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Planning as a problem

Atessa's historical centre between industrial and post-industrial development

Giulia Augusto

Atessa, district of Chieti, a town having a population of 10,000 inhabitants, is characterized by a historical centre opposite to an industrial area localized in the Sangro valley. In Atessa, the Municipality founded a Committee to study the problems of the historical centre, to set strategies for territorial valorisation and to set guidelines for urban development.

How can a historical centre like Atessa be holder of ideas of complexity? Which logics are consistent with the industrial and commercial development? How can territorial resources meet domestic and external demand? How to compete with other territories offering a similar supply?

In order to answer to these questions, an analysis outlook that considers territorial and urban redevelopment not only as a way to improve spaces or physical structures, but as a process capable of producing social and cultural re-vitalisation taking into account the context on a large scale, was adopted.

Atessa as a magnet of flows

In Atessa the development of production activities generated an entrepreneurial texture drawn by enterprises such as Sevel and Honda encouraging development of a network of small and medium enterprises. Weaknesses are related to depopulation, dispersion and impoverishment of commercial activities, though in this framework the historical centre could develop a strategic role as a settlement model based on relations and cooperation so to start a process of 'return' to the historical centre itself.

Development between integration and complexity

Development is a challenge: an impoverished historical centre can be transformed emphasizing its uniqueness. In the case of Atessa, its valorisation has to take into account the relationship between inner factors and has to foster the external relations with the territory. It seems to be necessary to build projects through the implementation of an integrated plan able of managing complexity. The integration among sectors appears to be relevant in the experience: local development is built on relations among economic, material and immaterial activities supported by the stakeholders operating on the territory. Complexity and integration are strictly related to the ability of building trust and dialogue, immaterial elements that can influence economic and human resources so to produce innovation. A strategic plan, meant as a tool choosing and building territorial groups, can meet this need. The participation into wider territorial contexts, existing or in progress, and into territorial platforms follows this logic. The need to develop the resources on the territory and to activate governance models is emerging; an hypothesis is the establishment of a multi-services organisation at an inter-district level having a majority of public capital; it should also be supported by the participation of private enterprises to improve territorial performances such as: environment sustainability, production of technologies for energy development, territorial governance for the development of urban welfare and quality of life. This model includes a monitoring system for the implemented policies, in itinere and ex-post, aiming at rapidly activate corrective actions of the policies in the different sectors

(commerce, training, industrial development). In a post-industrial economy based on rapid transformation of professional roles and on a development not based on traditional activities (agriculture and industry), the training offers new opportunities for the new professional profiles required by the market. Training is a sector also related with social sector when it works towards the creation of professional roles specialized in social inclusion and integration of third-age people. The commercial sector is requested to act as a tool of valorisation and revitalisation both of the historical centre and of the suburbs while implementing private-public policies with both a short and a long-term perspective. Commerce is a strategic function living of flows, that's why it is necessary to encourage dimensional increase and communication facilities through technological infrastructures. If the application of the model of integration of networks for the valorisation of historical centre can meet difficulties and risks, the 'control' of networks could be the basis to start a consistent development holding elements of innovation. In a complex and integrated vision which is supported by planning and programming tools, critical knots for the development of historical centre can be solved through the creation of networks of the experimental repertory of technical and operative forms and governance able to support the effectiveness of transformation projects and to guarantee the coherence of future development visions.