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MODULE 4:

URBAN DESIGN

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The search for strategies capable of producing effective responses to the challenges posed by the complexity and size of the contemporary city has found in the Urban Project a valuable operational tool. Its effectiveness can be traced back to the role of mediation between large area planning tools, too slow to be able to give immediate answers to the dynamics in progress, and architectural design, unable to meet the requirements of urban scale. This consists in imposing a morphological and functional definition of the places and at the same time in leaving a margin of flexibility to the following projects, inevitably linked to the social and economic mutations of the territory.

The transformations and changes that currently involve and distort the city call into question the aims of control and stability to which the Urban Project aspires. The traditional tools of analysis, in fact, cannot describe an articulated and dynamic reality, which aggregates, decomposes and recomposes quickly. The Urban Project (or perhaps more properly urbanistic project) is an evasion of forms and intentions that can leave the spatial limit indefinite and an indefinite temporal dimension. It is a progressive project, practicable in its strategic parts and in the respect of structural coherence and environmental compatibility that an urban planning project can guarantee.

1. URBAN DESIGN & URBAN TRANSFORMATION

The role of Urban Design: to make connections among people, places, movement and forms, urban patterns and nature. The role of designer in this fluid and dynamic context that is the contemporary urban environment is also to understand how to keep the memory of the past and to control the transformation of the city in its possible/probable development/evolution.

Urban Design is an expression that was created in North America in the late '50s, as the evolution of the expression "Civic design" focused on the location and design of large public buildings and their relationship with open spaces.

Urban Design is rather broader than Urban Project, which initially is characterized by a predominantly aesthetic orientation and today deals with the quality of public space and its socio-cultural aspects (not only physical).

Urban design is the common ground between architecture and planning, is the interface between landscape architecture and planning, draws on the tradition of architectural design and landscape architecture, environmental management and the tradition of social science of contemporary planning.

Traditionally, Urban Design works on the spatial scale between the plan, the architecture and deals, first of all, with the design of the PUBLIC SPACE. Today on this topic we are experiencing a

significant evolution, which sees it responding to a wide range of problems through different spatial scales.

In this perspective, the Urban designers can take care, for example, of a study of global regional access, of a new city, of a regional park, of the neighborhood mobility system, of the revitalization of a public square, and can set standards for conservation or development, building a participatory process, etc.

It is therefore important to underline that today Urban Design operates through a variety of spatial scales rather than one in particular.

The definition of Urban design refers both to the design of cities and settlements as a whole and to the design of some parts of urban areas.

The design of cities and settlements, the macro-scale, focused on the major themes of the organization of space and functions, while the micro-scale project of parts of the city focused on the public face of architecture, on public space, and on more detailed considerations of design on that scale.

These two dimensions are interacting and belong to the same process of planning and composition of the urban space. Public urban space, in practice, becomes the common theme, the glue, of the two scales / dimensions of Urban Design.

The roles of Urban Designer can take on different roles within the project, including the following ones:

- **TOTAL DESIGNER:** a single person or team carrying a project from its inception to its completion on site. While an urban designer may be central to the design process for a project, given the multi-disciplinary nature of urban design and the many actors involved in the process, it is unlikely that the total designer will be a single individual.
- **'ALL-OF-A-PIECE' URBAN DESIGNER:** a single designer or firm prepares a master plan giving detailed guidelines for developers and architects to follow in the design of buildings. Here the urban design team acts as the reviewer of each sub-proposal and implicitly, the elements of the whole project are built within a short period of time of each other, if not simultaneously.
- **VISION MAKER (CONCEPT PROVIDER):** provides the concept of how to organize the spatial pattern of a city or urban area, communicating it in the form of a framework or set of guidelines for other actors to develop the detailed phases or parts.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGNER:** closely associated with the civil engineering and, to a lesser degree, the town planning professions. Because much of the character of an urban environment stems from its streets, parks, public spaces and other public facilities, this role is a crucial one which should not be underestimated.
- **POLICY MAKER:** involved with politicians and decision-makers in the creation of a better future for towns and cities. This is a facilitating role, which involves providing guidance and advice to decision-makers regarding the nature of changes to the built environment; establishing goals for development, and guidelines within which others operate; and coordinating, monitoring and evaluating work as it is implemented. The policy maker must consider short and long-term consequences of design decisions, look to the needs of future generations, and have concern for both the community and the environment as a whole.

The roles of the Urban Designer

- **GUIDELINE DESIGNER:** establishes detailed design principles in policy form, defining and designing public space, specifying certain uses, encouraging and stimulating development, and

conserving existing environments. Used in the public and (increasingly) in the private sector, guidelines link policy with practice.

- **URBAN MANAGER:** promotes, develops and undertakes the day-to-day management of urban areas. The role concerns the whole urban environment, and often encompasses many of the activities listed under facilitator of urban events (below), together with the initiation of small-scale initiatives through the assembly of a coalition of interest groups, and management of the servicing and maintenance of the public realm.
- **URBAN CONSERVATIONIST:** influences the decision-making process with regard to the delicate balance between retention and change. This requires a sensitive appreciation of the dynamics and processes of urban change. The scale and level of interest can vary from individual buildings to large areas of townscape, neighborhoods or quarters of the city, to the whole city. As well as the protection of buildings and areas, the role is concerned with the promotion of change that will positively enhance the existing townscape.

The "modern" concept of Urban Space Design

Urban Space Design in the "modern" period modifies the traditional principles of urban form as a consequence of new opportunities and new issues emerging after the industrial revolution.

The traditional streets with limited height of the fronts and aligned, the squares and the compact urban blocks, are replaced by a rational distribution of the areas, designed according to automobile sizes (with an efficient infrastructural network), with a free distribution of building blocks, with a design of the buildings without height limits and seen from within them, that is in "functional" terms (the buildings become essentially "sculptures", objects in the urban space).

In this way the urban space, rather than being closed by buildings, is freely structured and used around them.

In recent decades, on the "modern" concept of Urban Space Design there have been a series of criticisms and reactions, which also concern the related practices and results on urban development.

- **CONSERVATION:** as a reaction to the break with the history of modernism, in the '60s and '70s both in Europe and in the USA protection policies for historic urban centers were introduced and conservation has become an integral part of urban planning. With it came the concern about the context and, in contrast with the internationalism of modernism, the great respect for the uniqueness of places and their history and for the continuity of local models and typologies.
- **MIX OF USES:** the logic of functional areas reinforced by the development of transport and the high value of soils that excluded low-value uses, has reduced the complexity and vitality of urban centers. This effect was exacerbated by the construction of single-purpose blocks of offices and shopping malls, which have internalized most of the traditional street life and related activities.
- **URBAN FORM:** with the awareness of the quality and scale of the traditional city, some critics supported a morphological approach to urban project, based on spatial precedents and archetypes, emphasizing continuity with the past.
- **ARCHITECTURE:** the disillusionment of modern architecture is documented in many books and follows the crisis of the modern movement that emerges as early as the 1960s when we start talking about post-modernism. Thus, new architectural ideas are born which include stylistic pluralism and the recognition of the decorative and contextual properties of the built environment.

New design approaches are born as:

CITY OF PEOPLE: the effects of the car on the city's shape have been much studied. With the modern movement the streets did not have social qualities, but they divided and fragmented the urban areas, causing problems of separation. As a reaction to this city of cars there has been a concern for pedestrians and the desire for environments where pedestrian is dominant (and only partly accessible to cars), and environments that facilitate the use of a range of modes of transport.

The "contemporary" concept of Urban Space Design

The design of the contemporary city can be summarized through the description of four "movements" that neatly enclose some of the diversity of the processes of urban contemporary development and urban design ideas:

1. TRADITIONAL URBANISM: looks back 'to an age of grids, public squares, moderately dense housing and pedestrian corridors'. Based on a critique of the placelessness of the modern vehicular city and of urban sprawl, traditional urbanism attempts to recover what it regards as a more 'authentic' urban framework.
2. CONCEPTUAL URBANISM: adopts a more radical attitude, attempting to 'shake off assumptions of what the city was, is or should be', and to appreciate the 'fluid instabilities' of cities as well as their 'inertia of material residue'. Instead of denouncing the 'chaos and congestion' of contemporary urban life, conceptual urbanists 'experiment out from disruption and disorder.
3. MARKETPLACE URBANISM: is characterized by the '*immense financial, technological and political energies*' developing at '*those nodes of dynamic intensity coalescing around the intersections of major freeways, atop tens of thousands of acres of farmland or waste land, on the borders of existing cities. Both the scale of suburban development, and the economic power of edge cities, are seen as 'proof of their harmony with popular values . . . Pragmatism is identified with what sells'.*
4. SOCIAL URBANISM: a critique of most aspects of contemporary American cities, particularly the *unequal consequences* of capitalism of goods. Highlighting the areas of the city from which "capital ignores or flees", these areas are seen *as an accusation against the continuing denigration of urban life at the hands of an unequal concentration of capital, relentless competition between businesses and real estate, and incessant social movements.*

The post-industrial city and the post-urban

The object of contemporary Urban Design is the post-industrial city, a different way of indicating what the historian Françoise Choay (1992) defined as the "post-urban city". According to Choay, the city is today an anachronistic object, belonging to the past, whose process of urbanization involves us in the post-urban area. The city of the post-urban, is the product of modernism and postmodernism, very different from the medieval, Renaissance and Baroque cities, characterized by a monumentalism.

Our jobs are changing, and so are our cities. We have a huge amount of data to help make cities more efficient and sustainable. But do we risk losing humanity in the urban jungle?

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A large group of American scholars have defined Los Angeles as the archetypal post-industrial or «post-modern» city. The "school of Los Angeles" claims that the post-industrial cities are increasingly fragmented in their shape and chaotic in their structure, generated as they are by different processes of urbanization of historical stratification. A key issue is therefore that of "fragmentation", both in terms of urban form and economic and social geographies.

The post-industrial city is a complex patchwork of growth and decline, concentration and decentralization poverty and extreme wealth are juxtaposed. Whilst downtowns may maintain their dominance of some high-level service functions, back offices, corporate plazas, research and development and university campuses, malls, airports and logistics zones, and retail, leisure and residential spaces spread further and further around the metropolitan core.

The first contribution to this model is THE CAR

The reshaping of the *post-industrial city form* outlined by the Los Angeles School can only be applied to U.S. cities. It is very complicated to apply it to those European cities that have significant physical and socio-economic heritage of previous urbanization (stratification and historical permanence), a legacy that defines resilience to restructuring in the style of Los Angeles:

- The presence of plazas and squares (many of pre-modern foundation) which remain important centers of activity.
- Complex street patterns, reflecting ancient patterns of settlement and long, slow growth.
- High density and compact shapes, resulting from high levels of urbanization, a long history of urban development, the constraints of defensive walls and, more recently, strong planning regulations limiting lateral growth.
- Low skylines, constrained by historic materials and technology, and by planning and building codes preserving the dominance of important buildings.
- Stable social and physical neighborhoods: Europeans move house much less frequently than Americans; and, due to past use of durable construction materials (e.g. brick and stone), the physical life cycle of neighborhoods tends to be longer.
- The scars of war: defensive hill-top sites and city walls limited and shaped the growth of modern cities.
- Symbolism: the heritage of a long and heterogeneous history includes a rich variety of valued symbols in the built environment and the historic area.
- A tradition of municipal socialism: European welfare states generally provide - or have provided - a broad range of municipal services and amenities, including public transit systems and housing

The context in which contemporary urbanism operates is that of the transformation of an urban form resulting from the transition from the *industrial* era to the *post-industrial and informative* one.

Today it is not yet easy to understand how the cities of the information age will develop. However, it is argued that this era challenges the idea of a city that in the end needs to be rethought. Computer networks have become essential to urban life, like streets. Memory and screen-defined space play an important role. Much of the economic, social, political and cultural action moves into cyberspace.

The information era has some important consequences on the city and its use:

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) allows teleworking. Teleworking can result in a substantial decrease in workflows. The employee could go to work only once or twice a day for meetings. From "urbanity by necessity" to "urbanity by choice".
Teleworking does not eliminate the need to design and create urban spaces where people want to live, work and play. It can simplify spatially fluid and complex urban lifestyles.
- ICT could influence future a-spatial and a-geographic cities, because the network denies geometry. It does not matter where computers are located but that they are connected to each other. A possible implication in terms of urban shape could be an apparently random combination of land use spread in the landscape. This produces a landscape in which capital lands by chance on a parcel, ignoring opportunities on successive parcels. The result would be a collage of non-contiguous lots, consumer-oriented landscapes without conventional, wired centers.
- The context in which contemporary urban planning acts is also influenced by the environmental sustainability of urban growth.
- The most influential and determinant factors of the urban shape are related to climate changes resulting from global warming and pollution and the exhausting of fossil fuel reserves. Rising fuel prices will change the location selection parameters.
- While someone argue that this will lead to more compact and centralized urban forms, there is considerable debate about this forecast.
- A more compact city reduces travel, simplifying shorter journeys and the use of public transport (thus reducing the use of non-renewable fuels and vehicle emissions). A compact city also supports the maintenance of open spaces and high-quality habitats, encourages pedestrians and cyclists, makes the supply of services and facilities economically sustainable, improves social sustainability and promotes social interaction.

2. RESILIENCE & URBAN DESIGN

The metaphor of resilience was introduced into the field of urban and spatial planning at the end of the last century in the context of studies on the sustainable city.

If the concept of sustainability has been consolidated in the last two decades of the twentieth century, and today its meaning and objectives are widely shared, the same does not apply to strategies and methods to pursue it on which there is still a wide debate.

It is within this debate that resilience is placed as a tool to achieve more sustainable cities and societies.

Research, scientific texts, policies and actions have been developed widely in recent years on the subject of resilience, in particular in response to the challenges posed by climate change, which calls into question the absorption and adaptation capacity of urban and territorial systems.

The etymological meaning of the word, to be traced in the Latin *resilire* which defines resilience as "*jumping back, bouncing*", recalls the idea of a process that brings back to a previous condition after a disruptive event.

The resilience comes later in the field of urban and spatial planning and is informed by existing definitions, however the most appropriate approach to the discipline is certainly the ecological one that *looks at the "city system" as an organism in continuous transformation* that is organized as a result of stressful natural or socio-economic events to achieve acceptable levels of efficiency.

According to the ecological definition of urban resilience, there are three main lines of research that describe different approaches and strategies, related to resilience and sustainability, resilience and adaptation and, finally, resilience and territorial risks;

in the first case, resilience is understood as a tool to pursue the sustainability of development in urban and territorial transformations, in a broad and general sense.

In the second, the focus is on climate change and the progressive reduction of energy resources, primarily from hydrocarbons with the impending peak oil, to deal with which resilience is conceived as a virtuous model of urban and territorial development.

In the third, resilience is mainly understood as a strategy for the response of territories and communities in particular to natural disasters.

In the ecological approach to urban resilience, the systemic vision of the city within which innovation is produced, determined by external events in the resulting adaptation process, is fundamental.

The territory and the city are seen as complex systems in continuous change and not as stable systems; therefore, the latter represent more an anomaly than the "normal" condition.

Complex territorial systems are made up of social systems and ecological systems that are closely interdependent and inseparable, subject to cycles of continuous change and adaptation that make them dynamic by definition.

Resilience thus becomes one of the tools to ensure the sustainability of the urban ecosystem in the long term.

Its characteristics are the diversity of components and resilience that allow the system to absorb exogenous shocks and adapt gradually, until it reaches a new condition consisting of innovative interdependent relationships.

The awareness of the dynamic nature of complex territorial systems induces, in the ecological vision of resilience, to accept coexistence with change and to develop skills in reading changes and adapting quickly without trying to return to ideal states of equilibrium.

In this approach, in fact, the flexible and dynamic vision clashes with that of maximum efficiency and process optimization.

Very interesting is the idea of transition city, coined by Rob Hopkins (2008), which becomes a model of the resilient city with particular emphasis on the characteristics of *diversity, modularity and feedback*.

The experiences of transition cities, mainly Anglo-Saxon, are based on the collaboration of the local community and bottom-up processes able to generate innovation in social behavior.

Resilience and adaptation research also includes studies on urban planning and urban design that propose functional models of organization, in which the building environment remains distinct, on the one hand, and infrastructure networks (energy, transport, water, the natural environment, food cycles, agriculture, waste collection, etc.) on the other (Newman, Beatley, 2005).

Resilience is achieved through the management of the construction and infrastructure systems, respectful of ecosystem cycles.

A territorial urban system that is resilient to natural hazards must not only be able to prevent and manage calamitous events, but must also try to improve environmental and social quality.

Limiting land consumption, especially in areas at greatest risk, prevents disasters and also reduces the social and economic costs of urban development.

The resilience of territorial urban systems becomes a crucial element in the management of emergencies due to calamitous events and must be pursued, not only by intervening on vulnerability of the goods on display, but also on the ability to self-organize and to mobilize the community.

Resilience in natural disaster management takes into account the long-term management of the pre-disaster phase with *prevention, information and monitoring policies*, as well as the organization of the emergency in the immediate post-disaster phase.

Today we are aware that current and future cities will have to face increasing shocks and momentous changes in urban metabolism, due to population growth, resource scarcity and climate change.

Similar to living organisms which, with the growth of the mass, see their corresponding metabolism reduced exponentially (M. Kleiber's law, 1930), so does the city, as a large organism whose vital networks are made up of infrastructures (transport, energy, electricity, water, sewage), etc.), is following the same approach.

In terms of the physical design of the city, "*urban compactness*" is suggested, to be pursued through the concentration of medium-high-density settlements near transport nodes.

Resilient cities must be based on an "*integrated metabolism*" that brings together the different urban functions (energy, transport, waste management, etc.) making the city a "*living machine*" able to reduce per person energy consumption.

The current infrastructure networks were very often designed and built in the nineteenth century according to an approach that separated the different functions, and in the following decades, although in the growth and renewal of the urban fabric, the logic has remained the same.

The integration of networks is an innovation in the functioning of the resilient city helping to create an integrated metabolism.

3. A RE-BIRTH THROUGH URBAN RE-GENERATION

Over the last few decades, the debate on urban development has focused on dynamics aimed at restoring value and urban, social and economic significance to city centres. This trend, encouraged by the guidelines established by the EU, is also spreading in our country where the concept of "urban regeneration" is increasingly gaining ground.

Regenerating a city center means looking at cities as functional ecosystems in which every space is designed as a place where economic, social and organizational relations are developed, shared by all the actors living in them: from institutions to enterprises, from third sector associations to individual citizens.

Regenerating in this way means not only protecting and recovering a pre-existing building heritage, but also, and above all, acting on the social, cultural and environmental framework by adopting an approach based on sustainability, social inclusion and innovation.

The serious financial crisis that has also involved the real estate sector, requires the rethinking of a model that has worked in an expansive period, of growth considered wrongly unlimited and based mostly on the differential income of agricultural soils, towards strategic and multidisciplinary planning approaches and new ways of enhancement by the private sector.

It is necessary to adopt new approaches within an integrated and multidimensional perspective, of long-term economic enhancement (long term regeneration), and of urban design quality with compact, dense and highly accessible models, which integrate more complex mixes also from the social point of view, and in degraded and disused areas that can offer new attractive elements.

It is inevitable that, over the years, urban centers will experience changes that lead to the overcoming of certain development models that have become out of date and to a common effort to adapt to new circumstances and situations.

The cities most susceptible to social and economic innovation, be they small or large, are those that show a high attitude of resilience and a great disposition to accept the new.

The smaller towns, often put in crisis by real exodus to large cities, are perhaps those that most need to activate the dynamics of "*urban regeneration*" that bring to the improvement of the territory and the attraction of both investment and new residents.

If to this tendency to depopulation, increased by the economic crisis of 2008, are added the enormous difficulties generated by a calamitous event such as the one that struck the city of L'Aquila with the earthquake of 2009, the need for urban regeneration interventions (including socio-economic) become urgent and essential.

Any urban regeneration project, as well as town planning transformation initiatives that respect particular contexts, must in general include targeted actions:

- the active involvement of the community as a whole in the process of urban planning;
- the search for investment by operators outside the community to increase production activities and attract new residents;

- the definition of an effective plan of incentives and tax breaks for development;
- the increase of the level of cooperation not only within the community, but also with higher institutional levels, such as regional and state;
- the protection of historical, natural and cultural heritage;
- the development of policies to promote the development of sustainable environments and low environmental impact.

European Union interventions in support of urban regeneration projects are implemented both through financing from specific structural funds and through multi-annual cooperation programs such as **URBACT** (<http://urbact.eu>), for the promotion of good practices and sustainable urban policies that integrate economic, social and environmental urban topics, and **URBAN INNOVATIVE ACTIONS** (www.uia-initiative.eu), that is an Initiative of the European Union which uses the European Regional Development Fund to support urban areas with more than 50,000 inhabitants in experimenting with innovative solutions to the problems and challenges specific to these contexts.

Concrete examples of good practice for balanced urban development implemented by cities participating in the URBACT European Sustainable Urban Development Program include:

- the valorization of small businesses in historic centers;
- policies for social inclusion and reception of refugees;
- the recovery and re-use of abandoned areas and facilities within urban centers;
- the reduction of waste through effective and modern recycling and disposal techniques;
- the creation of appropriate structures for democratic participation for the involvement of citizens in urban development planning activities.

The design idea was born out of the belief that smaller cities can more easily carry out urban regeneration and redevelopment projects through good practices of reusing and transforming empty spaces into places of social and working cohesion, especially for young people.

Urban regeneration operations are the main tool to generate new development opportunities, but require specialized approaches at three different scales of intervention through:

- **organizational and process strategies**, with strategic planning, through shared vision and objectives and the ability to create public-private partnerships on specific issues and stimulate further investment;
- **urban design strategies**, in which quality arises in the urban project as an asset of economic enhancement and in defining settlement rules and on which converge the different interests of stakeholders, marketing strategies, or marketing actions oriented not only to communication factors but also to real and social demand;
- **bringing innovation both in the process and in the product.**

However, some urban regeneration operations have failed, showing that the success of urban regeneration interventions is related to the process that produced them.

In particular, the factors that can determine their failure are due to:

- A lack of directing role of the public, and clear development strategies within a clear and shared process;
- A lack of an enterprise culture;
- A lack of knowledge and professionalism in urban planning strategies strategic.

In conclusion, what Italian cities need is a **strategic vision**, a systemic culture of urban transformation and redevelopment, projected in the medium to long term, otherwise the risk is to generate only a succession of disconnected interventions.

4. PUBLIC SPACE AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN HISTORIC CITY

For the management of the territory and of human activities, the concept of **sustainable development** takes on the characteristics of an integrated and multi-sector concept, which combines the three fundamental dimensions of Environment, Economy and Society with the Institutional one.

Each **plan, programme or intervention** of the local administrations, in fact, should lend itself to the comparison with an *integrated vision of the territorial systems* and with an *evaluation of strategic sustainability*, in a framework in which the economic, social and environmental effects are defined.

The themes of **the existing project**, in this sense, represent a necessary starting point because they are oriented towards the *management of the environmental and temporal characteristics of the buildings and their context*, with a view to governing the processes of change that take into consideration the necessary **dialectic between transformation and conservation**.

Although this issue is very wide, it is considered of particular interest to investigate the *functional and environmental transformations that involve public spaces* (also on the basis of the successful results of experiments already carried out abroad with the cases of greenway and woonerf); this is in fact **an opportunity for the city to reassess and to revitalize entire parts of its fabric** currently in the shade and in conditions of degradation or abandonment.

The **PUBLIC URBAN AREA** (squares, streets and sidewalks), is the largest quantitative part of the *public urban space* and the place where urban mobility takes place at all levels: **private** (pedestrian, cycling, automotive) and **public** (trams, buses, subways).

The enormous **INCREASE IN INDIVIDUAL MOTORISATION** which occurs in all countries of the world, meets a fundamental need but also creates major imbalances, both in terms of **air pollution** and **road congestion**, to the detriment of the flow of modes of transport with a much lower level of pollution per passenger, such as public transport.

It is therefore necessary to apply solutions and instruments that allow a more sustainable and balanced use of **URBAN PUBLIC LAND** and at the same time allow citizens to re-appropriate a large part of the common good of the city.

RECOVERY, REGENERATION AND URBAN REGENERATION become the key words that define the strategies of intervention in the shared sense of wanting to **recover the ancient history of a territory** and **regenerate all those spaces** of the consolidated city neglected over time, crossed but not lived because they **lack the proper infrastructure** that can allow a different usability.

It is therefore useful to challenge the roads inside the historical centers, close to the city walls, with the **DEFINITION OF NEW PUBLIC SPACES**, also dedicated to **cycle-pedestrian mobility**, with a view to sustainable development.

The **RESHAPING OF URBAN MOBILITY** through a **different distribution of travel and transport modes** is one of the main objectives of the regeneration of cities and their peripheries, whose **impact on the quality of life**, found wherever this strategy has been adopted, is extremely positive.

However, this is a perspective that implies **a radical transformation not only of urban, infrastructural and transport solutions**, but also of **the mentality and habits of citizens**, and that requires a wide-ranging planning of strategic scope.

The **PUMS - Urban Plans for Sustainable Mobility** (in Italy) - are the opportunity to address, at a planning level, these issues, as is demonstrating the action of the countless national and local movements that are fighting for the affirmation and implementation of the objectives related to a **different conception of mobility, especially in urban areas**.

In fact, there is a growing protagonist of **ORGANIZED ASSOCIATIONS** that stimulate public administrations **by promoting soft mobility** with projects and experiments of pedestrian islands, environmental islands, cycle paths, areas to reduce the speed of cars.

As an example of the actions foreseen in the **new planning tools**, the areas of interest and the macro-objectives of the PUMS **of the city of L'Aquila**, currently under approval, are reported:

- Effectiveness and efficiency of the mobility system
- Energy and environmental sustainability
- Safety of road mobility
- Socio-economic sustainability

The **URBAN TRANSPORT TARGET** in **Agenda 2030** for Sustainable Development commits to providing access to **safe, sustainable and affordable transport systems for all**, to improving road safety, in particular by expanding the provision of public transport, with particular attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, starting from the assumption of the **"DESIGN FOR ALL"**, that a city suitable for children, disabled and elderly is a city for all.

The **relationship between functions and settlement forms** can find its resolution in the **URBAN PLANNING PROJECT** of modern cities that today lack an urban structure, centrality and identity, which become the fertile field of application of a new approach that also **acts on the great post-urban transformations**.

The **LACK OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROAD AND PUBLIC SPACES**, the result of the welfare crisis, of a lack of coherence between the social model of development and the tools of territorial governance that have been expressed through functional zoning, has produced along the existing urban infrastructure **morphologies typical of complex post-urban settlement forms**, causing links in which the relationships of mediation between the same road and the settlement are not traceable, for example through **the sequence road-arrow-green-built**, or through the aesthetic features of the urban landscape and its backdrops.

The explicit objective is therefore **to provide new opportunities for socialization and sharing to citizens** who at the same time could enjoy **an urban living room as a public space** experienced as a natural extension of the exclusive appliances.

Recovery, regeneration and urban regeneration therefore become the key words that mark the urban design of public spaces in the shared sense of **wanting to recover the ancient history of the territories and regenerate all those spaces left abandoned** in time with architecture and quality materials.

the creation of public spaces cannot, in fact, *ignore the method of access to them*, so that even a large Urban Park would risk being excluded from the ordinary usability of citizens because of the difficulties of access to it.

In other words, it would certainly be more possible to use such places if the user could have an extension that would branch out into the urban fabric allowing access **even in a sustainable way**.

5. A DICOTOMY: HISTORICAL URBAN CENTER VS PERIPHERY // DENSITY VS SPRAWL

One of the challenges that the main Italian cities will have to face in the next few years will be **to succeed in sewing up their urban fabric from the urban, economic and social point of view.**

From north to south what these realities have in common is **the growing distance between the centre and the peripheries**, spaces that do not represent physical distances but that decline into social, economic and infrastructural gaps, phenomena of individual marginalization and small realities that must be remedied by looking at the welfare of the community and local sustainable economic development.

In this context, the institutions have a key role to play in addressing the change that also involves wanting **to recover and play that leading role in the social processes of urban transformation** that is its own.

Often our cities have grown **without urban planning** having guided their territorial expansion, which, on the other hand, has been shaped to respond to **contingent, economic, territorial, logistical, speculative or necessary needs.**

In most small and medium-sized Italian municipalities, with a peak that can be seen in the period of economic boom of the 70s, **urbanization took place along the main provincial roads**, constituting a continuum of housing where center and suburbs alternate and cities flow without being able to distinguish where one begins and ends the other.

However, **URBAN PLANNING** and **SPATIAL PLANNING** are not the only keys to action.

If **with the planning tools**, even after the event, **it is possible to take note of the existing and create intervention programs** to provide, for example, the neighborhoods with the missing works and road infrastructure or implement interventions to mitigate the hydrogeological risk, remains another complementary theme to be addressed related to investing strongly in **the rebuilding of the social fabric**, torn apart by the economic crisis and the widespread perception of those **who live in the belt areas to be excluded from the processes of city life.**

the **rise in housing prices** in metropolitan cities, the **economic crisis** that has led to the loss of many jobs, the **contraction of credit** provided by banks, have meant that **many people have looked outside urban centers for places to live.**

Faraway places, in an extreme suburb or even in neighboring countries, with the risk of finding oneself in the ambiguous situation of **not feeling even more citizens**: in fact often the workplace is far away and difficult to reach, because of the *congested traffic* or the *inefficiency of local public transport*, and at the end of the day you just want to return to your home, tired after a long journey and *without time to socialize*, where the house itself becomes **a dormitory place** and a clearing house for family tensions.

This reality is experienced by an ever-increasing number of families and individuals; **the phenomenon is concentrated above all in the localities that**, not only in the past, **were the result**

of irregular expansion and also in those produced by Zone Plans and interventions planned by Administrations unable to bring suitable services and the necessary infrastructure.

ABUSIVISM and the **FAILURE OF PLANNING TOOLS** are elements that, in the past and still today, **contribute to the alienation of citizens in modern cities**, together with the growing individualism, which increasingly characterizes human relations and the economic crisis, which creates new poor and **increases social exclusion**.

SOCIALITY is the easiest element to lose in these realities: the spirit of being together and of being a community does not find space in the fast times of the metropolis and in the "*non-places*" of the peripheral urban settlements.

Getting out of this impasse is possible but **we need coordinated interventions that**, in the meantime, **overcome the CONCEPT OF THE PERIPHERY**, deleting a term that must come out of the vocabulary of those who administer and plan.

We need to start **rethinking urban aggregates as a network of human relationships, infrastructures**, places where conflicts can be mitigated and where ideas and proposals can be summarized, a network where everything works only if **the individual networks hold together**.

In this framework, **URBAN REGENERATION INTERVENTIONS** must be implemented, not by building new homes but by **redeveloping and transforming what has already been built** according to the needs of the city, **connecting neighborhoods with public mobility** and making investments in infrastructure, including technological infrastructure and digital cabling, so that these act as a driving force for economic development and facilitate the system of relations, without forgetting basic public services and places of aggregation, central to the recovery of lost sociality.

The protection of the green heritage and the environmental sustainability of the planning choices are other points on which to invest, together with the hydrogeological resistance of the areas at risk, aiming to create a resilient city capable of withstanding the natural shocks that are increasingly being knocked down negatively affecting the lives of those who live there.

The real objective is to define **IN THE VAST AREA, homogeneous areas for environmental, cultural, economic, territorial, social characteristics**, while promoting the aggregate exercise of administrative functions of individual municipalities to point to **a polycentric system**, where each part, each union of municipalities, each area has a specific role, brings a contribution, is an indispensable and unique piece of the puzzle that we call **metropolitan city**.

Here **the word "PERIPHERY" no longer makes sense**, because **nothing is marginal anymore**, but they are all part of a system, of a network of functions and opportunities, that recovers administrative efficiency, that mitigates and mediates social conflicts, that promotes the vocations of the territories and protects the environment, and that supports an organized infrastructural and economic development through strategic and territorial planning.

In this context, the citizen would live a full citizenship, participate in strategic decisions and be a protagonist of the process of change, developing at the same time a **SENSE OF BELONGING**,

recovering that centrality that has very often been considered at the "**periphery**" of **political-administrative priorities**.

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