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## The city concept and strategic vision

Michele Talia

Opposed to the undoubted quantitative results produced in Tuscany by the new planning system, there is still considerable uncertainty in assessing the qualitative results of this extraordinary urban planning season. According to some, the novelties introduced by Regional Law no. 5/95 have been deactivated by a form of planning overly concerned with preserving the primacy of the regulatory dimension, and therefore bound not to go deeply into those strategic aspects which instead prove to be decisive for the innovation of the plan.

The most important contents of the Structural Plan of Siena respond to this criticism above all where they evidence that the attention given to the relation between elaborating a fertile *city concept* and the main planning choices can protect town-planning discipline against the risks of a management too closely bound up with contingent matters. And in fact the city concept which has been made the hub of the new SP not only sought to reconstruct the way in which the urban community perceived itself, but has shaped a vision of the future compatible with the aspirations towards change forming part of the local identity.

A useful contribution has been offered in this regard by the scenario techniques, first used for analyzing the possible impacts of vast-area policies, and then for comparing the effects on the environment, on the landscape, on local development and on the settlement structure of the main strategic guidelines. Thanks to the use of alternative medium and long-term scenarios, the SP has been able to focus on

the junction that guarantees the connection between a structural dimension able to guarantee the conservation of the non-negotiable resources, and a strategic dimension with which to convey the essential, qualifying contents of the civil, cultural and spatial project to be implemented with the forthcoming *Regolamento urbanistico*. In applying this working method to a complex situation such as that of Siena, special attention was given to seeking a balance between the urgency of up-grading the housing structures to the requirements of present-day society, and the impulse to preserve the places of identity and of memory. Included in this sector are the initiatives aimed at favouring the provision of housing for rent.

Another basic criterion identified is that of seeking a greater propensity to establish productive and service activities having a higher value added; and stemming from this are the choices regarding the rationalizing of the supply of productive areas, the strengthening of functions of excellence, the reallocation of urban elements of attraction, and the improvement of accessibility to the historic centre and to other places of particular interest. Such is the case of shifting the outdoor and the indoor sports stadiums to a new sports centre located in the area presently occupied by the outdoor stadium. In selecting plan objectives, strategic importance was attached to respecting the environment and safeguarding the countryside, assigning to the management of the natural resources the task of promoting the city image. Particular attention should be given to the up-grading of the ecological network by means of developing areas of concentration of environmental values, maintaining the elements of

biodiversity, and lastly the formulation of statutory rules by which to transform the traditional free belts around infrastructures into special environmental corridors, or foreseeing environmental compensation measures aimed at integrating the areas of open territory compromised by the new urbanization works.

In finalizing a city concept which can be appreciated by all citizens, the SP promoted the search for an urban form not depending only on the values and resources of the old city; it strived to demonstrate that high urban quality can be achieved also in newly established areas. For this reason a growth guideline was identified, aimed at concentrating a considerable part of foreseen housing developments in the southern quadrant, where a vast range of measures should provide a boost for integrated planning which could prove to be competitive with regard to the more central, consolidated urban fabric. With respect to this aspiration the SP of Siena lays down the procedural, programmatic and management conditions to ensure that the implementing of the choices contained therein will be able to achieve morphotypological results compatible with a project of a present-day city.

Moving in this direction is the emphasis assigned both to the coordination of the operative instruments of Siena and of the adjacent municipalities, and to the balancing of foreseen new housing areas and the provision of more infrastructures. To ensure that this choice of method will produce the hoped results it is necessary for the entire planning system to confide in the instrument of evaluation, which could constitute an effective link between the structural and the operative dimension of

the planning.