

The quality of the city The role of evaluation in methodologies to the preparation of plans and projects¹

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In recent years there has been a debate about the role of evaluation in the development of plans and projects, both with regard to the inclusion of equity objectives and to mitigate the imbalance of the powers between the directly and indirectly involved actors.

These are important preliminary questions that solicit answers, which can't be hidden, but can be declared explicitly and incontrovertibly considering the personal roots of cultural and ideological nature and within the framework of the scientific connotation currently acquired by the discipline².

The seminar promoted by SIEV on the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* which took place in the Campidoglio in Rome in April 2016, tackled this problematic area.

The contents that have qualified this event, have stimulated the awareness of the centrality of these issues, not only as unavoidable ethical, cultural and deontological references, but also as relevant solicitations strongly orientating to define the methods and provide more incisive operational tools that can be, at the same time, more adherent to the current scientific attributes.

¹ Responding to the Consultation initiated by the Promoter Group of the International Conference on "The quality of the city in the future" with the present contribution we intend to start also on the pages of "Valori e Valutazioni", the discussion on this topic. The organization of business meetings in Enna and Rome aims to address the same issues in terms of teaching in the faculties of Architecture and Engineering.

² In the economy and the purposes of this paper we can only mention these aspects. However, with regard to the epistemological question, the scientific contents, the same gnoseological function of the design process has been repeatedly treated and analysed in the pages of this magazine in the essays Giulio Mondini, Luigi Fusco Girard, Fabiana Forte from the undersigned.

To start this reflection, we believe that it is first necessary to assume among the many interpretations of the urban phenomenon, the one that can be considered more useful to deal with these problems in a profitable way.

We therefore propose to *interpret the city as the largest and most efficient mechanism to produce and distribute (or redistribute) goods and services.*

From a functional and symbolic point of view, this mechanism has so far worked by composing two powerful social and economic opposite effects, that are opposite but also interacting, producing: *the former aggregating, the latter segregating effects.*

According to such hypotheses, we now have a frame that allows us to evaluate:

- the spatial arrangements that characterize a city in a particular period of its life;
- the extent and the spatial distribution by which these effects interact;
- which of them eventually ends up prevailing;
- the consequences of planning and designing processes.

It should be remembered that in the first decades of the twentieth century and in the years ranging from the end of the Second World War until the end of the 80s (thus extending well beyond the post-war reconstruction phase) the typically Keynesian interventions implemented during the great urban expansions of the European cities, have been an extraordinary component in the social and economic policies whose scope was the income redistribution on ground of equity (Fattinnanzi, 2012).

Then, from the last decades of the last century, in many European countries, a different vision has matured in urban policies.

Increasingly, the policies to support the new expansions,

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dominant in the last thirty years, have come to confront and to resize with the growing need to socially, economically and functionally regenerate the existing settlements, built in different periods, from the oldest to those built in war.

As part of this vision, first of all, the aim was to encourage the conservative rehabilitation of historic centres, which have increasingly been considered essential components of the overall urban quality in Europe.

Subsequently, this approach was extended, to the point of affecting the extensive peripheral expansions built up in the post-war period. Obviously the problem has been placed very differently in the historically consolidated areas and in the more recent suburbs.

1. THE INTERVENTION IN HISTORICALLY CONSOLIDATED URBAN AREAS

Many historic centres and neighbourhoods to these neighbours, especially those built in the early decades of the last century, generally affected by a process of centralization, with a strong increase in land values and real estate (also induced by the great post-war building expansions), they are subjected to profound transformations deriving from the phenomena – often interacting – of *filtering up*³ and *outsourcing*.

These have been phenomena both of socio-economic transformation that of physical and functional type.

These transformations were driven by the possibility of enhancing their favourable position acquired in the urban and/or natural context, often further qualified by the stratification over time of appreciated symbolic and cultural values.

These valorisation projects have generally been promoted or managed or by entities that have had the financial capacity to acquire a significant share, at the limit the total one, and in any case of a strategically significant portion, of attractive real estate.

More often, they have been the result of capillary processes of functional social and economic filtering up.

The problem is that these processes, when they have been fuelled by the “spontaneous” dynamics of the market, generated the almost total expulsion of its inhabitants. Consequently, they have generated the progressive rarefaction, until the complete disappearance, of the traditional commercial and artisanal activities and the

³ In 1968 Guido Dandri, starting from the analysis on the dynamics of the real estate market and the phenomenon of slums in the USA, introduced the concept of filtering down in the Italian Urban Valuation, according to which the progressive physical and functional obsolescence of the buildings is accompanied by the increasingly intensive use by lower-income residents. From this, it is possible to deduce the phenomenon of filtering up, of inverse sign, in which the progressive centralization of the building stimulates physical requalification interventions, the functional reconversion and the settlement of inhabitants and functions of higher economic level.

consequent closure of public services starting from those more closely linked to the residence.

The transformed historical centres often assume an essentially mono functional character: for example, almost exclusively directional or commercial activities take place or, as occurred in the cities of art and in the Italian and European coastal urban area, activities related exclusively to tourism are consolidated.

Generally, it is precisely on the basis of these processes that the radical socio-economic transformations of the area are produced and the expulsion of the majority of the pre-existing inhabitants and of the activities and services connected to them.

It is therefore understandable that the urban regeneration interventions promoted by the European Community have firstly proposed to ensure the permanence of the population and, at the same time, to support the redevelopment of historically consolidated activities.

Although the primary purpose of these interventions has been to eliminate the inadequacies of hygiene and functional of the building structures and, where necessary, to recover the degradation and safety, in most programs the social and economic regeneration is also encouraged, creating the conditions for the reintegration of the inhabitants and of the traditional activities, in the overall social and economic structure of the city.

Therefore, according to this approach, we can consider the physical and socio-economic regeneration of these neighborhood a potential engine capable of pushing and qualifying the overall development of the city.

2. INTERVENTIONS IN DEGRADED PERIPHERAL AREAS

The demographic explosion, the economic and physical expansion of the European cities that followed the post-war reconstruction phase, resulted in the construction of large new neighbourhoods, often on the margins of consolidate urban structures.

In most of Europe, in general it deals with interventions directly or indirectly activated and implemented by public authorities, entirely or partially supported by public resources or, it is the Italian case, promoted, designed and implemented by private entrepreneurs and financed through the use of land credit or reserves that legislation makes mandatory for social security and insurance institutions.

Initially in the new neighbourhoods settled the immigrants from the countryside and smaller urban centres, subsequently, the families expelled from the central areas of the city, and more recently, the immigrants came from other geographical areas driven by vital socio-economic or political/military reasons.

Obviously in the various European countries these expansions have assumed different characters and dimensions: different urban qualities, different services

and accessibility conditions and also technological and typological qualities of the buildings.

But we need to reflect on an aspect that we consider illuminating and of considerable importance, namely that in which, even in settlements with a sufficient level of accessibility and acceptable level of equipment or, even a good level of these, we can see the emergence of situations of strong discomfort and the emergence of strong social conflicts.

We believe that these phenomena can be interpreted as the expression of situations of segregation, therefore of socio-economic marginalization and of cultural ghettoization.

In this regard, we strongly believe the situations of conflict that characterize the neighbourhoods in the Parisian suburbs.

This issue has characteristics and therefore different solutions for historical centres and suburban neighbourhoods.

In fact, while in the historic centres or of more ancient formation, even in the presence of a strong economic and social stratification, it is possible to identify a core of symbolic and cultural values that, even if degraded over time, can still be considered sufficiently shared, and basis of which to implement interventions that, at least in part, recover and enhance the pre-existing socio-economic structure. Instead, in the peripheral neighbourhoods, it is rarely possible to find cultural values and positive community-type identities, on the basis of which (after having at least partly removed the factors of degradation and marginalization) to start recovery and regeneration processes, thus creating the premise for the reintegration of the marginalized neighbourhood in the overall social and economic structure of the cities.

In the context of modern suburban neighbourhoods, it is therefore necessary to start a process of making and starting-up of project, that, from the early stages, foresees the participation and involvement of all the subjects who live or work in the neighbourhood.

We have experienced that this practice can generate more awareness among the inhabitants and start building a positive, shared identity profile that can also be recognized outside the neighbourhood.

This is certainly a difficult process, but that some positive experiences prove possible. For example, in some popular neighbourhood of Rome, such effects have been achieved, realizing significant Street Art experiences.

In the neighbourhood of Tor Marancia, with the support of public institutions, cultural associations and above all with the participation of its inhabitants, painting the anonymous extremities of all the buildings of the neighbourhood, a real outdoor museum has been created consisting of about twenty of large paintings generating a kind of *genius loci* and an identity, now widely known not only in Rome⁴.

⁴ At the beginning of the 2000s, Rome has become one of the most important poles of the phenomenon of Street Art. In those years, this initiative was promoted and supported by the

The realization of the Neighbourhood Contract that financed the recovery of the Fondo Gesù, a physically and socially degraded neighbourhood in Crotona, is a further example of the positive role that can play the participation of the inhabitants to the process of identity formation and to identify the community values for the settlements which are characterised by urban marginalization.

In this case, participation in all phases of the program start-up and drafting of the project contributed to the building of an identity and a positive image of the neighbourhood, to the start of a process of reintegration into urban life and, even, to reduce the presence of elements of crime⁵.

Municipality, by bodies linked to it, by art galleries and cultural associations. In this context, this phenomenon has lost its initial character of protest, becoming an effective vehicle for the qualification and redemption of degraded areas of the city. Initially, the semi-central areas were affected, then numerous suburban neighbourhoods within and outside the Grande Raccordo Anulare. The Big City Life project promoted in the village of Tor Marancia is the best known of those that have developed during this period. This project led to the creation of a real open-air museum formed by the works of twenty-one artists from eleven countries, each of which has covered by painting, in many cases of high quality, the squalid walls in headboard of anonymous buildings. The realization of the project in Tor Marancia, as well as in other sites, was characterised by the participation of the inhabitants who during the works hosted and advised the artists. The inhabitants, after the end of works, have carried out the maintenance, organized guided tours, using the proceeds for the maintenance of the public open spaces of the district.

⁵ The neighbourhood contract Jesus Fund Contract in Crotona was activated by the Municipality for the recovery of a highly degraded complex both from a physical and a social point of view. This complex resulted to be marginalized from the city and deeply polluted by criminal presence also due to the negative effects produced by the crisis of the industrial structure that had strongly connoted the city after World War II. In this case it was necessary to intervene on buildings of subsidized housebuilding built after World War II, which consisted of completely inadequate housing and with a typological, technological quality and very low urban services. Over time the deficient initial situation has dramatically worsened. In this context the initial crowding and cohabitation situations have grown. The buildings, as well as for the natural physical degradation (moreover not contained by any maintenance intervention), have been completely compromised even for the abusive actions carried out by the inhabitants. These have tried to overcome autonomously the initial deficiencies of the buildings and to meet new needs have by invading the public spaces with illegal volumes, dug into foundations to obtain new basements, realized additions to services, balconies and loggias, formed by anchored cantilevered volumes precariously to the existing pillars. In an area subject to earthquake and flooding of the neighbouring river Esaro, has thus created a situation of serious danger. The Crotona project, despite being among the first to be implemented by NC, was characterised by the knowledge of its inhabitants and their socio-economic status. In this case, the systematic involvement of the subjects involved and the participation of the inhabitants was positively tested. Through these procedures, the implementation of the Neighbourhood Contract (NC) as well as having carried out the necessary consolidation, rehabilitation and functional adaptation of the building structures, had the important effect of starting a social

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So in Europe the regeneration programs of the urban neighbourhood (and also the national ones that, like the Neighbourhood Contracts, were inspired by the Community legislation) have attempted a laudable holistic approach, similar to the one adopted towards the historical centres, in which the rehabilitation of degraded physical structures has been considered an aspect of an overall process of economic and social redevelopment.

Therefore, projects were promoted in which the most important goal was to overcome segregation phenomena and stimulate a process of integration in the functional, social and economic complex in the city.

But we must ask ourselves: did this type of intervention give the expected results?

In the case of negative responses, what reasons related to the characteristics of the physical space have been that have decreed modest results?

Where and for what reasons did the segregating pushes continue and prevail over the integral ones?

We believe that the ongoing initiative helps to shape satisfactory responses and shows the ability to suggest more effective actions.

Actions that can realistically take into consideration the situation of urban unease, which has recently worsened further in these neighbourhoods, in which have been manifested and cumulated the most dramatic consequences of the infernal mechanism set in motion by the planetary phenomenon of increasing divarication of the distribution of wealth and opportunities⁶.

This phenomenon determined the reduction of mass consumption, the downsizing of entire productive sectors, reduction of job opportunities, unemployment, underemployment and precariousness.

In this situation, the critical issues that currently characterize many important urban realities have in fact put in crisis that set of identity values and those rights, that seemed by now to have been firmly acquired and which we can briefly indicate as "right to the city".

reclamation mechanism and a process of reintegration of the district in the social and physical fabric of Crotona. The development of a participatory design process has enabled the renovation of existing homes by adopting devices that are technologically original and constructing new buildings using innovative typologies and providing them with a symbolically identifying and perceptually strongly emerging image.

⁶ In early 2017, the OECD published data on a further concentration of wealth at global level. The data show that last year 61 people held 50% of the world's wealth. A level of concentration that would have been expected for the next two years. It is therefore shown that the process of concentration feeds itself and accelerates, also driven by the characterization that the phenomenon of globalization has assumed. The effects on the working condition on the population are combined with those induced by the intensification of technical progress that expels work to an extent not compensated by new opportunities. The phenomena of marginalization and conflict that occur in urban neighbourhoods are one of the dramatic consequences of these phenomena.

3. THE SPATIAL CRITICALITIES OF THE CURRENT CITY

We have noted that discomfort and conflict also involved suburbs sufficiently equipped with essential services and a good accessibility situation.

This observation suggests that the discomfort and awareness of this situation of marginalization perceived by the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, derives also from other factors such as: the qualitative aspects inherent to the physical conformation of the settlements, the spatial structure of the functional destinations, the symbolic pregnancy of places, the architectural characterization of public buildings and homes.

These issues are therefore of primary importance, especially for those who were involved in the preparation of plans and projects and, in particular, are interested in the complex problem concerning the relationships to be established between urban planning and the design of works that structure and qualify the cities.

4. THE PERCEPTION OF THE SEGREGATION AND MARGINALIZATION CONDITION

The concrete life of the inhabitants of the suburbs/dormitories of the present western cities takes place largely in spaces marked by a great functional and symbolic poverty and in the perception, often unconscious, that offer of opportunities varied and interesting that historically had constituted the most attractive feature of the contemporary city, it resides elsewhere, and that elsewhere it is necessary to move to try to access it legally or illegally enjoying its advantages.

We can see how many of the suburbs of big cities are characterised by an absolute lack of identity, a uniform image and an anonymous seriality of the houses built in the same neighbourhood and even in different neighbourhoods.

In these contexts, emerges above all the symbolic absence or irrelevance of the community and public places or structures, i.e. of those structures, which have formed not only the functional, physically usable armour of the city, but also constituted that imaginary and that symbolic system of western "civitas" and that over the centuries has deeply connoted the existence and culture of the people who inhabited them.

People who, not by chance, in our culture, have been indicated with the qualifying term of citizens, wanting them to connote them as individuals in the fullness of their rights and their duties.

Now, we believe it necessary to suggest some instrumental hypotheses to guide the interventions on the physical space of the cities, evaluating them on the basis of their capacity to enhance or depress the processes of segregation and integration.

Based on the positive results achieved, we submit two types of problems:

- the conformation and the organizational, functional and symbolic quality of the urban space, of its main spaces and public and collective buildings,
- the identity, typological and dimensional organization of residential buildings and their specific symbolic value but equally important.

To discuss of these problems profitably, we consider it useful to propose the following point of view: *urban space – at any scale should be indicated and interpreted – as a composition of physically defined natural or artificial objects, hierarchically structured and functionally organized.*

Urban space is represented by a complex composition that over time is characterised and qualified by the process of interaction with the social and economic structure with which it interacts.

Among other things, starting from these assumptions we believe it is possible to profitably tackle some of the essential aspects of the relationship between town planning and architecture, between the physical structure of a city and functional and symbolic/ perceptive quality of the works that build it and qualify it.

We believe that, in the different urban centres, the particular conformation assumed by these relationships has strongly influenced the birth, development and, above all, the radicalization of aggregative and segregation phenomena to which, in our working hypothesis, we have given a decisive importance in the reading and evaluation of the socio-economic structure of contemporary cities in terms of fairness and distribution of opportunities.

If we examine under this point of view, even briefly the urban phenomenology of the Western world, we can identify cities characterised by a strong physical structure, but which have a poor quality, as a whole constructed from objects that, as a whole, show a weak individuality symbolic and poor perceptual relevance.

Conversely, we have cities characterised by a weak overall structure, which instead have a high symbolic identity, due to a strong characterization of the natural situation and/or a high quality of the physical elements that compose it.

Instead there are cases (generally they are urban centres of more ancient and complex political and socio-economic history) in which, over the centuries, the overall urban structure has positively interacted with the objects that constitute it.

This generates a qualitative osmosis process which, generally, will be positive, but sometimes also negative⁷. These phenomena can be interpreted as an expression of

different processes, generally occurring at different times, but which then interacted, determining the essential features of a specific urban structure.

We have cities in which the structure has been predominantly conditioned by geographical location or natural conformation and/or by the occurrence of certain historical events; other cities, the structure has been the expression of the particular stratification, consolidated over time, of norms and knowledge of a customary nature; in other cases, the urban structure has historically been configured as the product of public authority interventions that, even if spatially delimited and sectoral, have nevertheless been the product of an intelligent and sufficiently shared overall design of the city's future development.

Here, we want to highlight and evaluate, both that the structure of cities has a spontaneous character or, instead, be the product of processes that are in some way planned or designed, the presence of certain factors that play an intentionally integral role or that instead they are destined to generate, perhaps implicitly, mainly segregating effects.

of great importance and, rightly so, for this reason the "Urbanistica" magazine has dedicated its second number to it. This development starts from the XIIth century, with a sailor settlement on the navigable course of the Amstel river, which was later strengthened by a system of artificial canals that played the fundamental role of multiplying the possibilities of docking of commercial vessels. Then from the fourteenth century, to cope with the strong socio-economic development, urban expansion was organically planned by mainly articulating it on three channels (the channels named of the King, the Princes and the Lords). The construction of the three canals was developed coherently, with standardized dimensions and bordered by tree-lined docks. It was completed over more than three centuries, progressively expanding the oldest urban nucleus (the Dam). Since the start of the construction of this urban system, the municipality has retained ownership of all the building land served by the canals, limiting itself to leasing them to the building applicants. The fee calculated in proportion to the width of the front of the house/ warehouse with the view on the channels, which were requested on the basis of the economic capacity and functional needs of the tenant. In this settlement module each building could enjoy two opposing views: the main one on the canal with the lower floors destined to warehouses and the premises for commercial use; the other opens on a large open court, extended to the whole block, generally using for gardens and vegetable gardens. This court was sometimes kept undivided, sometimes fragmented at the service of the individual building units or at the service of the housing units. The buildings, although characterised by a different development of the front facing, have maintained a strict alignment with a variable height in a limited range, less than half a dozen floors. The strong homogeneity of the aggregates has limited, but also enhanced, the limited variations "admitted" by the habits that have characterised the different eras: the intensity of the colours used in the external plaster, the sobriety of the decorations. The architectural element that has undergone the greatest stylistic variation over the centuries has concerned the profile, style and decoration of the roofs. It should be noted that the effective balance between the uniformity of the overall building fabric and the variations allowed in the individual building units have undoubtedly had positive results, so much so that it was decided to re-propose it also in some recent expansions of the City.

⁷ Among the Hanseatic cities, the urban development of Amsterdam is perhaps the most coherent and paradigmatic example of the relationship between the urban structure and the quality of the building. A relationship, regulated through a set of institutionalized norms, but which also represents the expression of strongly stable and shared values in bourgeois / mercantile society. From this point of view, the city is an example

In this regard, it is necessary that the evaluation doctrines elaborate instruments able to estimate, in the dialectic between the various possible scales of intervention, the phenomena of spatial nature and those with socioeconomic contents, which determine integration or segregation, are triggered and developed.

5. THE URBAN QUALITY AND THE ROLE OF EVALUATION

At this point, on the basis of the role assigned to the evaluator, it is necessary to define its position, to ensure an effective and timely intervention of the overall development of the drafting process of the architectural project, the plan and the urban planning.

To face this problem more effectively, we believe that, with respect to the concrete development of drafting process, it is appropriate to distinguish three phases:

The upstream or ex ante phase

The upstream or ex ante phase is so defined with respect to the development of the drafting processes.

It can be characterised by the following steps: a first phase starts from the moment in which a subject, public or private, decides to intervene and ends at the beginning of the one leading to the drafting of a project or a plan; a second one that includes the entire development of all the phases that lead to the final approval of the project or the adoption of the plan; a third one starting from the previous one and that including the implementation and management phase.

We believe that, substantially, the whole process that develops starting from the very moment in which the intention to draw up any type of project or plan is manifested, up to its adoption or realization, appears essentially as a decision-making process in which a high number of variables and choices must be composed.

These subjects, depending on their nature and the phase of the process in which they are located, always involve more or less numerous categories of subjects, generally independent from one another.

These tend to intervene using subjective, often partial and sometimes mutually conflicting decision-making criteria.

Throughout the development of this process, the role that the evaluator can play is therefore to make explicit, transparent and shared the reasons for the choices to be made.

To deepen the role that the evaluator is able to perform in the three phases indicated, it is useful to articulate our considerations towards each of the three categories of subjects who, in various capacities and with different roles, are involved in the intervention processes:

1. the subjects (in particular the public administrations) who individually or jointly have the ability to intervene and promote the drafting of the plan or project and namely, those who, subsequently, will have the

responsibility to take care of and/or control the drafting process;

2. the subjects (economists of different types, sociologists or anthropologists, statisticians, etc.) who are called to carry out the different roles of advice or specialist support to the subjects indicated in the previous point;

3. the subjects who are directly or indirectly involved or only interested in the implementation of the plan or by the project, or those towards whom it was considered appropriate to activate forms of consultation or actual participation in the development of editorial processes.

In this regard, while recently, a lively debate has been raised on the instruments of *direct democracy* used on general issues, many experiences made in recent decades have clearly demonstrated the overall capacity of participatory processes to improve the outcome of plans and projects, sometimes even making it possible to implement it.

Participatory processes to be satisfactorily positive (in the sense that they can favour a higher quality of decisions) must be based on *information* and on the *responsible awareness* of the participants or, in any case, which have been involved.

As we will see in dealing with the individual phases of the intervention processes, the evaluation can contribute decisively to the realization of these conditions.

Once the possible roles of the evaluator have been configured in general terms, we will now deepen the issues starting from a first analysis of the nature of the specific decision-making process that characterizes the three phases previously indicated.

In the preliminary, ex ante or upstream phase

It is the phase that starts or from the manifestation of problems, or from or deficiencies inherent in the physical structure of a territory, or from the perception of potential that has not been used up to that moment.

A public administration or a private entity identifying these elements decides to intervene by drafting a plan or a project.

In this phase the objectives, the main implementing strategies are set, the necessary resources are quantified and the possibilities of finding them are prefigured.

In this phase the evaluator's role consists essentially in supporting the promoter's decisions with his own tools.

Subsequently, this activity must be aimed at activating and qualifying the process of drawing up the plan, taking into account the overall objectives set out by the promoter, the choice between the possible localizations, the quantification of the necessary resources and the identification of the necessary skills.

Furthermore, evaluator could play an important role, as suggest the expansion of the promoter's objectives, considering those purposes that are directly or indirectly attributable to the project and that have been neglected or ignored by the promoter due to inattention or because they

are not immediately perceptible or as often happens, due to the interference of overlying interests.

On the other hand, in the contemporary world, the decision-making processes concerning projects and plans are generally characterised by increasing levels of complexity and uncertainties due, for example, to the preparation time generally long and even longer implementation times.

We think that these difficulties, at least in part, can be overcome, governed and structured with the adoption of a management process, which can be updated as the intervention process develops in its various phases.

The project management that we believe should always be requested, to the team in charge of drafting, as a preliminary act, must be congruent with the intervention process.

In particular, in this phase, the task of the evaluator should essentially consist in the translation of the purposes that generated the same activation of the plan or project *in an overall system, appropriately hierarchized of performances, which must be accompanied by the relative control systems.*

The control systems must be clearly structured and communicated and must be acquired and used by the *design team*.

We believe that, in the preliminary or *ex ante* phase, the participatory process will essentially concern the verification, specification of objectives and of their priorities.

In particular, it must be taken into account the general scope of the contents and implications, which characterize this phase, for interventions of greater size or importance, and for which, the participatory process should essentially envisage the involvement of possibly institutional intermediate bodies and/or panels representing the socio-economic reality of the territory concerned.

6. THE EVALUATOR'S CONTRIBUTION DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE PLAN AND THE PROJECTS

This phase includes the process of drawing up the plan or project, which goes from identifying and activating the team in charge of drafting it, up to its approval and final adoption.

At this point it seems useful to premise an important consideration, perhaps obvious: the greater or lesser success of the implementation of any project or plan, is ultimately determined by the actual level of pursuit of the goals that, directly or indirectly, have determined its activation. Now we know that projects and plans are always the result of a large number of decisions, each of different size and relevance, but always strongly interconnected.

In fact, the whole drafting process is articulated through this set of decisions. In this regard, an essential point to be explored is that relating to the definition of the dominant characters of these decisions.

Reflecting on the drafting practices we note that essentially the decisions are the result of a process of *selection, comparison and choice*, made by the editing team always

within a basket in which a certain number of *alternatives* are included.

Alternatives that, in that territorial situation, at that particular historical moment, are taken into consideration because, materially available, concretely usable and culturally shared by the actors involved in that specific phase of work.

The final synthesis that constitutes the epilogue of every drafting process, must be made, composing in a coherent whole the set of solutions/options.

The quality of this synthesis will depend on the quality of some fundamental operations to be performed in the preliminary stages.

A first operation concerns the adoption of methods and procedures capable of governing an exceptionally complex drafting process, that lasts over time and generally subject to more or less radical feedback operations.

Within the methodology adopted, it is therefore necessary to construct a system of congruent, transparent and questionable criteria to be used to select and evaluate the choices included in the various baskets.

Within these criteria it is fundamental to insert those, which allow to estimate the complex of costs connected to them, understood as that total use of the different types of resources, whose uses, directly or indirectly, must be connected specifically to each of the *solutions/options* considered⁸.

Within these criteria it is fundamental to insert those, which allow to estimate the complex of costs connected to them, understood as that total use of the different types of resources, whose uses, directly or indirectly, must be related specifically to each of the *solutions/options* considered.

A second important operation concerns the adoption of criteria that guide the formation and structuring of some *baskets for project choices* and planning that can be considered significant as well as congruent.

Precisely in relation to the problems related to the construction of the different baskets of choices, it is possible to better understand and enhance the role that specialized skills can play, whether they are organically included in the drafting team or that intervene in a specific phase.

⁸ In recent years, in most European cities the development of new buildings has been greatly reduced. As a consequence, the attention of the protagonists of the building activity has been mainly addressed to the problems of maintenance, management of variously outdated property and however very extensive. In this period the need to expand the concept of cost is affirmed, which has been extended to all those who, in relation to the typological and technological characteristics of the property, the user and / or manager subject will have to sustain over time. The concept of total cost has been defined as the sum of the cost of the works (construction, redevelopment, more or less conservative restoration, etc.), and the appropriately discounted value of the maintenance and management costs that are expected to support in a convenient default time frame.

In the basket of alternatives will not be included only the best known ones, of which all the participants are aware, even those not specialized.

The knowledge of the basket of alternatives will obviously only be limited and episodic.

The inclusion in the team of professionally up-to-date and culturally dynamic specialists will be able to widen the basket, inserting less practiced solutions/options, even the most innovative ones, i.e., those that at that moment, the most recent developments in science and technology make available.

It is evident that in order to evaluate solutions/options that are little or not validated by custom, it will be necessary to adopt more refined and convincing evaluation procedures, able to make the decision makers aware of all the implications in terms of an efficient use of resources.

We believe that once these preliminary operations have been carried out, the quality of the synthesis depends essentially on the ability of the team to operate the choices by balancing the different mutual interactions.

First of all, it is necessary to evaluate to what extent each of the choices made will contribute to the pursuit of the general aims of the project or plan.

Secondly, in determining the quality of the final synthesis, it is very important to assess the level of coherence between the single solution/option and the complex of those adopted previously, and to identify the extent to which it will be considered binding with respect to the subsequent ones.

In particular, this consistency must be assessed in relation to the generating idea (also called *basic idea*, *guiding idea*, etc.) of the *plan* and *project*.

This generating idea can be considered as the formulation of preliminary theoretical hypotheses, analogous to those that constitute the incipit necessary for the development of any activity in the field of research.

This hypothesis, that can be defined in any of the phases of the drafting process but which, generally, can be formulated since the preliminary one, perhaps as a temporary work hypothesis, to which a simple maieutic function is assigned, perhaps put in place to stimulate the capacity of the team.

Therefore, a hypothesis that initially can be intuitive, indefinite and incomplete, can subsequently be developed, and progressively verified and validated precisely with the development of the drafting process.

The verification and validation phase can confirm this hypothesis, or can determine its totally or partially rejection.

In the field of planning and design that specifically concern the physical structure of a territory, it is possible synthetically define the *generating idea as one of the possible hypotheses in which a unitary, structured and coherent whole is configured, in the context of which all the objects physicists who constitute it come to assume a meaning and a role from a functional, perceptive and symbolic point of view.*

In this regard, we must observe that, in the vast majority of cases, in the development of the drafting the *generating*

idea is essentially configured as an innovative composition of solutions historically known.

Therefore, the final synthesis, only exceptionally, will contemplate the insertion of completely innovative options/solutions.

Generally, this will occur when in the repertoire of available solutions, it is not possible to find one, sufficiently adequate for an innovative synthesis.

During the entire development of the planning phase, a major task of the evaluator is to operate an update of the project management, which must be continuous and shared by the whole team.

In it, on the basis of the concrete developments of the drafting process and specificity of the choices to be made, it is necessary:

- define the categories of subjects to be involved in each of the development phases according to the nature and the size of the decisions; in particular the participation may concern: the entire universe of citizens; particular categories involved; statistically significant panels; administrations or any sufficiently representative intermediate bodies;
- identify subsequently, the most effective tools for knowing and representing opinions and needs: interviews, questionnaires, animation techniques, etc.;
- select the most appropriate and effective evaluation tools (available or innovative) to be used to support the choices related to the specific decision-making node of the drafting process.

In the desirable eventuality that more important and meaningful choices are supported and qualified by activation and participatory processes, the inclusion of the evaluation elements guarantees some essential conditions for the process to be more effective, free from those distortions and constraints that sometimes negatively affect the results⁹.

⁹ The recent referendums have triggered doubts and uncertainties about the possibility of establishing positive relations between representative democracy and direct democracy. In particular, they have shown that a participatory process in itself appropriate and significantly motivated, can be distorted, even disregarded by a conditioning interference of a technocratic / managerial nature or, conversely, an interference of a populist nature. The technocratic / managerial settings are translated into procedures that intentionally or in fact tend to realize the consensus towards the decisions dictated by one or more subjects that manage or are interested in the realization of the design or urban planning process, to the setting up of program, to the drafting of the project and to its implementation phases. The populist approach attributes (in good faith or instrumentally) an absolute value to the opinions expressed by a generic citizenship, perhaps collected through punctual direct and undifferentiated consultations or, at the most, conducted in the network. Neglecting some fundamental aspects that can positively connote the development of participatory processes: the dialectic and the positive interaction that is created within the community of participants; the activation that determines in the individuals; enrichment of knowledge; the correct perception of the problems to be solved; the knowledge

In particular, the participation of all categories of citizens-users directly or indirectly involved, allows to carry out a drafting process more adherent to the knowledge and satisfaction of the needs of the individuals and communities involved¹⁰. In this field, can be identified important areas of development of the evaluation methodologies to be used both in the information acquisition phase and in their translation into tools capable of qualifying the entire drafting process¹¹.

At this point it is necessary to specify the needs to which we refer, which are generally of a practical nature, specifically of a functional type or of environmental well-being, and only more recently related to energy consumption.

On the basis of these needs, some methods have been identified that allow us to evaluate the extent to which the project hypothesis we intend to adopt are able to satisfy them.

We consider these developments of the evaluative disciplines certainly positive and, in some cases, even necessary, because, they are imposed by the regulations in force.

But deepening these problems, the awareness has emerged that we can no longer consider them sufficient.

of the whole range of options / solutions that are proposed as available and possible, accompanied by all the information on the implications that their adoption presupposes.

¹⁰ Alessandro Giangrande and Elena Mortola have led concrete experiences, which have enabled the focus of an organic methodology to conduct participatory planning. The fundamental phases of the method proposed by them include: the construction of an individual scenario (vision) of the individual participants, defined as a sort of narration of the future, in which they imagine what transformations are desired for the places inhabited or frequented. A vision that in this first phase must not be conditioned by time horizons and problems of technical and economic feasibility. Individual visions are expressed in an appropriately fluid form and compared in collective meetings. Hence, the critical issues and propositions formulated are collected and organized into sections that also collect proposals for solutions, often divergent. These after being compared and organized, accompanied by corrections and adjustments with the tribute of the participants themselves, allow the coordinators to set up a collective scenario. The next phase consists in the identification of some focus, that are those parts of the problems emerged on which it is possible to focus the attention on the specific possible solutions that, in this phase, will be identified without worrying about the advanced ones, in the context of other focus. On each of the focus identified, a specific work table must be created, to which any internal and external subject, but interested, can participate. At the tables the options included in the focus are discussed but they can be taken into consideration and compared also new proposals. Finally, all the options emerged are subjected to a multi-criteria process. It is interesting to note that the methodology briefly described above has been constructed and used to develop a project for the rehabilitation and reuse of a depot of the municipal transport company currently abandoned.

¹¹ In the Italian social housing sector, in the decades between the '70s and '90s, significant participatory planning experiences were realized and, in close connection, with the use of multi criteria evaluation tools. A critical review of the experiences of the NAHC (National Association of Housing Cooperatives) members of the National League of Covers and Mutual appeared in the number 15 of Values and Evaluation.

We know that people who are directly or indirectly the recipients of drafting work, are bearers of perceptions of a practical nature, but that these always associate, and in an indissoluble way, aspects that fall within the scope of image values and symbolic meanings.

On the contrary, literature and many concrete experiences show us that practical and symbolic needs interact with one another, constituting well identifiable cultural profiles, some specific perceptual modalities and of fruition ways.

The knowledge of these profiles, methods and the consideration of their centrality in the development of design processes that, even in dialectical terms, sometimes even conflicting, allow us to relate the drafting choices to the real needs that characterize the reality in which a plan or a project gets down.

Obviously, these considerations inevitably offer us a reflection on the exclusive role attributed to planners and designers in the formation of the final synthesis of the plan and the project, placing the problem of conceiving urban and architectural objects capable of satisfying economic and functional needs, but also endowed with symbolic values and socially shared images.

We realize that this is a complex issue but on which we believe it is absolutely necessary to reflect.

The construction of spaces endowed with strong image values, which are publicly shared, especially if realized in experiences of urban regeneration and regeneration, show that they constitute a determining factor in the construction of a positive sense of identity and belonging to the community.

It is a matter of such importance, that it can't be considered the undisputed and unappeasable prerogative of some subjects, even if they are enlightened, technically prepared and endowed with specific creative abilities.

If we consider the arguments made so far to be correct and acceptable, it seems quite clear that in the drafting phase the role of the evaluators can't be performed "on call" to operate with punctual episodic actions, but instead must constitute a *constant* and *pervasive* presence in the editing process.

This conviction has found an important confirmation in the innovative regulatory framework that was introduced in Italy with the Legislative Decree of 2016¹². In art. 23 the decree establishes that the *preliminary design phase* must be absorbed and strengthened by the technical and economic feasibility project.

It establishes an important innovation: for the first time, the normative device emphasizes that the design solution adopted for the realization of a public work should be selected on the basis of systematic and comparison assessments, made between alternative solutions.

A selection process, therefore, which must necessarily be based on the adoption of an evaluation method, of a system of *performance criteria and needs to be satisfied*.

¹² Compare with the text of Legislative Decree No. 50 of 2016.

In any case, the alternatives considered must all be included within the pre-set budget limits.

Therefore, in the implementation of all public interventions of construction, transformation and recovery of works, for the first time an importance is attributed to the quality of the project.

A regulatory novelty that could lead to significant improvements in the quality of the Public Works implemented, and which can also contribute to reducing the widespread opacity and illegal situations affecting the sector in Italy.

However, we believe that the application of the decree as it is currently formulated poses very significant operational problems and methodological problems that the regulator has not found.

It presents interpretative difficulties destined to generate an avalanche of disputes that are difficult to resolve and which can greatly widen and complicate current problems. These problems and critical issues must be resolved by adopting precise implementation rules, in order not to reduce or cancel the positive potential of this Decree.

We therefore indicate some of the issues that must be resolved and specified in the implementing rules to be adopted as soon as possible.

Firstly, on the basis of the aims of the project, it is necessary for the competent administrations to establish which criteria should guide the construction of an adequate set of qualitatively and quantitatively valid alternatives.

A second problem must then be solved: in order to make comparisons sufficiently homogeneous and especially for those questionable, it is necessary to define preliminarily a standard performance basket, to be used to evaluate and compare the different alternatives considered by the same designer and from those presented by different designers.

At the same time, uniform parameters and estimation criteria should be defined to demonstrate that all alternative projects respect budget limits established at the planning stage.

Finally, to obtain an overall assessment, the administrations as the project owners in relation to their goals, must set the levels of importance for the different performances.

The ex-post or downstream phase

It seems appropriate to close this paper with a brief mention on roles that, in this final phase, could be profitably carried out by the evaluation.

It seems useful to treat the issue by distinguishing three sub phases:

- *the definitive approval of the plan and the project,*
- *the definitive adoption of the plan and the execution of the works envisaged by the approved project,*
- *the development management of the planning process and of the works carried out.*

The considerations that follow suggest that also in this phase the evaluators' contribution can be particularly useful, even if in the design and planning practices which have been implemented in Italy it had little feedback.

In the final *approval phase* the evaluation task is certainly essential and consists in validating the project or plan, verifying to what extent the pre-established performances have been effectively implemented.

In short, it is a matter of guaranteeing the promoter to implement a project that is as consistent as possible with the proposed aims.

In the *implementation phase* the evaluator's task is to evaluate how the indications contained in the definitively approved documents have been respected in the final plans.

If there are motivated needs to introduce significant variations to the project or the plan, a competent subject (external or organic to the implementing subject) must assess the extent to which the variants proposed are consistent with the project being implemented and with the limits established budgets.

In case of some force majeure events have been intervened that impose variants such as to distort the performance levels and if these have been established through some formal procedures, will be necessary, even if briefly, to reactivate the process to verify the level of acceptability of these variants.

In the management phase, it is necessary to establish those monitoring activities (today little or nothing practiced) aimed at verifying the extent to which the performance and economic framework that was initially established has been respected.

Obviously in this phase the involvement must be directed to all categories of users to whom, programmatically, the intervention is directly intended.

In this phase the survey should also extend to all those social and economic realities on which the implementation of the plan or project has directly or indirectly impacted.

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