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Angela Barbanente

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edited by Elio Trusiani

Elio Trusiani

Raquel Rolnik

Gislene Pereira

Maria do Rocio Morais do Rosario

Elio Trusiani

Cristina de Araujo Lima

Yara Vicentini

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The spillovers from urban time policies

Marco Mareggi

The intention here is to outline demand for research on urban time policies relating to the durability of the method of intervention and time and space-time oriented action implemented in practice, but not necessarily in the form of urban time plans as tried out in Italy. There has been much debate both academic and in local administrations over the need to avoid multiplying the forms of urban plans. The effective and valuable elements of these policies must be consolidated. It is a question of explicitly stating the demand for research already outlined by Bruno Dente in 1997 concerning what is put at stake for public policies and for integrated urban design by urban time policies.

Policies for the quality of everyday life

Urban time policies in Italy have constituted a new instrument for managing local public policies since 1990. Alongside and/or integrated with other urban management instruments, they act on the rhythms of life and work of citizens, on social time and the accessibility in space and time of public and collective services and places. Initially asked for, promoted and concretely defined on local government agendas by new social actors, women (Zajczyk 2000), these policies have focused on the quality of urban living at the scale of everyday life as it is lived "minute by minute" (Bonfiglioli 2004). It is not so much a treatment of subjects and issues by experts as a form of listening, action-research and of a collective construction oriented towards co-design and towards processes of

concrete transformation of cities and of ways of using them (Mareggi 2002). From pioneering origins, time policies have today become mandatory for Italian municipalities (Law 53/2000); a field of experimentation in towns and regions in France, Germany and Holland and an issue that is seeing the first light of dawn in a few faculties of architecture and planning in the USA and Brazil. Implementation in the form of a dedicated thematic plan has been experimented in many Italian cities and according to the promoters has constituted a generative matrix capable of carrying a strong ethical and interpretive content for the city of today.

Fields of action

1. A sphere of action that now has a twenty year tradition of time plans continues to exist. It concerns the co-ordination and harmonisation of service timetables with a time oriented logic that focuses principally on study and intervention to modify and adapt the opening hours of activities on the basis of an analysis of the needs of user populations (e.g. in Modena, Catania, Genoa, Rome and Perugia). This subject is experiencing a revival of interest today. On the one hand, priority is being given to projects that help reconciling life and work time, where the explicit objective is to promote and improve the permanence of women on the job market, while on the other hand projects are being developed which address everyday aspects of the good functioning of cities, which work on the creation of systems of actors to harmonise urban logistics, which undertake time problems of citizens (e.g. in Cremona, Milan, Verona, Prato and Rozzano).

2. There has been a

migration of the subject matter in the fields of action since the 1990's towards time oriented policies, with the establishment of relations between the settlement character of places, activities, social practices, life styles and the mobility of the populations that inhabit them. There have been initiatives in commerce, schools, social relations, public spaces, mobility, with a view to urban renewal and social revitalization. These actions have started a new original mix of traditional and innovative instruments, through local governance practices (e.g. at Bolzano, Pesaro, Sesto San Giovanni and Ravenna).

3. Exercises are currently in progress that address the closeness of urban time policies to other instruments for managing communities. The local legislation in Tuscany places time plans alongside other structural planning instruments (e.g. at Empoli and Lucca), while in Pesaro and in Bolzano time policies are being committed to the Strategic Plan of the city. In Lombardy, on the other hand problems relating to services and the redefinition of quality and not just quantity standards have led to joint experimentation between Time Plans and Service Plans (e.g. at Lodi).

Research demands

It is a question of working on some determined research demands:

1. while urban time policies have privileged, in recent years, a continuous migration of subject matter and research into innovation, it is necessary today to *explore and consolidate procedures, methods, instruments, the savoir faire of success and the organisational forms experimented* and move towards the standardisation of these, without fear of replicating in order to

consolidate. Consequently the re-proposal of initiatives under-taken in a municipality years back must not be interpreted as the implementation in a different context of a practice of no interest to academia;

2. the development of instruments to measure results obtained and for whose benefit, is a further area of research *to verify if, and how, time strategies constitute a new factor at stake* for public policies and integrated urban design. It is a research hypothesis drafted by Bruno Dente, which finds a sufficiently broad critical mass of experiences and which, with the multiplication of demands for time oriented projects that arise in a wide variety of sectors, seems to require answers already considered in time policies;

3. finally it is interesting to examine the *geographical scale of the time policies* adopted, once again to understand what type of action is effective for which communities.

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