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If we look at the capacity Milan has shown to generate urban innovation we notice rather surprisingly that it has a corresponding capacity to translate plans and aspirations into reality. If we reread the history of the city over the last few decades some of the main phases of this can be identified.

The first is that of the reconstruction after the war, which was in reality the construction of a new city. The years of Milan as the 'economic and moral capital' of Italy were characterised by exceptional performance in implementation and by a constant search for innovation. Various factors helped to make this capacity possible. The decision making network was already sufficiently complex, but squeezed horizontally on an urban scale. The actors that took part in the planning and implementation of projects were not few, but at a very local level they were still lacking, and the municipality operated practically independently of higher levels of government. In this context the experts played a key role both in the design of innovations and in the construction of coalitions. A long period of crisis then opened up. In the seventies the issue of governing change was interpreted above all in terms of integrating decision making networks on a metropolitan scale following the shift of growth beyond the borders of the central city. In the eighties, de-industrialisation processes shifted the centre of attention back to Milan. They were the years of a change to a philosophy of 'planning for projects', which produced a large quantity of proposals which ran into

irresolvable conflicts. Different hypotheses can be advanced for the causes of this crisis. It can be said that Milan failed to reproduce the capacity to generate innovation when the complexity of the decision making processes increased, above all in a vertical direction. It was then that the experts could no longer be given a central role in the generation of innovation and support of its legitimisation. After this long interlude, a new scenario seems to have opened up in recent years. This scenario is contradictory in certain ways, the outcome of two styles of governing change, that are essentially different, coming together. One is the style that is gaining ground in the institutional arena and which selectively involves clearly identifiable economic and political actors. It is a style that is re-acquiring decision making capacity while keeping a low profile on the level of innovation and urban quality. It exploits the availability of some new resources. One of these that is certainly significant is the electoral reform which with the change to the direct election of the Mayor and a majority system has made it possible to make decisions, overcoming local conflicts in a way that is completely new on the Italian scene. The large construction sites that have sprung up in the city are the result. The other style is one that develops in arenas consisting mainly of local actors and which is gaining a capacity to act starting with the search for new forms of effectiveness. This is the space in which Milan seems to have been retrieving its capacity to innovate in recent years. It is above all innovation that starts from the process to then reach the product. It is a way of interpreting the planning process that is changing. There is no

philosophy of the expert who promotes it playing a central role. They are methods which recognise complexity as a resource. They are methods that question the sequence of analysis, planning, decision and implementation, at times interpreting the action of change as triggering the plan, at others rejecting the need for 'a plan' as a reference framework and at times using a plan as an analytical instrument. They are methods that overcome deterministic attitudes towards the 'local' by working on their construction.

### **Changes in social demand and the role of the expert**

The relationship between social demand and the role of the expert has changed considerably over the last few decades, following what we might define as the four main cycles of social participation in the processes and policies of urban change.

The first cycle is that of 'social conflict' and can be considered to have occurred in the nineteen seventies in Italy. Forms of grass roots participation occurred when the political movements which previously had existed in factories came out into the city. They had clear ideological traits, with a basically uniform social composition. They redefined the proletariat on an urban foundation and played on conflict with the institutions to demand alternative ways of producing the city. They therefore expressed a demand 'to do', asking the institutions to provide an appropriate response and they counted on clearly identifiable leaders in the political arena. These were the years when the experts were obliged to leave the field and those that moved towards the political movements defined a new

figure that of the advocacy planner.

The second cycle of participation was that of the NIMBY (not in my back yard) syndrome. They were urban movements that grew up in the eighties as a reaction to the drawing up of large projects for urban change. Hardly ideological, these movements were completely independent of the projects that gave rise to them; they were born and died together with the threat. They were explicitly 'territorially based' and their composition runs horizontally across the local society in question. They rejected all planning philosophies. Their demand was an unequivocal 'don't do it'. Their action was very effective and the results were immediately visible. This was the period in which the continuous proposition of major projects was supposed to re-launch Milan in Europe and its decision making performance was close to zero. In this third phase, scientific knowledge and the experts tended to be used instrumentally, both by the movements and by the proposers of projects. The third cycle of participation started at least partly as a countermeasure, as an attempt by institutional actors to tackle the problems of decision making and effectiveness generated by the previous process. The involvement of residents became a necessary condition for internalising objectives and knowledge of actors (who had been taken for 'weak' and today are recognised as 'strong') in the policy, to generate better and at the same time 'shared' planning with the emphasis on consensus as an important condition for increasing the capacity to decide. This at the same time places new demands on the expert. It redefines the expert's role and starts a

process of constructing new professional figures, the facilitators. The innovative forms that we have rediscovered and that are presented in this section seem to be characterised by another fourth cycle.

We are returning to ideologically characterised bottom up mobilisation, but with an idea of 'politicisation' that is completely different from that of the seventies. Like then, these forms of mobilisation can be strongly in favour of planning, but they do not ask others to provide an answer, they do it themselves. And while they do it they point out the failure of institutions to act and at times act as antagonists. They do not refuse to contribute with technical expertise, but rather they know how to make experience, expertise and relations interact. They express demands from the expert which the figures of advocate and facilitator are unable to satisfy. Further redefinition of their roles is therefore required. A temporary definition of this new figure, which remains to be constructed both in terms of functions and skills, is that of 'policy activist' in which policy is seen as separate from politics and activists mark a profound difference with respect to mediators.

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