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Planning change. Note on efficacy, agreement, and relationship in Jesi

Vincenzo Zenobi

Whether or not the *Secchi plan* of 2000 is still the tool governing urban planning practice in the city of Jesi is certainly a question open to discussion. If it is the palimpsest of regulations, variations, practice, customs, and traditions that govern the transformations of the physical city, it is a palimpsest that might in some way be traced back to the *Secchi plan's* intentionality. Perhaps an excessive simplification but the *Secchi plan* seems to be characterised by two aspects. In the usual meaning of the term, the *Secchi Plan* contains the urban expansion of the city and has brought about the longterm recovery of disused industrial areas. However, it has produced somewhat questionable architectural results and in many respects has failed to provide shared solutions to mobility problems. From the point of view of the professional groups involved in practical government of the city, whether in or outside the public administration, the *Secchi plan* is now unlikely to metabolise transformations. A terse judgement of its effectiveness might conclude that the *protostrategic* new character of the 'compound city' has had little effect even though evidently so rich in planning suggestions, and has failed to operate as a significant reference point during the course of the *Secchi plan*. Whatever the fortunes of the plan have been up till present, at the beginning of the new decade in 2000 the times seemed mature enough for more substantial renewal. Some sort of correspondence exists between the position, in the field of practical local

politics, of the subjects who were victorious in the 2002 elections and that of the technicians in the field of practising professionals who produce plans. In their respective domains they seem to be two winning minority positions which provisionally and locally at least discuss the prevailing opinion, the *doxy* of the respective camps. One of the more interesting outcomes of the 2002 local elections was that in an apparent continuity (the ruling majority in the city is substantially unchanged) the best part of the personnel with governmental responsibilities changed. The operational strategy of these new subjects is interesting (coinciding with their *de facto* strategy of legitimisation). It logically follows that the result is not the consolidated and assured positions of the disciplinary *mainstream* but constructions which continually refer to the environmental and strategic-participative aspects of the choices. It is a logic that naturally makes them hold discussions with the more innovative sectors of the discipline. The choice of Milan Polytechnic's DIAP as cultural-technical reference able to manage the complex interactions between strategic, environmental, and urban planning, on the one hand demonstrates the desire to creatively re-interpret the legacy of the *Secchi plan*, and on the other the ambitious attempt to challenge the current *doxy*, to repeat the success of that plan and set an example in Italy of practical government. If one were to consider the motivation and strategies underpinning the production of new instruments of territorial management, one might assert an underlying logical relationship. One of the motives driving the project is that three instruments of territorial

government (Strategic plan, Local Agenda 21, and the town development plan, which is subdivided into *Piano idea* and *Progetto del suolo*) might allow better *performance* in territorial management to be obtained if they were produced together in a cross-referenced extension of forums and other forms of participation, environmental evaluations, technical-urban planning proposals and analyses, that is to say, in technical knowledge of various kinds cross-referenced to local knowledge rooted in daily experience. The attempt to relate and make different areas of knowledge react together raises further questions. That it is easier for the urban planning technician to deal with information and advice obtained from local knowledge, in that case through the mediation of the policy and not vice versa since technical knowledge is deposited in the imagination with its own time and cadenza and is not easily recognisable as an ability to settle controversial questions immediately. That the interaction between fields of knowledge requires time that sometimes conflicts with the timing of the decisions. From the technical point of view, more traditional instruments (i.e. the town development plan) have shown themselves to be sufficiently flexible to agree to attempts at innovation in the practice more than, for example, an informal instrument might have been able to do. The obligation to follow a standardised approach and a protocol has made an effective relationship with other practices more difficult, and casts doubt on the wisdom of proceduralising innovative approaches which, rather than in a standard, must find their legitimacy in the context.