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# The urban strategic planning in the peripheral regions: the case of Catania (Sicily)

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THE URBAN STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE PERIPHERICAL REGIONS: THE CASE OF CATANIA  
(SICILY)\*

Abstract: More and more regional development appears as an effect of the role that cities are able to carry out in the territory. This implies reconsidering not only resources which are available to a city but, above all, its ability to organize urban activities and functions. If these considerations have already found careful appraisal in the most developed regions, by means of the renewal of instruments for the strategic planning of cities, it seems still insufficient the use of these new planning instruments in the less developed regions, although their primary role in the processes of local development. In Southern Italy, for instance, the proliferation of financial support from various sources (E.U., National Government and Regional ones), which imposes plans at different scales (the interregional one, the among cities one and the among suburbs one), and the emergence of actors and stakeholders, also within the presence of public order problems and infrastructural deficiencies, constitute a network that bridles and conditions the city activities and functions, on one side, but can also be a set of occasions that - if used - can push the city towards development itineraries, on the other side. With our paper we propose to analyse the case of Catania (a central city in an Objective 1 region, Sicily), putting in evidence how the new Plans give order to the activities and the functions of the city, trying to achieve one balanced and sustainable development, by means of the recovery of urban identity.

**1. Paradigms, methodologies, and routes of the Strategic City Planning in Italy and in Europe.**

The passage from old Fordist system to Post-Industrial economics, which finds new organising solutions different from those typically belonging to the polarised development; the innovation introduced by new technologies, which has built up a

communication networking running town to town and town to country, linking even the smallest realities to the global system; sovranational globalisation's and integration's processes; decentralisation and privatisation of public activities, can be considered as essential features to achieve a new central position of local and urban territoriality.

The most direct consequences due to these processes are: the increasing importance of the role played by Local Administration, supported in Italy by the higher efficaciousness of Mayor's direct decisions, and the consideration of the town as a collective entity, not only in planning territorial order, but also in managing economical and social transformation processes and in carrying out socio-economical development policies connected with the territory. Therefore it is necessary to underline the importance of a careful consideration of the identity of the town, its particular situation, its expectations and possible prospects.

Nevertheless, the new role played by the city, related to always increasing requests coming from the territory, is strictly connected with all those difficulties concerning the administration of urban areas, where complex economical, social and cultural relations influence economics, social cohesion, cultural activities and quality of urban life itself. It is also to be mentioned that a higher level of competition is characterising all those cities in the territory, which are interested to attract enterprises, and generally, all those economical activities, which are connected with infrastructure and service, social and cultural dynamics, professional qualification.

As regards such a complex context, in which local processes and global efforts are indissolubly bound, it is necessary to emphasise the great importance of the previous statements, as follows: a) increasing social cohesion; b) definition of a widely approved project concerning development and achievement of the urban and metropolitan area, where instruments for the government of the territory should be applied; c) qualification to face complex problems according to operative entrepreneurial and managerial instruments to obtain and administer all necessary funds, and to promote a profitable partnership between public and private.

A proper answer to these requirements has been given with the introduction in the scientific debate, and consequently in the urban administration, of all those urban complex policies and strategic programmes, which are strictly bound to flexible, multisectorial, operative methodologies and even to special decisional organisms able to draw up, co-ordinate and carry out projects. Afterwards multisectoriality is one of the most important features because urban development must be sinergically based on

urban promotional activities, and must be also necessary supported by environmental requalification, by a correct valorization of infrastructures and by social services.

Otherwise it is to be underlined that the Strategic Planning has been introduced after the crisis of the traditional city planning, particularly concerning town plans which are now widely considered not able to grant all requests connected with new urban development projects. It seems necessary to compare the “physical planning” (which, together with structural plans have determined urbanistic decisions in the 60’s) and Anglo-Saxon planning in the 80’s (which, in order to achieve better conditions of income and employment, has been connected with all those criteria of competition, deregulation and privatization; on one hand carrying out new fine projects in several fields such as: social-economic, cultural, of spare time, and marketing; on the other, not considering the importance of a more general coherence of the whole urban system particularly concerning financial resources and urban sustainability) both unable to develop a general consideration of the economic, social and urban future of the city, with the strategic city planning (Hall, 1996). This new system proposes a model that could be defined as ‘reticular’, as it has been used a decisional net-system, and ‘visionary’, as it has been finalized to carry out a project of the future city chiefly based on expectations and prospects of all citizens. This kind of model has been projected in order to use co-ordination and integration as special instruments aimed to create common consent, and even to permit citizens’ participation to a common urban project (Archibugi, 1999).

This approach can be considered completely new, as it has been based not only on different options, dealing at the same time with economical, social, urbanistical, and infrastructural problems, but also defining permanent standards of control and revision of all taken decisions, in order to afford a continuous feed-back between plans and realizations. Accordingly, such Plans, remain ‘open’ to possible future changes and include also phases of *top-down* or *bottom-up*.

Among several essential features of the ‘third and fourth generation’ planning, which is deeply different from all those belonging to previous generation, indicating the passage from a urban policy based on supply instead of that based on demand, are to be mentioned: 1) the definition of common principles regarding urban and territorial transformation, the consideration of the role of the town in a competitive market; 2) the net integration of actors representing private and public interests, who, thanks to various consultation and cooperation forms, should contribute to manage complex urban

policies with operative contents. A sort of urban *governance* able to assure both permanent consensus around common aims and new and better administration conditions for the town itself, which are likewise to be realised by private as well as public institutions (Cicciotti, Dallara, Politi, 2001).

Besides, the Strategic City Planning, especially if compared to the traditional ones, seems to be a more complex, advanced and of new generation system, which is not merely linked to Public Administration's one-sided decisions, and which does not consider public institutions, generally regarded as interpreter of the common interest, as the exclusive intermediary of different instances. On the contrary, complexity and plurality of all different interests of the urban area are considered as values to be protect and even more as opportunities to build up common objectives. Therefore it results almost clear the passage from the *government*, usually meant as a sort of goals' unilateral and fixed definition, to the *governance* meant, on the contrary, as negotiation of different interests implying consequently a very different idea of the consensus, which has been: a) considered wholly irrelevant for instruments of the first generation; b) merely meant as a formal step by those of the second generation, in order to guarantee the adhesion to a planning hypothesis in which the public institution is the exclusive reference; c) essential in every step of the planning process, both regarding definition and carrying out of objectives and strategies.

In other words, one of the most essential characteristics of the Strategic Planning process is chiefly the general involvement, meant as a structured relationship among representatives of different interests, which, directly referring to concerted or negotiable planning, is able to face complex decisions and at the same time to grant relevant requests of democracy and transparency. Therefore, far to be ignored, problems' and objectives' complexity will be used as an important resource; the plurality of different interests, even those which may be conflictual, will be considered as values to be preserved.

Nevertheless it seems necessary to underline the great importance of the strict relationship running between the planning and *city users* in order to increase consent, co-operation, confidence, efficaciousness and even to grant positive results for investments or decisions. For this purpose, residents, whose vote is the expression of their political power; all those who have relevant economical interests in the territory (*stock-holders* and *stake-holders*, who hold a stock capital, as well as owners of lands, buildings and infrastructures) and even external partners, whose capitals and resources,

give a considerable contribute to territorial development, are involved less or more directly in the growing processes and collaborate to the periodical objectives' and instruments' revision.

Therefore, the organization by a Strategic Plan of new generation, implies the pre-arrangement of a political document in which the concept of the city is to be clearly defined, particularly its relations with other cities and regions; moreover all objectives, strategies, and policies, are to be carefully planned. It will be of great importance:

- to give full value to 'common interests', which have been sacrificed in Plans of old generation by powerful lobbies;
- to organize systematically the participation of all local actors and citizens in the Plan's arrangement ;
- to increase decisional opportunities, even appealing to the new regulations concerning local autonomies (L.142/90);
- to draw up flexible documents in which long-term objectives are clearly defined;
- to encourage partnership between private and public and within the public itself;
- to relate several urban policies, from transports to school, and the health system, in order to define an integrating development project for the whole urban system.

Strategic Plans of new generation, thanks to their flexibility, are not exclusively bound to short- or medium- term planning processes, on the contrary, they can be also taken into consideration even in a long-term hypothesis, as it is considered of great importance to perform economic efficiency, particularly allocative and distributive, and to achieve social equity and a policy opening towards the outside, which are widely considered as the most essential planning principles according to the new concept of a sustainability.

The importance of the relationship between Strategic Planning and sustainability seems to be of great importance in the consideration of problems regarding both infrastructures' and strategic services' location, and environmental impact ; especially consequences of suburbanization, such as an higher traffic's level, ground impoverishment, exhaustion of limited reserves, should be carefully respected.

The project 'Sustainable Cities', which has been set up in 1993 by a committee of experts belonging to the European Commission, has confirmed the strict connection between planning and urban sustainable development, and has also arranged a general framework concerning objectives and necessary requirements to carry out them (Guy and Marvin, 2001).

The European Commission itself has introduced a necessary evaluation system concerning quality of life in most European cities and towns, in order to provide comparable information to the several local policy makers about general conditions, plans and progresses. The proposed approach is based on two main initiatives: the first concerns *Urban Audit* Plans and provides comparative information about European quality of urban life by means of some indicators, which are to be constantly updated, able to evaluate the impact of local, national, and European policies upon urban areas' development (in the Urban Audit Manual, which should create a *benchmarking* of 58 European cities concerning quality of life, 33 indicators have been identified, afterwards grouped in 21 sectors attesting particular aspects of quality of life). The second, running parallel to the first one, would be managed by EUROSTAT, in co-operation with National Institutes of Statistics, and would be finalized to match local information system about cities, towns and urban agglomerations. *The European Environmental Agency* stores all information to the GIS (Geographical Information System) and create a *network* to encourage urban authorities to arrange an indicators' system directly bound to local 'Agenda 21'.

Besides, it is to be mentioned, that the latest planning mostly refers to metropolitan areas, and, after having considered new paradigms of environmental impact, introduces environmental indicators related to the situation analysis and even to decisions in the urbanistic field.

It is necessary to underline the important relation running between Strategic Planning and *urban marketing*, which also implies a planning mainly based on demand rather than on supply; as, according to a higher level of territorial competitiveness and sustainability, fundamental connections among different kinds of city users and territorial offer, must be constantly verified. Moreover, marketing should precede, walk together and follow the steps of the whole planning, so that urban development tendencies would meet urban expectations, global net orientation, and citizens' requirements. Marketing must be meant as a useful instrument to verify, and eventually modify, projected strategies, so that supply could follow, as much as possible, periodical change in demand. It is not a mere chance, that the most significant experiences of urban marketing, as those of Barcelona and Lyon, have been included in long-term Strategic Planning activities.

Otherwise, it must be emphasized that this planning form, as a special forum and intermediary among different interests, communicates urban strategy and urban image

to city users and to foreign investors. To correctly define the contemporary role played by marketing strategy in the city planning, it is necessary underline that a real marketing strategy has been introduced only after the 80's: just when the idea of 'functional cities' (able to manage all changes connected with the rapid urban growth) has been replaced by that of 'competitive cities' (able to produce income and employment) (Jensen-Butler, 1999). Marketing strategies' directions have further changed in the 90's, when the most important objective became 'to make cities sustainable' , and when, accordingly to new needs, certain features contributed to the ideation of this new project (Balducci,1999).

Strategic Planning, sustainable development, urban marketing plans of the last generation, have been strictly driven by the same guiding principle, that is to say: the standing search of a new system of urban development concerning the metropolitan areas. This should be no longer considered as a strictly fixed system, coming from 'the up above', on the contrary a flexible one, connected with the local actors, both private and public, able to fit different features of local *milieu*, such as material, historical, social, cultural, and local riches, typical of the areas; representing opportunities to carry out a coherent and peculiar process of growth, as well as opportunities to take part to the global competition .

Urban crisis and economic changes effects in the 70's and 80's have produced the following consequences: increasing unemployment; population decrease; increasing social marginalization; environmental and urban decay;

consequently, an always growing number of cities and towns try to afford Strategic Planning forms, and the European Union itself has indicated this instrument as the best way to direct metropolitan and urban development and management. In these cities and towns, co-operation processes between private and public have been introduced thanks to strategic plans, and after the individuation of the main development strategic objectives, a coherent system of policies has been defined to manage processes finalized in changing the territory.

The strategic approach is meant to afford a wide open planning horizon, and, directing limited resources towards essential objectives, to cause a deep transformation of the city with public and private aid, stimulating the general participation and defining essential objectives.

The Strategic Planning has been tested during several years, less or more successfully, by some of the most dynamic European cities, from Barcelona to Amsterdam, from Frankfurt to Glasgow, from Munich to Bilbao and Lyon; recently



applied in some of the most important Italian cities such as Turin; Florence, Rome, which are nearly accomplishing the most relevant previous operations, and in cities and towns like La Spezia, Trento, Pesaro, Prato.

The most often used strategic plans follow three main models: *Top-down*, *Bottom-up* and finally the most diffused, *Reticular*, which is even the most complex, as it is based on the global view of problems, policies, and operators. On one hand, reticular plans are related to the previous approval of certain strategic *issues* and to general participation, on the other, to creation and management of a network among different operators (Camagni, Capello, 1997). The most characterizing features are:

- multisectoriality of the planning approach, which concerns not only territorial, but also functional aspects;
- a temporal arrangement of almost short and medium-term sceneries, above all for those cities aiming at an international role;
- involving local and external actors even from the initial planning steps and consequently, the individuation of guiding principles as well as the definition of specific actions;
- formulation of choices, decisions and operative actions concerning all different participators, both private and public, according to a negotiation rather than a mere business-economic optimisations;
- carrying out uninterrupted planning processes, which do not follow fixed steps.

The most significant strategic plans in accordance with the reticular model develop the following phases:

**1) Organization phase**, including all general activities, such as:

a) definition of the area in which to operate, including districts, urban or metropolitan area (this would be the case of big cities, in which urban renovation is considered as a absolutely necessary condition to permit the development of the whole area);

b) definition of the network before starting the planning of the whole project, which may be project network (following the project only during his development, and with scarce opportunities of interaction) or functional network (permanent and with numerous opportunities of interaction);

c) different participants' involvement and definition of their own tasks. Besides, it is important to underline that the principal strategic plans have determined new private, public and mixed operators, in order to develop plans represented by: 1) programming

Institutions able to produce strategic plans, and to adopt supporting urban strategies, programmes and projects; 2) promotion and development Agencies, supposed to facilitate the settlement of new investors and to adapt urban structure to their own requirements; 3) Committees, Councils, Associations and working groups supporting the project;

d) deadlines of the programme;

**2) Analysis phase**, which takes into consideration:

- national and international studies concerning reference sceneries, in the background of metropolitan and urban systems, which could represent the main competitors;
- analysis of the economical, social, cultural situation of the city and its most important operators (concerning different specializations and involving generally architects, geographers, town-planners, economists, sociologists, and lawyers, who will provide objectives and strategies with a solid planning);
- SWOT analysis meant to test Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats concerning the whole urban area;
- studies concerning the already carried out territorial policies which, together with those to be carried out, should be related to SWOT analysis in order to satisfy all participants' requirements and offer essential reference points to the successive strategic action.

**3) Definition of objectives and strategies.** Objectives' individuation directly comes from analysis' results, and represents the necessary preliminary definition of strategies, proposing a suitable solution for both present and future problems.

**4) Networks ideation and management.** The networking of all those participants, who have got an effective decisional power and propose constructive suggestions, represents a very important step to involve them in the guiding principles for the future urban development, and to stimulate the necessary consensus to afford them. Therefore, if we consider that these participants are also related to other networks, which are connected with the Strategic Planning, it results a sort of 'networking on the network'. On this phase, an essential role is played by the Forum, where the political decisions are widely discussed, and where other consultation forms have been planned for all citizens interested in urban projects, and where the representative organisms of different economical and social interests have been set up. The most important target is to open a dialogue in order to negotiate interests, develop partnerships, and attain effective liabilities, so that the 'operators-deciders' may decide together with 'operators-

technicians', who are skilled in special planning subjects. Thus, as a special programming place, the Plan offers the most trustful framework, which different operators may refer to.

**5) Actions** generally regard solution of conflicts, negotiation when interests are in contrast, financing channel of projects, definition of ground exploitation. The most significant actions concern economical, social, cultural environmental policies, and those of external and local transport.

**6) Testing** concerning communication and controlling activities of planning contents and results. Thanks to a communication program and to proper advertising campaign, urban role, image and identity have been locally, nationally, internationally and globally promoted. Firstly, it would be of great importance to develop an internal network, strongly supported by local public opinion and by citizens' and interests' cohesion, secondly an external one, able to modify urban image from a global point of view. Testing activities permit to evaluate efficiency and efficaciousness of the whole process, even modifying and revising the Plan. In strategic plans adopted by European cities, urban *marketing*, (which should include a series of targeted actions carried out before, during and after the definition of the Plan) seldom assumes a well-defined role. Nevertheless the importance as testing instrument cannot be ignored for objectives' and strategies' reorganization, so that supply could constantly fit demand.

Only after a long period some cities have gradually reached the reticular planning; for instance Glasgow and Barcelona, which have been two of the first cities to adopt Strategic Planning instruments, have now respectively reached the fourth and the third step of the Strategic Plan. Otherwise it is important to point out that nowadays the international collaboration among cities firmly pushes towards studies' and knowledge's achievement and even towards all initiatives directly or indirectly connected with guiding principles of the Strategic Planning, particularly those concerning development of urban sustainable models.

A very remarkable role is played by the following networks:

**The charter of European cities for a Sustainable and durable Development** (Aalborg Charter) which has been already approved in May 1994 by the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Aalborg (Denmark). European cities and regions, which have subscribed the document, have decided to put local 'Agenda 21' into effect, to carry out long-term projects and to campaign for the Sustainable and long lasting Urban Development of the European cities.

**Eurocities**, undoubtedly the most relevant European cities' network (almost 100 major cities), actively considers economical development and urban problems, having as main interlocutors the institutions of the European Union and as operative references, principles and policies of sustainable development and urban Strategic Planning.

**Euromedcity**, an Euro-Mediterranean cities' association co-ordinated by the city of Seville, has been constituted by the Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (activated by European Union with Declaration of Barcelona, November 1995). This organization, to whom 49 Mediterranean cities adhere, including Catania, principally aims at: creating several opportunities for meeting and collaboration between operators and researchers of Mediterranean cities in accordance with MEDA programs; activating and promoting instruments and methodologies for a more active participation of the citizens to the government; exploiting urban cultural riches and spreading knowledge and common experiences.

**Metrex**, the network of European metropolitan regions and areas, founded in 1996 during the Metropolitan regions Conference in Glasgow, supported by the European Commission. A network in which are connected European metropolitan areas' representative institutions, professionals, politicals, officers together with their advisers. It has been intended to carry out Strategic Planning and programming of the metropolitan territory, with a double target: exchange of knowledge and experiences concerning metropolitan dimension and contributing to the European metropolitan planning. Consequently, in order to spread the out-coming information, Metrex should create an interface among the different institutional levels of metropolitan areas. In 1999, in Porto, it has been subscribed, by more than 40 regions and metropolitan areas, the 'Porto Metropolitan Magna Carta' which pursues the common target of an efficacious metropolitan territorial dimension. Successively, in relation to the European Program 'Interreg III' (financing, from 2000 to 2006, all the initiatives aimed at the target of the European Spatial Development Perspective and of Urban Political Framework, so that Europe may obtain a better urban equilibrium) the projects

InterMetrex and PolyMetrex have been defined in order to re-check and to renew methodologies and competences of metropolitan Strategic Planning. Particularly Intermetrex, that has been recently concluded, offers fundamental information on competences and guiding principles of the metropolitan Strategic Planning, afterwards ideating a program for the revision of the 'Praxis Benchmark', which represents an important instrument for regions and metropolitan areas to evaluate the opportunities to carry out a more efficacious metropolitan spatial planning. Therefore 25 different indicators have been proposed to measure competence, capability and process for the effective spatial planning and development.

Other forms of collaboration to exploit the Strategic Planning are occurring within Italian cities and towns like La Spezia, Trento and Pesaro. The municipality of Rome itself, assisted by 'Risorse per Roma S.p.A.' and having evaluated all data reported in the strategic City of Rome's Plan ('Roma Prossima'), has started a very significant transactional co-operation project ('Network of Urban Strategies for a Sustainable Development for the Mediterranean Basin'), which should permit to start a network of collaboration within the main West Mediterranean cities, whose chief target is the elaboration of a Strategic Planning based on common guiding principles of the cities belonging to the network (European Programme *Interreg III B Spazio Medoc*). This instrument should permit the construction of a polycentric urban model which very well fits Mediterranean landscape, so that in their inside, a specific area is to be developed, alternative and complementary to that commonly called 'Blu Banana', the only one which can ensure economical functions and global services to Europe, thanks to huge metropolis like London, Paris, Hamburg, Munich and Milan.

In Italy, the use of Strategic Planning is testing Local Institution's capability, after that the new regulations have conferred them more decisional autonomy, to project and manage transformation processes and construct a specific identity through several coherent and flexible interventions. This advanced form of planning is thought to involve both public and private participants in a fertile cooperation, to innovate and manage a *governance* meant as negotiation of different interests, and also testing local institutions' capability to image and lead territorial development and to generate income thanks to an administrative action, in a general renewed relationship between citizens and administration.

At any rate, it is useful to point out, that such experiences do not interfere with the role played by electoral assemblies and by public institutions in the administration of

cities and metropolitan areas, not implying the delegation of public functions to those organisms not democratically elected, not even configuring them as technocratic choices of systematic planning ensured to experts, on the contrary aiming at enriching local institutions' ruling opportunities, offering information and indications on economical, social and cultural resources.

## **2. Possible methodologies and routes of Catania Strategic Plan**

Planning and carrying out development projects concerning urban articulated systems, as for instance that of Catania, which is animated by complex and often contrasting dynamics, are no longer to be related to the traditional framework of reference of urban well fixed and autonomous static models.

On the contrary it is necessary to use complex and procedural paradigmatic principles, typically belonging to the Post-Modern urban society, which should represent the guiding lines for political decisions of the City Administration, as well as for definition of objectives and strategic measures to be pursued (Allmendinger, 2001; Erba, 2001)). Such paradigms remain essential even in the following steps, that is to say from strategy to operativity, and necessarily imply coordination and integration of operative plans, involved actors and projected actions. Consequently, it is possible to grant the efficiency of interventions only after the exploitation of all possible synergies running between projects and actors, avoiding useless repetitions and partial or incomplete results.

Such a Strategic Planning's process directly refers to a 'reticular' model, as the most able to offer a global consideration of problems, policies and actors, and to a 'relating' approach concerning both main promoters, in this case Catania, and all actors, involved in planning and executing all necessary steps to achieve concrete results. Therefore distinguish features will be:

- Multisectorial and territorial features;
- Definition of medium- and long-term scenery;
- 'Negotiability' of all processes concerning choices and decisions making, at the same time not ignoring business guiding principles of optimisation and rationalization;
- Exchange of knowledge in every step of the process;
- Convergence of main objectives;

- Involvement of all actors, public and private, able to bring planning and operating resource and competence, according to actively participated decisional processes;
- Procedural and continuous fidelity in the planning.

Which are the reasons to have pushed City Administration in starting a so important operative and methodologically renewed route? Firstly, the awareness of the final conclusion of an age, which has been characterized by a growing model directly dependent on public expenditures, and consequently the new role played by the Administration, very different from the past, able to meet expectations of the town and reinforce its identity. Secondly, the necessity to affirm a new and stronger urban image, on the national and international stage, to answer properly all questions regarding the future of the urban area, to define sustainable and widely approved urban project and development process, to which several public and private initiatives should consciously and responsibly converge. Last but not least, the proliferation of finances coming from different sources (European, national and regional) promoting projects on different levels (interregional, municipal and inter-municipal) and the growing presence of actors having strong economical interests (even though with problems concerning public order and lack of infrastructural provisions) represent, on one hand, a net entangling and conditioning urban activities and functions; on the other, may constitute a great chance for the town itself to start new development itineraries (Avarello, Ricci, 2000). From this point of view, the strategic city planning intercepts the most suitable finances to carry out the main objectives of the town of Catania.

The proposed route is chiefly based on the Strategic Planning's guiding principles, and it has to be articulated as follows:

- **Preliminary Phase**, which includes a general assessment of the most recent studies, researches and experiences on urban policies and Strategic Planning related to different subjects and privileged interlocutors. This phase should be finalized to indicate the most suitable models of the Strategic Planning in a town like Catania and to define the first procedural hypothesis.
- **Auditing phase**, which is based on researches on the most important economical, social, territorial, cultural, and turistical services of the town, together with related problems. Otherwise, this phase is intended to analyze the urban system development and all contemporary tendencies, to identify factors and relevant variables for urban development, both internal (specific features of the town) and external (location of the

town in its relational context), and to identify the role played by urban actors as protagonists of local society and economics together with their strategies. From these studies and researches it is easy to deduce the SWOT analysis, principally concerned Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, which are the fundamental inputs to define planning guiding lines.

- **Planning phase**, which implies a global vision of urban scenery and the definition of urban idea and identity. The following steps concern the definition of general goals on which depend strategies and specific objectives, and afterwards the identification of operating measures and suitable project to pursue them. The planning phase (*framing* or *structuration*) also implies the consideration of decisional problems and the achievement of a strategy to manage their complexity, also indicating demand and organizing logically required information in order to adopt the most efficacious solutions.
- **Masterplan drawing up**, which can be considered as an integrated and essential part in planning, as this document should represent the frame work of reference indicating the passage from abstract strategies to operative programmes.
- **Mobilitation and networking of actors; resources and interests**, both local and external, which must take part in the decisional process by formal or informal agreements; the creation of different forms of partnership between public and private actors, the extension of representative organisms. In order to achieve and maintain a high degree of consensus amongst all of those who have decisional power, and to involve them in the future urban development, it is of great importance the organization of permanent *Forums* and strategic conferences for the discussion of Strategic Planning's priority actions and projectual solutions aiming at involving social, economical and institutional entities.
- **Urban marketing actions and communication strategies** should play a very relevant role in the Strategic Planning of Catania, to achieve consensus, solve conflicts, and to negotiate amongst different actors, as well as to develop promoting activities on various levels. As a matter of facts, in order to stimulate local capacity, it is indispensable to communicate the image, identity and advantage offered by the town. Otherwise it is to be stressed that *Forum* itself and documents concerning *Masterplan*, planned in the previous phases, if properly promoted, may represent essential urban marketing and communication elements. Accordingly, marketing concerning the urban area of Catania would essentially have the following functions:



a) to create value for the community (value meant as positive variation of the level of needs satisfaction);

b) to define the conditions for a better exploitation of the territory (intervening in local activities and supporting investments);

c) to increase territorial attractiveness (considering how the town is to be perceived, promoted and all opportunities offered by territorial exploitation);

d) to create a city-mark used on one hand, by enterprises to promote their own image, on the other, by City Administration to attain all necessary resources for its re-launch.

• **Monitoring** *in itinere* of the implementation phase, which should permit a constant check of results achieved by urban planning policy, able to activate a cyclical and everlasting process to improve planning, systematize defined objectives and define those to come. In monitoring the Strategic Planning, various factors should be considered, amongst them all those concerning:

a) new European national and regional projects able to modify the reference scenery of the urban Strategic Planning essentially referring to guiding principle of 'subsidiarity';

b) changes in socio-economical Plan's framework of reference;

c) evaluation of achieved objectives and adopted strategies;

d) evaluation of achieved policies, programmes, actions and specific projects supporting the adopted strategies.

Monitoring should always be accompanied by indicators showing the effectiveness of all initiatives and their impact on the urban ecosystem in order to attain an effective testing of achieved results and permit a benchmark with cities and towns pursuing analogous goals.

To achieve the projected objectives, the strategic Plan of Catania should be referred to a complex and organic town, whose vocations are absolutely distinguished and equally developed; otherwise it should be able to follow rapid Post-Industrial transformations, play a regional role, and project its functions towards the outside in order to valorize its special position on the Mediterranean sea. Certainly the town will not neglect its traditional commercial and artisan vocation, which, on the contrary, will be emphasized; nevertheless, other local resources will be exploited thanks to an efficacious system able to compete nationally and internationally, combine research, innovation, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial spirit, training, and semiskilled labour in order to create an important *hi-tech* and *net economy* centres (Ruggiero, Scrofani, 2001;

Scrofani, Cappello, 2002). Otherwise, in the last few years, inhabitants of Catania have shown an increasing sensibility for environment and culture, the two essential features of the Post-Industrial society; consequently it seems to be of great importance the proper exploitation of these primary resources to elevate quality of life and social cohesion and even to stimulate a high-quality tourism.

Observing these essential previous statements and thanks to the planning which has characterized the town in the last few years, it is to be pointed out that: a) important strategic projects have been set up (P.I.C. URBAN, the Territorial Employment Pact 'Catania SUD', 'Programma integrato S. Cristoforo Sud', etc.); b) other ones are going to be set up shortly (P.R.U.S.S.T. 'Le economie del turismo', P.I.T. 'Catania città metropolitana-dal sistema diffuso alla metropoli accogliente', 'Il patto per il Lavoro Città di Catania' etc.);

and even that innovative industrial settlements have developed, in particular those connected with microelectronics, biotechnology, and to vital youth entrepreneurship. At least in the medium-term, Catania is considered as perfectly suitable to play an important role within that tight circle of cities and towns in which is convenient to live, sojourn, invest, locate institutions and structures on national and international level, organize meetings, congresses, exhibition and big events.

To pursue this general target, it is necessary to follow some consolidated principles of the Strategic Planning. Therefore it is important to imagine a global vision of the urban area's development in the next twenty years (*visioning*), defining the idea of town itself, its identity (*mission*) and considering at the same time:

- internal and external scenery, which Catania has to be necessarily compared with;
- Strengths and Weakness of the town (already mentioned);
- Expectable requirements of *stock-holders* and *stake-holders*, who are those that hold a territorial capital stock, own lands, buildings, infrastructures and enterprises (residents, workers and not);
- Requirements of external partners, whether individuals or institutions, that thanks to their capitals and resources, will be more or less directly involved in the Strategic Planning, collaborating to its development and to the periodical revision of objectives and instruments.

The following step, represented by the definition of *strategic lines* of Catania, aims at indicating the most safe and efficacious way to achieve the main goal, concerning the future scenery proposed for the urban area. According to the most advanced European

cities and towns, the common denominator of these projects will be the convergence in a sustainable urban development policy, which is based, on one hand, on quality of life and work, and on citizens' security; on the other, on the consolidation of commercial, financial, directional activities, on structures and production of art, culture, technological research and innovation, recreative activities and tourism. Such structures and activities play an always more relevant role in the contest of urban regeneration, re-launching nationally, internationally and of course locally, the image of the town, in order to increase consensus, participation, and social cohesion.

Obviously, the problem connected with the individuation of the key-actors, is to be faced from a double point of view: on one hand, considering their direct relationship with the City Administration, on the other, considering objectives, strategies, and actions which they pursue in accordance with municipal policy and at the same time investing their own resources. The first is the case of institutions, enterprises and individuals, which have stipulated accordance, agreements and conventions with the Town to carry out activities and projects strategically important for Catania. The second is the case of those actors individuated in relation to their contribution to: main strategies for socio-economic development, projects under construction and to be carried out in the future, employed resources. Such resources may be projectual, economical, financial, voluntary and political; the last ones concerning those finalized to achieve the necessary consensus to legitimate participation to decisional process.

The *Masterplan*, essential and integrating part of the Strategic Planning of Catania, represents the main document organizing logically and systematically the passage from *strategic lines* to *specific objectives* and to the following organizing and operative *actions*. Accordingly, these actions have been defined to indicate the way to reach, as fast and best as possible, *specific objectives*, and at the same time, to offer a synthesis of plans, operative measures, and projects finalized to stimulate development process of the urban area and to pursue the most efficacious solutions.

The achievement of the first three phases, which should end with the drawing up of a *Masterplan*, represents the first relevant engagement of the City Administration, which, making use of the most modern operative and conceptual instruments concerning culture and principles of the integral Strategic Planning, tries to address and support the urban development process even considering the increasing competitiveness between towns and regions. Therefore, *The Masterplan* should become an acquaintance instrument for the town itself and give to the City Administration the opportunity to

dialogue with internal and external actors, playing its essential role to promote, stimulate and coordinate local development processes. Besides this document should facilitate local social mobilization for common objectives (such as development, improvement of life's quality), otherwise stimulate citizens' participation to reach these goals and permit to the local administration to discuss and deliberate projects and actions even considering future prospective.

In relation to Urban Strategic Planning works and interventions projected in the *Masterplan*, the City Administration of Catania intends to be a *key player*, and not only a mere actor. Therefore, the *Public Management* tries to play a vivifying role to achieve a urban integrated development: managing strategic planning, projecting and defining targets, to which collectivity, enterprises, trade associations and union delegations should converge. It is also necessary to involve horizontally and vertically all key-actors, to connect sinergically actors and projects, even thanks the creation of public and private organisms.

The Plan and consequently also the *Masterplan*, which is an essential document of it, must be considered flexible and open to all private and public contributions in accordance with its guiding principles and guarantying that decisions would be even carried out. After a public presentation, main political, economical, social, and cultural actors of the town and the metropolitan area (in order to carry out successfully the plan, the metropolitan dimension should be constantly observed, afterwards the Province and other Public institutions referring to Metropolitan Area could offer an important help) should subscribe the plan, nevertheless considering that only a precise vision of the future will make all citizens believe in the future of their own town (Sanfilippo, 1991; Cervellati, 1998; Ruggiero L., 2001).

Obviously, only an organized contest can guarantee the efficiency of a complex project like this, with fixed principles and terms; furthermore objectives and individuated actions, in accordance with the planning set-up, have to be carried out and followed by a network of those subjects, who have subscribed the Plan, and who should be able to connect the main interests of the town with it. This networking, which could be also integrated according to future requirements and opportunities, should be coordinated by a mixed association (public-private), whose operative office (vivifying actors' support and receiving eventual proposal of changes of the Plan itself or of its articulations) would be also designated to promote, coordinate, encourage and control.

The same office should assure exchange of knowledge thanks to publications, renewed Web page, opportunities to debate, organized public meeting on specific subjects; otherwise it should be able to connect planning objectives with monitoring function and territorial transformation, also considering the essential importance of urban planning instruments, already existing or those which are to be projected or revised.

The *Masterplan*, which develops in parallel to the adoption of the new General Town Plan, should contribute to clarify and reinforce all choices based on this basic urbanistic instrument according to a wider framework concerning social and economical development of the town, relationship between town and metropolitan or regional territory, relations to big national and global network. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that sustainable development policies, in particular those regarding economical and social development, are not to be connected, or at least only partially, with the urbanistic planning, and are to be considered in the wider contest of the Strategic Planning, which finds its operative expression in the *Masterplan*. This last document includes, organizes and systematizes urban development policies, also playing an essential and complementary function to the Urbanistic Plan. In other words, *Masterplan*, defining operative strategies to promote economics, employment and social development, will be used side by side with the urbanistic instrument. Consequently it would be avoided that this instrument, for the transformation and the regulation of places, will be overloaded with alien contents and objectives.

Besides the *Masterplan* has been proposed as an efficacious analyzing, managing and evaluating instrument, particularly suitable to push the territorial components of a complex urban area like Catania towards fixed goals. After all, thanks to a far-reaching work involving actors, resources and activities, the passage from abstract objectives to strategic choices and specific goals would be systematically managed, moreover according to successive organizing and operative actions finalized to carry out programmes, projects, and plans which have repercussions on development processes of the urban area.

\* Although this work is fruit of the combined research of the two writers, the first part was written by Luigi Scrofani, the second part by Luca Ruggiero.

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