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## Sensemaking

*Alessandro Balducci*

The Commune Government of Jesi is young and motivated. It specifically requested a 'Strategic plan' be drawn up together with revision of the Prg, and also ordered the construction of the Local Agenda 21. During the formulation of the Strategic plan the instruments used in urban design in this situation had to be revised by defining the strategies of both actors already operating in strategic and general decision making, in sectors of society normally excluded from this type of decision making.

Although the revision of the town development plan maintains its centrality, the Strategic plan runs in parallel with it and majors in two interesting and complementary directions. On the one hand, it frames the urban design plan in a wider context compared to its normal field of interest, linking it to the physical nature of the urban transformations, and on the other hand, there has been discussion to overcome the limits of the policy community which more strictly speaking is affected by the widening of the urban market. A problem in the city clearly presents. With this as the mandate, an exploratory course was embarked upon in Jesi by transforming the Strategic plan into a process of collective reflection. This has used many methods to communicate with the city, resulting in the form the plan documentation would take not being dealt with until the final phase. It was conscious of the fact that no model existed that could be applied to Jesi, and that the form recurring in the more noteworthy experiences of places like Barcelona and Turin might not necessarily adapt itself to the task required in Jesi.

Just as all exploratory

journeys open things up, the road taken in Jesi was also very open. However, it was oriented in certain directions so that significant results would be obtained: to the creation of a vision that could be recognised and shared as an objective by all the actors; to the immediate short term actions arising out of this vision and avoiding conflict between this and long term policies; to involving interested parties and subjects who, being independent of the Strategic plan, are capable of transforming the visionary elements and action contained in a community development and growth plan; in applying the plan, to communicate with and involve the various urban populations so that a sensitive environment within which the strategies could be developed was created. Composed of mobilisation, discussion, and investigation of the city, this important wide ranging local event was recognised in the final Strategic plan document, as it had to be, which therefore became a planning and interpretative outlet proposing new strategies and characteristics which could then be consolidated by local agreement. Looking back it seems that the most important role played by the group of activities emanating from the Strategic plan was that of sensemaking, that is, making sense of the direction to be taken, giving it meaning, and making people conscious of it. For example, consciousness of the transformation processes in a city which has changed profoundly, being widened into an urban region through which it has built a different relationship with its territory, its parts, and its populations. Sensemaking is also revealed as recognition of a possible future not only to be obtained immediately but also through planned

development trajectories. This is the most significant sense that can be attributed to this group of practices as described by strategic planning. Should this be the case then any modelling or standardisation, if not impossible, becomes extremely difficult; on the other hand, constructing each level around the specific development of the community concerned can only be a good thing.