocchini, Valter Baruzzi and Monia Guarino have been appointed to co-ordinate the activities of the Workshop. Studio Scagliarini (Bologna) has drawn up the approved detailed plan and takes part in the workshop.