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Form and contents of the 'Strategy and framework document'

Antonio Longo

The Strategy and framework document for urbanistic policies*, stipulated by Lombard law 9/99 as an instrument for guiding strategic and extraordinary decisions to be developed using the tools of integrated planning implementation, was the first formalised document for the planning process. Presented in draft form in the summer of 2005, the document was approved in december of the same year and developed in relation with the draft guidelines for the Services plan which had long been in the pipeline. This was then included in the Local government plan in compliance with law 12/05 which was subsequently approved.

The decision to develop the document through the public participation structured process described in these pages was reflected in the form the document took. This had to be of an experimental nature as it combined very different themes that were difficult to break down into univocal visions. All were linked to the operativity of both active and probably projects (the central areas) and the possible repercussions of these on the entire city, along with a more general assessment of the city's potential future and the transformation of its parts.

The interaction through images, scenarios and vision resulted in a document whose contents are the evolution of the images themselves (which organises the information and sets its goal), selecting and translating scenarios into possible projects, the acquisition of a political and technical vision of the future of the city as the heart of the document.

Within the document, the possible and desirable changes for the city have been represented, reasoned and standardised through four different representation methods: vision, images, strategic territorial areas and project files are respectively at the start, in a central chapter dedicated to the construction of significant non localised themes, and in the part dedicated to general and detailed territorial transformations.

Vision. The vision is the political and technical document for planning, which introduces the framework document and outlines the preferred and shared future of San Donato Milanese. The timescale to which it refers is the threshold of 2020, and it outlines the strategic objectives of the process for governing the area chosen by the administration. The images that accompany the vision text provide the reference territorial structure of the contents of the framework document. Given its simplicity, the vision has been taken as the starting point for defining strategies for future transformations of the city. The vision also provides an opportunity to assess the transformation priorities and compare them, to evaluate actions and opportunities and establish their goals. It is therefore the document with which the administration has taken on its long-term prospective responsibilities, providing its point of view in terms of the opportunities now available.

Images. The images are documented descriptions of the change which involves the city. They have been deliberately simplified and partially constructed starting out from the themes that recur amongst inhabitants of San Donato, which the work group has attempted to represent using data, diagrams, maps, photographs, original texts and quotes. The images do not describe the future of the city, but provide an outline of the meaning, describing the present and interpreting it whilst playing an active role and making it possible to reformulate problems and help describe important new themes for the city. In addition to this, by stipulating the choice of themes analysed, they serve an important informative role for the public.

Strategic territorial areas. In the course of the project, plans were developed to explore the potential for the future transformation of the city, and the choices and processes to be adopted so that these choices can be implemented. This made it possible to activate further images, projects and desires, and to provide the administrative course of action with criteria for assessment and making its choices. The scenarios contained in the document are interpreted in relation to the specific parts of the territory known as strategic territorial areas. Whilst these are not geographically marked out, they are defined by a set of factors regarding their position in the local and extralocal area, the extent to which the strategic themes affect them, and the filing of projects and perspectives for transformation: images with a loose structure that intrinsically take in a variety of levels and themes.

Project files. these are descriptions of the transformation requisites affecting strategic territorial areas or parts thereof. The files contain fully-fledged master plans on a small scale which define the alignments, maximum heights and subdivision of the open space, along with the relationship with infrastructures and roads. They are made up of texts and graphic diagrams whose interpretation requires constant reference to the overall framework of the document; as a result they need to be consulted together.

The four methods of representation are closely correlated to one another. Within the process of creating them, each of the methods added to the other in a cyclical manner: the process got underway with the first interviews of the operators, analysing issues related to specific places and projects, and then moved on to the general images of change affecting the city. After this it embraced large-scale change scenarios and visions of the whole before returning to observe the city in detail and analysing specific planning proposals. The four methods of representing the city therefore served to complement the document: in some cases they isolated specific criteria and principles to evaluate the transformations as a whole, constructing a common background for the dialogue between the authorities and the various parties involved in the area's transformation.

* The documentation concerning the shared process in the neighbourhoods and the Strategic framework document can be consulted on www.comune.sandonatomilanese.mi.it