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Strategies for the development of the port

Nicoletta Artuso

The development strategy for the Port of Genoa is contained in the Port Plan developed by the Port Authority at the end of the '90s, also with the contribution of the University and other external advisors, and approved in December 2001. If the methodological approach of the current Prp was determined to encompass the modern evolution of the Port of Genoa characterized by expansion phases, implemented or only envisaged, and modification phases, based on the optimization of existing local resources, it is ascribable to this latter modality of action. While the former have resulted in big works such as the port of Sampierdarena at the start of this century, the construction of the airport and of the iron and steel industrial area in the '60s, as well as the latest expansion of the Voltri Port, the latter have consisted in the rationalization and adjustment of the port structure to the current needs, focusing particularly on its local context. To give some examples, in line with the Prp expansion project for Sampierdarena, the existing parallel piers, no longer functional to the modern handling of containerized goods, have been modified, and water areas have been filled in, so as to optimize the lack of local resources; the reduction of most polluting forms of traffic, such as hydrocarbons; or the attempt to make the ship repair industry compatible with the surrounding urban fabric. Even the most substantial and perhaps most challenging expansion westward of the Voltri port basin has been part of a

project aimed at safeguarding the delicate balance between the necessary port development and the surrounding natural and urban environment. The intent and responsibility of such interpretation and the resulting development strategy may support a new phase of 'big works' which, contrary to the past, is today necessarily faced with the issue of sustainability that, for port cities, is firstly the result of a culture of respect for the different stakeholders.

Growth prospects

Although the Port Plan forecasts look moderate compared to the logics of expansion of the past, they have been carefully weighed to meet expectations based on economic analyses. Considering that already today the system of goods forwarding and reception prevents smooth port operations, the development of traffic and facilities needs to go hand in hand with the strengthening of infrastructures out-side the port. This has meant acting differently, from the planning of specific hubs, and the joint study of solutions for the city with other relevant Administrations, to the presentation of principles and options for the general mobility system of the Northwest. Currently there is an upward trend in traffic essentially in line with the economic analyses carried out at the time of the Prp drafting. Forecasts up to 2016 highlight for the port of Genoa a volume of handled goods between 4 and 5.5 million TEUs yearly. Meeting the needs of growth in traffic depends on factors such as the development of high terminal service efficiency standards, as well as the implementation of infrastructural and logistics projects. As to the extension of operational spaces, the Prp

mainly foresees projects for the Sampierdarena and Voltri port basins. If such projects were realized, the port production capacity would be saturated between 2009 and 2013. If this was not the case, in light of the recent debate about projects feasibility (particularly the expansion westward of the Voltri port), the same capacity would be saturated between 2007 and 2010. Against this background the issue of development strategies for the port and the city at large becomes a priority.

The debate about new proposals

In this context the proposal by Renzo Piano, upon request by the Region of Liguria, and publicly presented to the administrators and the city on 25 May 2004, suggests an evolutionary scenario which is an important reflection tool on the development not just of the port of Genoa but of the city as a whole, and beyond the regional perspective. It is a cultural contribution, as Piano himself defines it, to the self-reflection of the city, introducing fundamental topics such as the relationship between urban and port spaces, eco-sustainable development, the infrastructural connections system, and port expansion. The strategic relevance of this authoritative contribution has been appropriately recognized by all local administrators, resulting in the creation of the Waterfront and Territory Agency, whose functions should be the preparation, supervision and monitoring of the joint general plan feasibility, while respecting each participant's authority (Municipality, Province, Region, RPBW and Port Authority). The city debate emerged from this wide 'vision' has increasingly intensified involving proposals by

different institutional and non-institutional subjects. Some new elements have come into play in the meantime, such as the 'emergencies' connected to the realization of two new large infrastructural projects (the 'gronda' motorway ring road and the *Terzo Valico*, i.e. the third pass). These would generate a large amount of fill material which could be used within the port and for future expansions. Once again the answer to the lack of space, particularly for production activities, may be found in reclaiming land from the sea which has produced over time a new kind of territory, totally man-made, and 'suspended' between land and sea. Nearly all of the hypotheses advanced, despite different layouts and foreseen functions, fall under the category of 'big works' and see the appropriate location for the new port spaces and other activities beyond the existing outer breakwaters. Delocalizing more critical activities judged incompatible with the urban fabric seems to prevail over the idea of interpenetration. The transition from simple coexistence to real integration between port and city in terms of spaces, economy and employment is not a simple matter, and has to do with the city culture. The debate is more heated than ever and tackles fundamental issues regarding the government of the territory. An action strategy is needed that, going beyond the logic of removal and through the promotion of integration of production and urban realities, strives for sustainable development in support of the overall city growth.