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Shared neighbourhood planning.

The structure of the 'Laboratorio Quartieri' and its activities

Marianna Giraudi, Linda Cossa, Dina Acocella

The Neighbourhood workshop (*Laboratorio quartieri*) stemmed from the wish to experiment with a shared planning process that aimed to integrate expert technical and design supervision with the experience and requests of the local community in order to provide the municipal administration with project guidelines to be included in the three-year Plan of public works.

The workshop approach was based on the assumption that San Donato could be interpreted as a 'city of neighbourhoods', each with its own physical features, history, ways of living, and different problems and resources. Managed by a mixed team (architects, urban planners and experts on urban policies), the neighbourhood workshop offered a forum for surveys, research and planning, involving the inhabitants and the local community and identifying the key working themes that would tackle the main issues, starting with technical feasibility, the availability of economic resources and the approach taken by the town administration.

The work lasted a year and a half and was organised using a time-based framework that allowed four-month modules for each pair of neighbourhoods based on the following structure of work phases.

Overview of the territory. The preliminary phase took the form of an initial overview and interpretation of the territory, based on its resources and problems, and the perception of the local inhabitants. Surveys and photos; technical

surveys of usage and customs; data analysis; life histories; structured interviews with preferential witnesses and about 200 street interviews: these were the tools used to build the preliminary interpretations of the territory. The views of both technicians and inhabitants were combined to create the initial planning suggestions.

Neighbourhood exhibitions. The exhibitions marked the start of a discussion phase with the local population and key players: they were not intended to display the outcome but rather to form a venue for a collective discussion of the themes suggested by the preliminary explorations of the territory. Interpretation panels, videos, data on individual neighbourhoods, initial themes and planning suggestions, and 'interactive' panels were among the materials on display in the exhibitions. About 1,500 people attended the four exhibitions.

Workshops and thematic meetings. The 15 workshops and 30 thematic meetings provided opportunities to verify the planning suggestions with the inhabitants, key players and local associations, to explore the possibilities for intervention and their consequences, and also to imagine feasible future outcomes. They also offered an occasion to bring together different groups of inhabitants using different methods and languages, and to launch a collective debate on the planning suggestions.

Final planning and public presentation. The planning proposals that took into account and interpreted the various requests were then presented to the local population at a public meeting and summarised in a document which will be useful when drawing up the programme of works for the neighbourhood.

Communications activities, a key tool in presenting the project to the city and encouraging participation, were an important component at every stage of the 'neighbourhood workshop', focusing on two levels of diffusion: on a neighbourhood scale and a city-wide scale.