

Urban and Landscape Perspectives

Volume 10

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Urban and Landscape Perspectives is a series which aims at nurturing theoretic reflection on the city and the territory and working out and applying methods and techniques for improving our physical and social landscapes.

The main issue in the series is developed around the projectual dimension, with the objective of visualising both the city and the territory from a particular viewpoint, which singles out the territorial dimension as the city's space of communication and negotiation.

The series will face emerging problems that characterise the dynamics of city development, like the new, fresh relations between urban societies and physical space, the right to the city, urban equity, the project for the physical city as a means to reveal *civitas*, signs of new social cohesiveness, the sense of contemporary public space and the sustainability of urban development.

Concerned with advancing theories on the city, the series resolves to welcome articles that feature a pluralism of disciplinary contributions studying formal and informal practices on the project for the city and seeking conceptual and operative categories capable of understanding and facing the problems inherent in the profound transformations of contemporary urban landscapes.

Pier Carlo Palermo · Davide Ponzini

Spatial Planning and Urban Development

Critical Perspectives

 Springer

Professor Pier Carlo Palermo
Politecnico di Milano
Dipartimento di Architettura e
Pianificazione
Via Bonardi, 3
20133 Milano
Italy
piercarlo.palermo@polimi.it

Dr. Davide Ponzini
Politecnico di Milano
Dipartimento di Architettura e
Pianificazione
Via Bonardi, 3
20133 Milano
Italy
davide.ponzini@polimi.it

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Dedicated to Giovanni Ferraro and Paolo Fareri

Contents

Part I	Urban Development and Planning: Issues and Dilemmas	
1	The Topic of Study	3
2	The Many Faces of Planning	7
3	A Crossroads with Many Dimensions	13
4	Emerging Questions	19
5	The Course of Our Discussion	23
Part II	Unfinished Projects for Disciplinary Foundation	
6	The Rise and Crisis of Planning Theory	31
7	Urban Design: The Lost Object	37
8	Decision-Centred Views	41
9	The Social Rootedness of Urban Planning	53
10	The Interactive Turn	65
11	The Collaborative Shift	77
12	Escaping into Irrationality	91
13	Designing the Possible	99
Part III	Mediterranean Planning Cultures: Italy	
14	Characteristics of the Italian Model	111
15	Towards a Planning Science?	117
16	City Design	125
17	Reformist Mainstream	135
18	The Challenges for Policy Making	143
19	Reconsidering Policy Design	153

Part IV Critical Issues and Perspectives

20 Planning, Implementation and Policy Tools 163
21 Urban Regulation: Critical Issues 175
22 Sense and Limits of Spatial Visioning 181
23 Urban Development Projects in a Strategic Framework 189

Part V Rethinking Spatial Planning and Urban Development

24 Choosing the Paradigm 201
25 The Quality in Spatial Development 207
References 213
Name Index 241
Subject Index 245

Part I
Urban Development and Planning:
Issues and Dilemmas

Chapter 1

The Topic of Study

Whatever the spatial and social frame of reference, planning problems and tools always seem to be fraught with a substantial degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. This does not regard only the effectiveness of planning, but often its legitimacy, consensus and sustainability in real contexts. In spite of the discipline's vast accumulated experience, this widespread uncertainty continues to raise doubts regarding a presumed disciplinary statute and even professional competencies and roles. Thus, any study in this sense must specify, insofar as possible, its underlying references and points of view. The purpose of these introductory chapters is to discuss some preliminary questions. We will begin with a brief illustration of the book's title and content.

This volume is not merely a survey within the planning discipline which faces problems of the physical development of the city and region, assuming that these references might be considered clear and distinct both in the world of institutionalised knowledge and in that of advanced practice. The effective ways of transforming highly urbanised places, the new phenomenology of physical and social change in the contemporary world, the interest groups and interacting networks affecting these processes, the public realm's capacity for providing direction and control in real situations of strategic interest are fundamental issues that an academic discussion can neither avoid nor relegate to a marginal role.

In this sense, issues concerning *urban development* are one of the discussion's perspectives, which simultaneously recall both real urban and regional transformations as well as the specific means of intervention utilised by different social actors. These issues bring crucial questions to the fore because the quality and effectiveness of any model of spatial development and governance does depend not only on the merits of programmatic goals and criteria, but also on the ability to undertake coherent, successful actions within specific contexts. Regarding this challenge, a number of different kinds of planning tools have been tested, none of which has been able to achieve definitive, and fully convincing, results. A link clearly exists between contingent styles of planning and their institutional and cultural contexts – which may partially explain the differentiation in planning tools and the variety of outcomes (Newman & Thornley, 1996; Freestone, 2000; Faludi & Janin Rivolin, 2005; Booth, Breuillard, Fraser, & Davis, 2007). Nonetheless, we should not underestimate a solid core of common trends and problems constituting a series of challenges, dilemmas

and limitations which are valid in different institutional frameworks, government models, economic and administrative structures. This core, in relation to which it seems so difficult to guarantee true experiences of good governance, must be placed at the heart of our thinking. Important theoretical and empirical studies regarding planning practices in different contexts could help us single out this critical nucleus (Rodwin, 1981; Healey, 1983; Reade, 1987; Bruton & Nicholson, 1987; Alexander, 1992; Faludi & van der Walk, 1994; Taylor, 1998).

The second of the discussion's perspectives refers to the disciplinary term *spatial planning* – an emerging topic that has grown in influence over the last two decades, along with an evident and clear evolution in its meaning. Today the term does not only allude to the large scale, to mid-to-long-term temporal horizons and to strategic goals, although this has probably been its most common empirical framework (Healey, Khakee, & Needham, 1997; Healey, Hull, Davoudi, & Vigar, 2000; Albrechts, Alden, & da Rosa Pires, 2001; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Salet, Thornley, & Kreukels, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 2006). It may also be understood as an increasingly up-to-date, evolutionary form of physical planning that can no longer be conceived according to traditional approaches now that urban form is increasingly heterogeneous, widespread or scattered on a large scale and in discontinuous forms that are largely independent from public regulation and control (Gehl, 1987; Boeri, Lanzani, & Marini, 1993; Scott & Soja, 1996; Gehl & Gemzoe, 2003; Font, 2004; European Environment Agency, 2006; Ingersoll, 2006).

The new phenomenology of urban problems clearly directs our attention to the large scale. In reality, over the past two decades in Europe, a clear revival of spatial planning attempting to synthesise the structural tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s along with the more recent strategic approaches deriving mainly from the American experience has been underway (Bryson, 1988; Mintzberg, 1994; Salet & Faludi, 2000; Healey, 2007). The essential purpose seemed to go beyond the medium-term experiences of large-scale indicative programming, which had already been utilised for some time in Europe (Great Britain and France among the first). The challenge was to surpass the partially effective schemes for guiding spatial organisation, including only selective restrictions for historic preservation and environmental protection. The goal was to study the *strategic* dimension in greater depth, in particular those critical elements, priorities and design methods that would help delineate physical modification coherent with an innovative and shared programmatic vision. It was a matter of developing new *planning policy* frameworks that could be useful for guiding, facilitating and improving public action in crucial areas of strategic interest especially in relation to concrete economic interests and emerging social demands (Healey et al., 1997). Given this framework, it seems clear that it would be erroneous to create sharp distinctions between problems of strategic orientation and coordination and those of regulation and urban design. Both approaches probably need to be understood in renewed ways with reference to the original models and some noble, though ineffective, attempts at reforming the planning system.

Following this logic, and within the more recent European programmatic framework, a third family of meanings can be singled out regarding spatial planning – not

only as a development in physical planning or the reinterpretation of large-scale structural or strategic planning, but as an emerging paradigm in EU territorial policy (Williams, 1996; Van den Berg et al., 1998; Albrechts et al., 2001; Salet et al., 2003; Janin Rivolin, 2004). As is commonly accepted, managing urban and regional development does not fall within the province of the European institutions but there is no doubt regarding the spatial implications of a broad set of EU policies concerning economics, society, environment, infrastructure, energy and urban quality or innovation. Within this framework, the notion of *spatial planning* alludes to the need for coordinating various sectoral policies that concern a particular territory in order to create positive synergies (OECD, 2001). It is clear that this issue relates to strategic spatial planning (Healey et al., 2000; Perulli, 2004; Healey, 2007) but with more in-depth articulation. Whatever the prevalent meaning, it is obvious that these issues are tied to concrete urban and regional practices in a relationship that is not simply one of causal determination according to traditional top-down development models. This relationship generally takes on dialectic forms that often lead to unorthodox outcomes – very often large urban projects become the keys to modifying master plans and policies.

The title of the volume recalls the need to reconsider the links between evolutionary interpretations of *spatial planning* and concrete processes of *urban development*. These links appear to be fundamental if we want to avoid some academic deviations. Confirming the fears that had been so lucidly expressed by prominent scholars (Hall, 1988), much *planning theory* literature over the last 20 years has, in our opinion, been too abstract and self-referential, raising many doubts about the relevance of the different studies. It is not surprising that this thinking is basically considered extraneous and irrelevant by a large number of practitioners (Burchell & Sternleib, 1978; Healey, McDougall, & Thomas, 1982; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996; Mandelbaum, Mazza, & Burchell, 1996; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). The problem is that, in many cases, they are not even original or influential studies interpreting new phenomenology of spatial systems and local societies or possibilities for managing emerging trends. More superficially, repeated attempts were made to transfer conceptual tools and paradigms from other disciplines, in particular from a vast field of potentially interconnected ones. But these attempts were not particularly innovative and, unfortunately, the legitimacy and fertility of these formal transferences were often insufficiently substantiated. We believe that the outcomes have been basically negative and the expectations for more productive future developments to be unfounded.

A return to the concrete practices that planners themselves had succeeded in analysing with empirical, interpretative and critical ability at some crucial points during second half of the twentieth century seems indispensable (Hall, Thomas, Gracey, & Drewett, 1973; Godschalk, 1974; Scott, 1980; Dear & Scott, 1981; Krueckeberg, 1983; Healey, 1983; Reade, 1987; Booth, 2007). What should be promoted is a more widespread *critical realism* approach – lacking in some recent research – along with innovative and design-oriented experimentations, since the fundamental goal is to achieve more satisfactory results in terms of environmental sustainability, quality of life and social cohesion. If today many trends in *planning*

theory seem excessively academic and exhortatory, there is no doubt that the issues under discussion are of great importance. Most probably, more demanding critical perspectives are needed together with the ability to reconnect themes and issues that have been undeservedly or instrumentally separated, both in public discussion and within the “common sense” of contemporary society.

Chapter 2

The Many Faces of Planning

Uncertainty does not only concern the specific object of planning but radically affects its disciplinary tradition, which has been seeking autonomy since the late nineteenth century. In effect, the central theme might be identified as *decision-making* following appropriately defined methods such as those that are scientifically corroborated – like an optimisation algorithm. Or it could be understood as the search for some “good enough” solution to problems of uncertain, and sometimes unfavourable, formulation through concrete experiments and investigations in real empirical conditions. In both cases, planning is conceived as a *problem-solving* activity that can relate knowledge to action in different ways (Simon, 1957, 1960, 1969; Tinbergen, 1956; Faludi, 1973b). As is already recognised, this was a key approach underlying the modernist tradition taken up by some planning schools which exerted great influence for a limited period of time during the mid-twentieth century, especially in the United States (Burhnam, 1941; Perloff, 1957, 1980; Scott, 1971; Padilla, 1975; Krueckeberg, 1983, 1994).

Nevertheless, many doubts are, of course, legitimate. Alternative interpretations seem not only possible but necessary. How is a real planning problem constructed? It is practically impossible to neglect the diversified, and often complex, processes that lead to the definition of a planning problem. Not only practice but actual planning culture must also deal with *problem setting* issues, which are added to the preceding ones while maintaining their specific autonomy. Attention-shaping, interaction, listening, argumentation and consensus-building methods are specific themes that have been included in the disciplinary agenda especially in the last decades (Webber, 1965, 1968, 1978; Rodwin, 1981; Schön, 1982, 1983a; Schön & Rein, 1994; Forester, 1989, 1993; Majone, 1989; Throgmorton, 1996). It could be posited that, for a long time, two main families of planning theory were shaped. One is more geared towards the construction of the critical problems to be faced according to a public agenda, the other to solving them. Each entails a specific set of principles and the use of differentiated techniques. But this distinction is also an over-simplification of the issue.

In the first place, the nature of the issues themselves changes – in substantial ways – in relation to the *decision at stake*, which may consist in formulating a comprehensive or sectoral plan or in defining an area programme, strategy or project.

The generic use of the term planning does not resolve this polysemous condition which, in some languages or traditions, has more precise distinctions and divisions. Even the Italian language, which, in relation to many modern issues is not precise, seems to define conceptual references to decisions, plans or projects more clearly. It is perfectly obvious that the meaning and potential effectiveness of a *problem-solving* approach, be it of improbable optimisation or the pursuit of compromise, can change appreciably. This depends on whether the problem at stake is one of preparing an urban development plan or designing a preservation or regeneration project. It is also obvious that *problem setting* issues can take on different degrees of complexity, depending on the technical tool to be produced and the extent to which choices are socially shared.

Furthermore, it is necessary to delineate a less vague outline of the *object* of the planning process. The idea that it might be possible to apply the same planning principles to a variety of sectoral issues has rightly faced great crisis for at least 50 years, despite the few tenacious attempts to sustain this thesis (Dyckman, 1961; Faludi, 1973b, 1982, 1987; Archibugi, 2003, 2005). Different schools have developed specific research programmes. Today *planning theory* is discussed less in general or merely procedural terms. It has become more common to refer to a broad, but not unlimited, field, defined by the term *spatial planning*. Perhaps this term is still overly generic.

The references that will be presented and discussed in this book belong – in the first place – to this realm. In many cases, it is clear that schools and authors tend to transcend the more traditional boundaries which normally define a discipline, venturing into a broader conceptual space where they risk losing identity and legitimacy. Over the course of our discussion, comparison with other traditions will be inevitable, in particular with the contiguous, and often overlapping, fields of *urban development*, but also with other fields such as regional economic planning, social policy or other public policies that have relevant spatial implications. In any case, we will attempt to clarify the point of view adopted, which, generally, will be internal to the discipline facing spatial or urban planning issues and, in others, will refer to other disciplinary traditions.

Another oversimplification should be avoided here. For several decades it has been clear that practices and techniques of interaction and collective conversation are necessary for planning. The paradigms labelled *communicative turn* render this necessity explicit (Fisher & Forester, 1993; Grant, 1994; Healey, 1997; Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003). After the reintroduction of models of instrumental rationality during the mid-twentieth century, this turn might be considered the second great attempt, during the last part of the century, to ensure that planning practices be endowed with a comprehensive disciplinary foundation. *Problem-solving* activities are not generally reduced to the application of mathematical calculations, but they cannot do without analyses, evaluation and experiments that involve: the sharing of meanings and values; the representation of the actual problem; the most convincing approach that can lead to an acceptable solution. This means not only recognising the crucial role of *problem setting*, but also becoming aware of the *interactive and communicative* nature of these processes, which often become the central nucleus of

many current planning practices. This also means recognising the radical complexity of many problems that cannot be faced only through planners' technical expertise. Over the last 30 years, pragmatic culture and communicative rationality have led to a substantial renewal of earlier planning paradigms, although this direction is not yet generally shared or is interpreted in excessively reductive ways.

This is one of the emerging reasons for which planning culture today appears more ambiguous and multifaceted to us than in the past. However, this is not the only reason. We should recall two other crucial debates. We must not forget that such issues usually elicit considerable interest, as well as contrasts or conflicts, among individuals, institutions and social groups. As the *political economy* tradition of the 1970s reminds us, this factor cannot be underestimated. Collaborative planning theories often risk supporting an irenic point of view as though the possibility for collective agreement were taken for granted only because of its communicative methodology (Friedmann, 1973; Innes, 1995, 1996, 2004; Innes & Booher, 1999; Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2000). The transparency and inclusiveness of the public debate and the persuasive force of good reasoning should ensure the convergence of interests and particular points of view towards a common position. Yet the "collaborative paradigm" (Healey, 1997) runs the risk of becoming an ideological simplification or even a fallacy.

Other thinking – at different points in time – focused greater attention on the idea of conflict and the difficult relationships between the various actors involved in the planning process. This was the significance of radical views in the 1960s and 1970s, which, not without some ideological simplification, constituted incommensurable alternatives to the contemporaneous problem-solving paradigms (Lefebvre, 1972; Castells, 1972; Harvey, 1973; Cox, 1978; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1979; Scott, 1980). But this is also one of the most current interpretations of planning as theory and practice inspired by *critical pragmatism*, which faces the concrete problems of negotiation between visions and interests as well as the agreed-upon construction of possible strategies and projects providing temporary equilibrium (Lindblom, 1965, 1977, 1990; Wildavsky, 1973, 1979; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Hoch, 1994; Verna, 1996, 1998; Hoch, Dalton, & So, 2000). In this sense, the issues of mediation and experimentation play a crucial role as compared with the traditions founded mainly on principles of calculation or agreement (as the conceptual notions of *contingency planning* effectively demonstrate: Bolan, 1967; Christensen, 1985, 1999; Alexander, 1996b).

We should also add yet another, more recent, family of references that seem to have stirred up new attention, albeit marginal. Much traditional planning originated from the "structuralist" framework (Boudon, 1970; Castells, 1972). The premise was that real situations, including their less apparent features, could be represented through empirical regularity and scientific laws able to grasp the essence of the phenomena. With a choice that was not an obvious one, and by all appearances little discussed, all references to individual subjects, their interests and motivations, the complex games of interaction that can arise in space and their hard-to-predict outcomes were excluded from the scene. Disciplinary knowledge, corroborated through rigorous scientific methodologies, should have guaranteed solid foundations for any

evaluation or resulting choice, up to design of urban strategies and projects. This framework clearly stands out both from the systemic approach that exalted the stability and technical rationality of presumed equilibrium solutions, and from some critical alternatives, such as those belonging to the radical Marxist theory.

Afterwards we acknowledged the crisis in structuralist thought, which questioned the foundation of many of the traditional social science or planning approaches. On the one hand, the reaction brought about the return of the agents of urban change (Touraine, 1988, 2004), and focused new attention on interpretative, critical, interactive and evolutionary views in keeping with the critical pragmatism movement. On the other hand, it guided some analysts towards “post-structuralist” explorations having clear irrationalist underpinnings (Hillier, 2007; Hillier & Healey, 2008c). Thus, paradoxically, some branches of contemporary planning, forgoing their original positive, rationalist and often technocratic matrices, surrendered themselves to intellectual exercises that were typical of European “negative thought” during the second half of the twentieth century. These experiments were more suggestive than they were influential and now they seem to have exhausted their critical functions while rarely managing to generate innovative and effective proposals in the public policy field. Some minor branches of planning theory seem to have belatedly, and perhaps with some naivety, addressed these intellectual traditions with outcomes of little significance. The complexity of the themes involved seems to have become an apparent alibi for formalistic digressions that we consider both of little interest and destined to rapid decline. However, they do exist and will be mentioned.

These brief references highlight the uncertainty of the disciplinary framework or rather the lack of any true framework. Planning theory and methodology today risk becoming mere generic labels available for many, differentiated, and sometimes contradictory, uses. Scientific, positivist, rationalist or technocratic, paradigms coexist with radical trends, substantially incommensurable, and also with practical ones whose interpretation appears less evident and can be deciphered only in relation to contingent situations (Healey et al., 1982; Friedman & Hudson, 1974; Friedmann, 1987; Brindley, Rydin, & Stoker, 1989; Alexander, 1992). These behaviourist, interactive and communicative approaches allude to different conceptions – not always compatible – of the pragmatic tradition. With surprising nonchalance, this variety does not seem to create a problem (among the rare exceptions, Beauregard, 1991; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). The current literature seems to accept with indifference both the implacable polysemy of traditions and the often radical conflict between different interpretations. The juxtaposition of non-equivalent themes and incommensurable paradigms that are not coherent with the orthodox disciplinary field continues in popular literature or specialist conferences without any criticism (Hillier & Healey, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). It is not clear whether a common founding nucleus exists – or whether it can be identified – for the so-called field of planning studies. Consequently, great confusion about other important issues becomes inevitable. Does it make sense to discuss planning in general terms, or are sectoral demarcations of the field indispensable? Is it possible to leave aside regional contexts, or does the institutional, social and spatial framework play a decisive role in the evolution of planning

theories and practices? Our conclusion is that any exploration of the planning field should be guided by a preliminary, reasoned and selective definition of the investigation's framework. Obviously the points of view that could direct interpretation and action are numerous and the choice of point of view is a fundamental variable both in the formulation of problems and in the development of analysis. It is an inevitable responsibility and a necessary choice calling into play specific values and views among the many possible. It is a "radically unfounded" choice in the sense that more than one possibility can usually be considered acceptable. In any case, it is a choice that needs to be made in the name of good reasoning and criteria of coherence and substantive legitimacy. This is also due to its potential consequences, taking into account, however, that the principle of utility does not usually provide, on its own, decisive justifications. The first step in our discussion will therefore seek to clarify the point of view underlying the entire study.

Chapter 3

A Crossroads with Many Dimensions

To give direction to our study, we will not follow the tracks of the theoretical debate that we consider to be often disorganised and insufficiently critical as we mentioned earlier (Hillier & Healey, 2008a). We believe it fundamental to refer to a field of practices that is neither uniquely of local interest nor so vast as to render real in-depth study impossible. The premise is that a series of experiences and thinking that have taken shape in the nascent European Union with particular intensity over the last 20 years might constitute a very interesting empirical workshop for investigating the fundamental trends in spatial planning and their consequent impacts on urban and regional development (Faludi & Zonneveld, 1997; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Faludi, 2003; Faludi & Janin Rivolin, 2005).

In fact, the founding phase of the European Union provided an opportunity for a comparative study of planning principles and models in use in the member countries (Newman & Thornley, 1996; Commission of the European Communities, 1997). This comparison did regard not only urban and regional planning systems, but all public policies with strong impacts on the city and region. Acting on the same area, planning and policy require forms of coordination, which, in Europe, have been called *spatial planning* and whose variety, in terms of references and experiences, is quite evident with clear differences in institutional frameworks, rules and procedures but also in planning styles.

Interpretations tend to distinguish different planning approaches; first the British model in relation to continental ones; but also the French tradition in relation to Dutch, German or Spanish ones; the unusual features of some northern European countries, in particular in the Scandinavian peninsula; and finally some singular approaches to planning in the Mediterranean countries. We are not interested in reiterating here the noted distinctions among planning approaches in a comparative study that has, in any case, been available since the 1990s (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, 2001a, 2003, 2004, 2006). Instead, it seems more interesting to explore certain common themes that have emerged over the years despite differences in tradition, legislation and institutional frameworks. This exercise might prove useful in challenging some apparently entrenched positions with more specific and well-targeted questions.

The salient features of the British model are, as is common knowledge, the decisive role of the central government, the substantial weakness of the intermediate

governmental levels and the discretionary responsibility of local authorities, which are, in any case, subject to the verification of coherence with the central administration's goals (Reade, 1987). Perhaps of greater interest are some critical aspects. The first is the basic simplicity of the institutional structure, which avoided the introduction of an excessive number of levels and interactions in a cultural context that has been historically characterised by a degree of social cohesion and by the legitimisation of public authorities. Nevertheless, more recently some trends towards the regionalisation of policies have been emerging although they are not always coherent and continuous. The second aspect concerns the pursuit of a suitable balance between institutionalised planning instruments and informal practices. This has led to the use and evaluation of tools in action taking into account their direct and indirect effects. More specifically, the third crucial theme seems to be the distinction, which can vary over time, of the essential functions of the planning system: *guidance*, *regulation* and *implementation* through projects and interventions. Each of the aforementioned functions introduces specific issues and enables targeted actions. In some contexts one may take on a dominant role, but in general the ability for integrating visions, rules and projects can ensure positive urban development experiences (Healey, 1983; Reade, 1987; Bruton & Nicholson, 1987; Healey, McNamara, Elson, & Doak, 1988; Taylor, 1998; Booth, 2003).

In the Scandinavian model, the emerging issue might be considered the growing influence of local government – in terms of functions, tools and practices – with the gradual reduction of the central level's direct responsibilities. However, it should be noted that even in a relatively close-knit context with a long tradition of public guidance by the State, negotiations between partial interests have, for some time now, become important factors in relation to more orthodox planning procedures (Thornley, 1996).

In the French case, on the other hand, the crucial issue of most recent interest has probably been the reinvention of the intermediate level of planning within a context of progressive decentralisation originating from highly centralised conditions (Booth et al., 2007). This has led to a series of institutional innovations and experiments which have probably not yet found a completely satisfactory state of equilibrium as demonstrated by the great variety of reforms that have recently followed one another over a brief time period (Merlin & Choay, 1988; Lacaze, 1990; Gaudin, 1993, 1999; Wachter, 2000; Ascher, 2001, 2007).

A singular feature in the Spanish experience, breaking off radically at the end of the Franco regime, is without a doubt the original interpretation of the relationships between architecture and urban planning within a visionary, design-oriented approach. This represents a clear innovation in the prevalently regulatory models usually associated with Mediterranean planning. The exploration of original models of *urbanismo estratégico* is of great interest as an alternative to the more traditional form of master planning thanks to the effective promotion of visioning activities and the implementation of strategic urban projects (Bohigas, 1988, 1998, 2002; Busquets, 1992; de Solà Morales, 1996). From an institutional perspective, the most striking new fact is the re-definition of regional-level governance. This has been a radical innovation with respect to the previous model and leaves space for

autonomous local initiatives. It does, however, necessitate a comparative evaluation, from the legislative and operative points of view, with other international models that have already been utilised at that scale.

In Germany over the long run, the most original feature seems to be the federal model which enhances the functions of regional-level spatial planning. This could lead to significant problems of coordination among the Länders' sectoral policies (Bundesregierung, 2002; Bizer, 2005; Siedentop, 2009). The strategic use of a selected set of rules and constraints – which have obtained indisputable results in terms of environmental policy – also seems interesting (Gambino, 1996, 1997; German Council for Sustainability, 2004; Pileri, 2007, 2009).

With a planning model based on an organisation into many levels and functions, the Netherlands is a sort of ideal laboratory for exploring both the planning doctrine that, for many years, has guided public and collective action (Faludi & van der Walk, 1994) as well as the singular role of the intermediate planning level. In point of fact, it seems worth investigating the need for, and effectiveness of, such a complex structure of a planning system in a socially cohesive country with limited geographical dimensions.

The so-called Mediterranean model is often portrayed as an apparent anomaly because of some of its more significant experiences and features (Faludi & Janin Rivolin, 2005). Indeed, if the other European models generally seem more oriented towards *process*, *interaction* and *mediation*, experiences in southern Europe seem to show more deterministic, self-referential features, with *regulation* and *plans* pursued over time (although the recent case of Spain, as we have mentioned, represents a profoundly renewed scenario). The physical dimension of urban development still remains the decisive issue, not only in the operational phase of planning, but also in its problem-setting phase. But it is not an inexplicable anomaly. A core of critical relationships is evident among the regulatory tools, visioning and physical planning that each country has had to tackle (suffice it to observe the intricate evolution of planning systems in the British context). Certainly a country like Italy has managed to renew its institutional frameworks very belatedly and also incompletely. However, Italian urbanism has continued to investigate interesting issues in physical planning that were too easily removed elsewhere. Indeed this very delay in institutional reorganisation might contribute to the country's avoiding a series of errors and limitations that marked attempts at planning reform during the second half of the twentieth century in many northern European countries (Hall, 1980).

The planning discipline seems to acknowledge this great variety of references as if they were exogenous conditions depending on long-standing traditions. A fragmented mosaic describing a plurality of non-equivalent worlds thus takes shape. However, the discussion of the meanings and identification of possible recurring themes is not the issue at hand. Both the internal coherence and the mutual coherence of the different planning systems, or their possible "contamination", are not the real subject of our study. Every context seems to be able to follow their inherited traditions. The relationships between the emerging direction of the European Union and the conditions in the member states – which are not always mutually coherent – do not yet appear entirely clear. These relationships seem even more uncertain in

light of the fact that the EU does not have direct jurisdiction over spatial planning and urban governance.

The most evident and notable contribution in this sense is the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which also represented a kind of mediation between different visions and traditions. Perhaps this role can explain some of the limits of the document's meaning and influence (Janin Rivolin, 2000, 2004; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002; Faludi, 2003, 2005). Some observers believe that the ESDP represents the highest point in European thinking and innovation in the field, and that, after more than a decade, we should still continue to publicise, interpret and apply the virtuous principles contained in the document within the different member states.

Our opinion is somewhat different (Palermo, 2001a). Since its inception, we have pointed out with regret some of the limitations of the ESDP approach. It renders the principal outcomes barely original, somewhat exhortatory and of little impact in practical terms. It would have been much more interesting if the document had provided guidelines and incentives supporting good practices. In fact, original experiences have been available for some time now but their effects – in terms of innovation of familiar models of urban and regional governance – have been partial or slight. What we have been able to observe over the last 15 years is a clear predominance of a cultural background referring to certain northern European models, whose differences have perhaps been underestimated. A substantial evaluation seems implicit here: not only is the perspective tacitly northern European, but the Mediterranean model seems to be considered less flexible, and probably less effective, for guiding development processes in a globalised world (Healey, 1997; Salet & Faludi, 2000; Faludi & Janin Rivolin, 2005). But the discussion stops here. There is no exploration of how the prevalent northern European models can be adequately interpreted in different contexts, nor are the real features of the so-called Mediterranean tradition – which is perhaps more varied and complex than certain conventional representations – more deeply examined.

Do we have to accept this “received view”? There are good reasons to doubt it. We believe that all terms of the debate deserve revision. Is it true that the Mediterranean model truly reflects previous descriptions? Can documented surveys of real-world experiences demonstrate that the situations are much more diversified and dense? The analysis of prominent authors, of disciplinary paradigms and of exemplary practices could confirm a more problematic interpretation of the so-called Mediterranean model. On the other hand, are we certain that a prevailing trend in *planning theory* with a clear, coherent identity can be recognised in other parts of Europe? It seems, in actual fact, that a picture that is both eclectic and conformist emerges. Perhaps, this image does not represent a mature alternative to the Mediterranean model, but it is one that should require more in-depth thinking about some of its perspectives and significant experiences insofar as a series of problems are clearly of interest in the south just as they are in the north or elsewhere. Furthermore, we perceive the need to explore the latent roots of the principal *urban planning* paradigms that introduce issues and views shared with other disciplinary traditions – *architecture*, *urban design* and *policy studies* first of all. What are the

contributions from these disciplinary fields both in research and action that strongly influence planning doctrines? How have they influenced the theories and practices of the Mediterranean model? Can they converge in sufficiently coherent discursive forms and paradigms despite the plurality of backgrounds? The image of a *crossroads* crops up again and again: planning is not a well-demarcated disciplinary field in the traditional sense. Rather it is an open arena crowded with heterogeneous and not always orthodox, issues, perspectives and tools, in search of a temporary synthesis while being minimally coherent and relevant.

Therefore, identifying the field does not mean defending a disciplinary domain but rather challenging the apparently unlimited variety of planning models and styles in order to explore the relationships between at least three large families of cultural traditions: *urban and spatial planning*, *architecture*, and *policy studies*. Under a confused veil of appearances, it becomes possible (perhaps necessary) to pinpoint a series of common issues which render certain situations and points of view somewhat less differentiated than at first sight. To face these issues, diverse disciplinary competences must be intersected in order to draw on innovative ideas and tools. This “trespassing” experience, as Hirschman has taught us, can be quite innovative and rigorous, if the extra-disciplinary explorations are guided by heuristically relevant questions, and if we are able to construct a new, coherent and significant research programme (Hirschman, 1981, 1986, 1995). The purpose is not to achieve a final, reassuring synthesis but rather a fertile definition of plural references, to be investigated and activated in terms of more original, transdisciplinary questions.

Chapter 4

Emerging Questions

These considerations will obviously be guided and influenced by the authors' research and practical experience. The book's starting point is the Italian planning context with its characteristic features – namely Mediterranean – and a series of limitations that concern society and politics, all of which are well known abroad. The international debate has not stimulated thorough study of the Italian planning experience. As in other southern European countries, some formalistic legal approaches and mere regulatory planning, which do not always lead to coherent results, are two prevailing tendencies, both in the public administration and in the academic discipline. Similar approaches have already been explored at different times in many other countries. Furthermore, a specific aspect of the Italian planning tradition is that it involves continuous – and often controversial – dialogue with the world of architecture. These premises introduce two critical points which, for at least the past 30 years, have been forcefully manifested in several international planning schools.

The first question is essentially a *normative* one. Resorting to more prescriptive regulatory tools does not constitute – according to the prevalent planning theories of the second half of the twentieth century – an adequate solution to the problems of managing the physical development of cities and regions. In general, the distance taken from this position has been conclusive, despite some superficiality of the reasoning upon which those judgements were made within the European debate. Furthermore, the risk emerges of passing from excessively deterministic and simplifying public planning practices – which have rarely managed to be thoroughly effective – to substantially deregulated processes, which could potentially lead to negative effects. The normative dimension was a surprisingly secondary issue for the planning debate at the end of the twentieth century. There is no doubt that it needed to be developed in more rigorous, selective ways in relation to the unacceptable tradition of blueprint planning. But the passage to strategic or communicative views would become an easy alibi for legitimating a weaker role for the discipline in the face of its crisis. Research becomes fragile if the inherited critical issues are not properly faced. Which regulatory issues should be considered essential in relation to the context and the planning problem at stake? How do they interact with programmatic visions and development projects? How do they influence institutional action and the expectations and behaviour of various types of social actors (Healey et al., 1997, 2000; Salet & Faludi, 2000)?

The second question concerns the project of the *physical development* of the city and the region. This, too, is an issue that can boast a rich tradition, obviously not only in the Mediterranean countries. It is sufficient to recall the founding British schools of *town planning* and *urban design* (Unwin, 1909; Abercrombie, 1933; Keeble, 1952; Sutcliffe, 1980). Nonetheless, these traditions have been substantially removed with no further discussion other than some misconceptions. Architects and engineers were supposed to anticipate the future form of cities as the project of single authors, gracelessly neglecting questions of meaning, consensus, and the necessary adjustments of strategies and implementation tools during the course of real planning processes. These prejudices tend to reinforce the previously described command and control approach which are two aspects that are no longer fit for the times, if it ever was. The reasoning of neo-orthodox planners seems to be basically unfounded regarding this point as well. Some good research and design traditions in the fields of architecture and urban design are still ignored, even if today they represent undeniable, and often illuminating, critical points of view. Perhaps an even more serious consequence is that problems of *urban design* were then substantially ignored by new orthodox planners who continued to speak of processes and values, visions and agreements, in often conformist or confusedly eclectic ways without facing the crucial issue of the form and sense of physical transformations along with their design and implementation. This attention is also surprisingly lacking in those approaches to planning which – more recently after so many fruitless digressions – again seem to put the issue of the *quality of place* at the heart of their investigation (Talen, 2005; Massey, 2005, 2007; Healey, 2007).

We have thus reached a paradox in a planning culture that might forget, or relegate to a marginal role, the *regulatory and design* issues. This is a serious error as we will try to demonstrate through more in-depth investigation of important questions and experiences in regulatory and design-oriented planning in a Mediterranean country like Italy. But other negative consequences result from these premises. As we have already noted, the prevalent trend in European planning orthodoxy was the one focusing on *strategic spatial planning* as a new approach suitable to the challenges of the new century. In our opinion, these positions are also invalidated by serious limitations. Too often, the emerging disciplinary discourse is merely exhortatory. The virtuous aspects seem obvious and do not require justification (Bryson & Einsweiler, 1988). The real criticalities of urban analysis and development, in actual contexts, are usually underestimated. Empirical tests backing up the theses are rare and incomplete. Communicative or collaborative views risk boiling down to mere fallacies even if it is true that they created significant expectations that have been pending for some 20 years. What is lacking is true reasoning about the potential criticalities and conditions for reaching more satisfactory outcomes. Apparently, we do not realise that strategic and communicative planning do not represent absolute innovation, because similar hypotheses and experiments have already been carried out at other times usually using different languages and protocols and without achieving results proportional to the expectations. The reasons for doubt and plausible risk are underestimated with a simplistically positive attitude that is, in truth, not very scientific and even debatable from a deontological point of view. In the end,

the prevalent trend is an exhortatory one which assumed that planning is a good practice in a deliberative world inspired by the democratic principles of the ideal *polis* (Healey, 2003a; Brand & Graffikin, 2007). And yet, a critical comparison with the best *policy studies* traditions would be enough for us to become aware of the unresolved problems, illusions and possible negative effects as well as the need for alternative visions (Lindblom, 1979; Wildavsky, 1979; Howlett & Ramesh, 1995; Lauria & Whelan, 1995; Regonini, 2001).

Here a second great limitation of the planning discipline comes to the fore. Just as today thinking about the relationships with the world of architecture and urban design is lacking in particular regarding physical design and regulatory issues, so the comparison with social sciences and policy studies is sporadic and superficial even if these fields face pertinent issues or clearly interconnected themes. The self-referential will to demarcate a disciplinary field in a proprietary manner leads to underestimating the fertility – in terms of criticism and proposal – of the relationships with other, more influential traditions. The risk of creating an interstitial niche for a few followers who face well-known issues is now clear. Observing the debates in the planners' associations, we too often detect a tendency to carry out vicarious functions (of the administrator or political scientist, the sociologist or sometimes the philosopher, geographer or economist), while the centre stage, concerning the interpretation and guidance of physical development, remains basically empty. However, this void is always full of real interests, which often prove decisive, in the absence of a true critical and constructive contribution by the planning schools. This has been clear for some time to several policy studies schools inspired by *critical realism and pragmatism*, which have also exerted some influence on planning culture for at least half a century (Banfield, 1968; Lindblom, 1977; Wildavsky, 1979).

This book's guiding ideas derive from the situation rapidly portrayed above. The first question regards the critical representation of some well-known planning systems, first the Anglo-Saxon one and then the so-called Mediterranean model. Can we accept the current views in the common language of planning, or is it necessary to refocus on tradition and practices? This step is not only useful in moving towards a more correct interpretation, but these references might help us understand and face a series of critical problems with respect to which orthodox planning culture seems to set the pace. Can we accept the current representations of this cultural arena, or should we challenge disciplinary paradigms and operative proposals? Indeed, we need to distinguish a variety of trends with different meanings and values. Some are already destined for unrelenting oblivion. Others are apparently more topical but probably short-lived. Others – a very few – can sustain new critical experimentation. To carry out this revision, we cannot remain only within the realm of planning theories and practices. Knowing how to see and develop relationships with other fields of research and social practices is indispensable; in the first place with the *policy studies* traditions that greatly inspired the planning schools which, in turn, did not recognise their debt to the field nor provide new contributions.

Therefore, a three-dimensional (at least) conceptual space is created in which each dimension requires reinterpretation. They are mainstream European spatial planning, the traditions of architecture and urban design, above all in the

Mediterranean countries, and the variety of policy studies that received large initial contributions in the United States, but perhaps have not yet been able to express all their innovative potential in European planning. To rethink the problems of spatial planning and urban development lying at the crossroads of these different traditions is, to our view, a necessary step. Our underlying hypothesis is that only through rediscovering and advancing ideas, experiences and reflections coming from the worlds of architecture and policy studies will it be possible to rediscover a relevant, meaningful space for planning culture and its professional profiles. The part of our study that offers proposals, rather than analysis, consists in a selective view of the most promising prospects for guiding, designing and implementing spatial development processes.

Chapter 5

The Course of Our Discussion

Following the introduction just outlined, part of the book will be dedicated to each of the most important issues. First (in Part II), it seems necessary to re-establish the paradigmatic framework of the “planning field” with reference to, and discussions of, the specific literature, in particular that of the second half of the twentieth century. The sources are fragmentary, eclectic and require an interpretative premise (Chapter 6) – the attempts, which have distant roots, to found an *autonomous discipline* revolving around themes of urban development and planning probably reached their peak during the second half of the twentieth century, but the directions that were explored proved to be unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons.

The founding paradigms of that era are now in a state of crisis which requires reinterpretation and critical evaluation. We will start the discussion with what, in our opinion, was the “original sin” – the misunderstanding and exclusion of *urban design* issues from the debate (Chapter 7). This contributed to creating a critical disciplinary void which seems destined to remain unresolved for a long time still. The next step will be to reconstruct a map of the most influential planning traditions over the last 60 years. The task is not a simple one due to the lack of authoritative sources. The few attempts to delineate a *disciplinary framework* have always seemed somewhat casual and sometimes naive. The lack of an adequate critical repertory is striking. A possible undesired direction might be noted; these portrayals do not so much represent alternative planning theories or practices as a collective process – that can produce verifiable outcomes in relation to a series of critical problems on the agenda – as much as they highlight a set of *planners’ profiles* (Burchell & Sternleib, 1978; Healey et al., 1982; Friedmann, 1987; Mandelbaum et al., 1996; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). It is as if the first problem were not to evaluate planning’s effectiveness but rather the distinctive features of a professional role seeking legitimation in different ways from the planners of the past. A critical rereading of the principal profiles outlined by a discipline seeking identity would therefore seem to be timely. The image that emerges is, in our opinion, rather disputable due to the eclecticism of the positions, the superficiality of the debate and the lack of critical evaluation. Self-referential expectations are not enough. The most diverse positions coexist even though a less superficial critical survey might highlight many reasons for the weakness of the roles delineated. Frankly, their possible success often seems improbable.

The following six chapters are dedicated to studying these main profiles in depth. First, mainstream conceptions of planning as a *public decision-making process* are taken into consideration (Chapter 8). These conceptions have given rise to technocratic and science-based positions that are clearly outmoded today, although real distancing from such positions is still often lacking (Faludi, 1973b, 1986, 1987). It may be useful to think about these sources in order to understand – thoroughly and unequivocally – the causes of some errors that should not be repeated in the future. Some positions in the 1960s and 1970s were, in fact, partial manifestations of a rationalist culture that had long been influential and which tended to entrust contingent choices to the principle of univocal, dominant reason. This principle could have been interpreted by the State, and also by other important economic and social forces that could exert conservative domination over existing social relationships on the one hand or give way to radical processes of social change on the other (Lefebvre, 1972, 1974; Castells, 1972, 1979; Harvey, 1973, 1985b, 1989a, 1996; Saunders, 1970, 1981; Friedmann, 1987, 1992; Sandercock, 1998a, 1998b).

This deterministic approach found roots in a Marxist view of social dynamics or in the hopes for emancipation of subordinate interests by actions of rupture and change (Chapter 9). In any case, what appears out of place today is a premise based on *structural determinism* that can presumably retrace the destiny of territories to a few clear, explicative causes. Important studies in political economics and urban sociology analysed such processes, which sometimes were, in their view, determined by strong economic interests and powers or by rising social movements. A general shift matured in those same years leading to the recognition that a *plurality of interests, visions and modes of action* usually influence urban and regional processes. The dynamic interactions established between the different interests involved constitute a crucial element in planning processes (Chapter 10).

The thesis was that a principle of dominant authority could be replaced by an *open game of multiple interactions* (Lindblom, 1965, 1977; Friedmann, 1973; Crosta, 1984, 1990a, 1998; Ferraro, 1990; Forester, 1993, 1999; Salet & Faludi, 2000). This convenient opening could not yet take on paradigmatic value because interactions can be articulated in quite different ways, for example as strategic negotiations or communicative agreements. To each of these correspond distinct forms of rationality and non-congruent paradigmatic views as demonstrated by the previously cited references. Observing empirical tendencies, a not entirely intuitive attitude could be noted. It could be presumed that the discussion of, and mediation among, distinct, often divergent, interests should constitute a key planning theme as had come about in the past. Instead, this sound line of investigation did not arouse much attention, or was clearly abandoned for two less problematic, but also more abstract, alternatives: the so-called *communicative turn* and the *strategic spatial approach*. These became the prevalent trends during the 1990s (Chapter 11), which were, unfortunately, matters of simplifying rhetoric and apparent innovation that significantly contributed to transforming planning theory to something merely academic and of little influence. Moreover, in current years, there has been room, though in more marginal spheres, for further ideological trends, which have sometimes taken on irrationalistic forms (Hillier, 2007; Hillier & Healey, 2008c). This is,

in actual fact, paradoxical for a discipline that had tried to base its first foundations on science-based positions (Chapter 12).

Among the many less important digressions, a single idea emerges concretely, in our opinion, as a field for potentially interesting research. That is the reformist tradition of “critical possibilism” (Hirschman, 1958, 1967, 1986, 1995; Crozier, 1979, 1987; Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Wildavsky, 1979; Rodwin, 1981; Schön, 1983a, 1987; Schön & Rein, 1994; Crosta, 1990a, 1998; Dahrendorf, 1983, 2003; Lindblom, 1990; Palermo, 1992, 2004, 2009), which, not by chance, attempts to re-establish links between *design culture* and *policy inquiry* (Chapter 13). This selective conclusion suggests a possible line of study in relation to the stated issues. We suggest that, in the variegated and partly picturesque world of planning, the cultural currents that should be favoured are the ones that lead to a *crossroads between architecture and policy studies*. Considering these references as external or marginal is an error that could condemn planning to enduring irrelevance. There are, in our opinion, two essential conditions for returning sense and practical value to this field. They are, on the one hand, the *return to the object* – to effective physical modification – and, on the other hand, a critical attention to concrete interests that interact and compete for the control of urban development – a policy making culture focused on principles of “critical realism”. Embarrassment remains over such an uncertain and unstable paradigmatic framework which, over the course of time, has not been able to overcome real problems and contradictions and thus provide positive responses to the search for an autonomous planning discipline.

The third part of the book consists in a critical discussion of a Mediterranean model, the Italian one that is most familiar to the authors. The essential goal, as already mentioned, is twofold. The first is to provide a less distorted image of a field of theory and practice that has been widely misunderstood or underestimated by the neo-orthodox planning schools. The second is to show how this exploration can offer research contributions and proposals in relation to some crucial points that the planning schools generally identify, but do not always face with success. The current literature, in particular the Anglo-Saxon, seems somewhat superficial to us regarding to these issues. The criticism is obvious and justified if it concerns how backwards and outdated institutional frameworks are in Italy. However, it does not seem correct to ignore a variety of cultural positions, though elite, that have often, and in advance, deepened the thinking about crucial questions that were subsequently faced by other international movements in perhaps more superficial ways. The insufficient diffusion of some key research, due to the fact that it is written in Italian, is not sufficient justification for those who would like to produce comparative studies.

Chapter 14 describes two important aspects of the debate. Generally, Italian planning studies have been rooted in the architecture schools without seeking the disciplinary autonomy that is more common in central-northern Europe or in North America. This context has not been devoid of problems, on the contrary, but has enabled a series of important studies, which anticipated some of today’s more topical questions. Over the last 20 years, these roots have not hindered direct relationships with some policy studies approaches promoted by the architecture schools

that were more open to innovation. The direct relationship between *architecture-urban design* traditions and *policy inquiry* constituted an original, and perhaps more effective, path for tackling many emerging issues in the planning field. Therefore, specific features of the Italian case do not only deserve attention because of the physical design approach, but also the partly novel relationship between the design and policy cultures (Secchi, 1984, 1989; Crosta, 1984, 1990a, 1998; Maciocco, 1991, 1996, 2008b; Maciocco et al., 2000; Clementi, 1996, 1999, 2002; Palermo, 1992, 2004, 2006).

Retracing the essential steps in the evolution of planning may be helpful for more in-depth study of planning paradigms. Of course, Italian planning also passed through a science-based phase (Chapter 15), but this passage took place almost 20 years before the influence of northern European planning and perhaps with more refined discussions (Piccinato, 1947; Astengo, 1952, 1966; Palermo, 1981, 1983). We can also acknowledge more than one founding attempt based on the “architecture of the city” idea (Chapter 16), but in these cases, the research, while surpassed today, may seem less schematic or more relevant, at least because it deals with the concrete objects of physical transformation as compared with the structuralist conceptions of planning (Rossi, 1966; Gregotti, 1966, 1986, 1993; Quaroni, 1967, 1981, 1996). However, since the 1980s, Italian planning embarked on a dominant path having a reformist tendency (Campos Venuti, 1967, 1987, 1991; Campos Venuti & Oliva, 1993; Mazza, 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Oliva, 2002), which, having eluded the more routine critiques of traditional planning, has offered a series of tentative answers to critical questions in spatial planning (Chapter 17). Furthermore, over the last 20 years intense and controversial, but instructive, experimentation has developed in the field of urban space and public policy (Clementi, 1990, 1999, 2002; Palermo, 1992, 2001a, 2004; Cremaschi, 2001, 2003). This has led to an undeniable revival of prior techniques for plan implementation and can offer interesting suggestions for some still unresolved disciplinary questions (Chapter 18). The most interesting outcomes, briefly outlined, might lead to partial innovation in current policy analysis interpretation, following an innovative *policy design* approach (De Carlo, 1964, 1966b, 1992; Lanzara, 1985, 1993; Crosta, 1998; Palermo, 2004, 2006, 2009), which was definitely influenced by rooting planning studies in the architecture schools (Chapter 19). If this were true, the Mediterranean tradition would not be considered a residual form in inexorable decline, but rather a potential, and widely unknown, source of significant innovation – as the case of Spain apparently suggests.

Part IV seeks to delineate some of the new frontiers in research and practice, not in the sense of seeking decisive planning models – which probably do not exist – but in the sense of assessing the innovation of certain practices in relation to fundamental critical issues such as: regulatory functions, suitable restrictions (neither more, nor less than what is necessary), the production of influential strategic visions (though devoid of regulatory value) and finally the design and implementation of development projects responding to outstanding morphological and landscape criteria. Chapter 20 proposes a summary outline of the evolution of, and differences between, *policy tools* (Hood, 1983, 1998; Salamon, 2002; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2004), assuming that the extent and quality of planning activities can be

defined only through concrete ways of intervening and their ensuing consequences. The next three chapters offer a critical interpretation of selected tendencies, documented by exemplary experiments in the field of *regulation* (Chapter 21), *visioning* (Chapter 22) and the *design of urban places* (Chapter 23), a theme evoked by, but not articulated in, more recent developments in neo-orthodox planning. For each of these aspects, we try to select a basic group of interpretations and proposals as a synthesis of the critical and argumentative work carried out until now briefly defined as follows: the priorities and technical forms of a more rigorous, effective system of rules, together with a model of governance that may ensure its legitimacy and political viability; the construction of influential visions for spatial and social development that can steer the course of urban transformations even in the absence of cogent constraints (the missed target of many current structural or strategic frameworks); the improving of urban projects in relation to context meant not only in a physical sense but regarding life possibilities.

The fifth and last part of the book draws some conclusions from the long discussion. They are of two kinds, one of which concerns critique and the other proposals. In the first place (Chapter 24) it seems necessary to radically reconsider the most recent trends in spatial planning according to the interpretations formulated by influential schools of planning. These positions appear too self-referential and exhortatory – too weak and elusive – to be able to guide innovative, sustainable and effective practices. If this is what planning theory has achieved, it should be noted that it does not represent any real progress in relation to the kind of urban planning that was so summarily criticised; it is merely an ideology tending towards a conformist viewpoint that cannot be falsified or that risks justifying most current practices.

Instead, a more powerful paradigmatic vision should be chosen from an *interpretative, critical and design-oriented* point of view. References and reasons will not be found only in the planning field, but in a more open, problematic space where different traditions of research and intervention intermingle. Our view is outlined in Chapter 25 as a synthesis of the previous discussion. It is a debatable but clear choice in favour of a pragmatic culture based on *critical realism, policy inquiry*, an idea of *design as collective action* and a *reformist culture of the possible* as its fundamental principles. It is a position that is coherent with some contemporary planning approaches, but not with just any one and in particular not with the more eclectic and conformist ones. This conclusion probably does not represent an original discovery but a selective recalling of certain interpretations and proposals that emerged in several fields of experimentation and had been undeservedly neglected by the prevailing trends in international planning. Perhaps today it is clearer that in crucial phases, this culture embarked on erroneous paths which proved to be unjustified, elusive and ineffective. This occurred on at least two watershed occasions: the *rationalist* trend during the 1960s and 1970s and then the *communicative-collaborative* one at the turn of the new century. To overcome these errors is indispensable and possible if we wish to give new social relevance to planning institutions. The way forward, in our opinion, is to reframe *reflective, critical and design-oriented* pragmatism as a movement of thinking and action which, thanks to these criteria, should no longer be understood as a negation of planning (Healey et al., 1982) but perhaps as its most rigorous and fruitful interpretation.

Part II
Unfinished Projects for Disciplinary
Foundation

Chapter 6

The Rise and Crisis of Planning Theory

The idea of “planning theory,” which will be discussed in this book, mainly concerns the disciplinary thinking and practices that emerged during the last three decades of the twentieth century. Particular emphasis will be placed on the British and American movements inspired by the critique of existing traditions and having the goal of finding innovative visions. The object of the criticism was the dominant *town planning* tradition during the first part of the twentieth century, both in its rigorously modernist forms and in its organic variants (Unwin, 1909; Abercrombie, 1933). For more than one reason, which we will comment in due course, that framework no longer seemed satisfactory at mid-century. The interpretation of the problems at hand was not convincing anymore, nor was the repertory of possible solutions. Many limits seemed to depend upon the fact that planning tasks were prevalently entrusted to the traditional figures of engineers and architects. Innovative hypotheses emerged first in the United States, on the basis of the Social Engineering movements at the beginning of the century, and later with the great impetus of rationalist culture and technological development during the Second World War and its aftermath (Akin, 1977; Noble, 1977; Nelson, 1980). These positions garnered great attention especially in Great Britain in the 1950s and 1960s with a certain delay compared to the United States, where the Chicago School with its innovative attempt to apply rational analysis to public policy had already run its course (Perloff, 1957, 1965; Friedmann, 1987; Hall, 1988).

The *Reader*, edited by Andreas Faludi in 1973, is a fundamental document from this period (Faludi, 1973a). It is an intelligent selection of the principal positions expressed in the international literature, especially in the United States during the post-war decades. The determination to overcome the limits of the town planning tradition took on two dominant directions: deepening the discussion in support of planning choices that went beyond the mere physical and formal dimensions, and exploring the issues involved in rational decision-making contrasting the traditional view of designing as a pure “creative act.” Faludi clearly recognised the debt in Europe to the thinking and experiments from overseas. His volume lucidly represented the great variety in approaches, referring not only to the most influential rationalist positions, but also to some of the substantial alternatives, such as Charles Lindblom’s incrementalism, Etzioni’s mixed scanning, Davidoff’s advocacy planning. A weak common thread lay in the attempt to provide a foundation for urban

planning within a social science framework rather than within the traditions of architecture and engineering. Among the various, often incongruous, cultural movements explored at the time, the author had no doubts about expressing his preference for the rationalist paradigm. Accordingly, planning was to be understood as the application of *scientific method to decision-making*. Surprisingly, the author adopted this point of view and then defended it at length (Faludi, 1986, 1987, 1996), even though many insidious objections were already evident. To this end, he made use of various argumentative devices making important adjustments to his course; but he did not want to give weight to the strong signs of crisis that these positions had been showing for some time in their original contexts. In fact, the rationalist view goes back to traditions that matured after the New Deal in the years between the two wars, thanks to the founding contribution of such figures as Merriam, Person and Tugwell (Perloff, 1957; Perloff & Klett, 1974; Padilla, 1975; Friedmann, 1987). They enjoyed a temporary revival during wartime, when rational analytic methods contributed to effectively solving a variety of problems of collective interest (Simon, 1957, 1960; Downs, 1957; Raiffa, 1968, 1982; Ackoff, 1974). But they very soon demonstrated their insurmountable limitations regarding the managing of spatial development in mature western societies. However, the attempt to found a rationalist planning paradigm was not successful. As we had foreseen at the time (Palermo, 1981, 1983), the rationalist interpretation of planning problems proved groundless and ineffective for several reasons.

Other directions were explored in order to legitimate planning within the social sciences. Plural, often parallel, routes emerged leading to the configuration of a vast variety of potential paradigms. A new difficulty arose in defining a *coherent, shared framework* that could put order to the plural positions and enable comparative evaluation and choice. According to Hillier and Healey (2008a), *planning theory* only took shape as a disciplinary domain in the 1980s in Great Britain and it was mainly as a taxonomic study. It was a classificatory description of the empirical variety in the fields of planning theory and practice rather than a real attempt to identify convincing orientations and evaluations – that is to defend some positions rather than others. An exemplary contribution – as serious as it was unfortunately inconclusive – was documented in the text, edited in Oxford by Healey, McDougall and Thomas, which represented the plurality of noteworthy positions (Healey et al., 1982). The central theme was the evaluation of the new, but already declining, *rationalist currents* in comparison to the continental tradition of *political economy*. While this last branch of thinking was able to offer important contributions to the critical interpretation of the interests, power and conflicts driving urban and environmental processes, it did not seem capable of guiding strategies and actions of public intervention with equal clarity. The authors sought, above all, to re-establish dialogue among, and comparison to, the different traditions without immediately expecting to reach shared opinions. In reality, the diversity of voices was recorded without important innovation or hope for future integration.

The two worlds – of critical interpretation and rational decision-making – continued to confront each other without learning how to communicate in significant ways. Some attempts are questionable, such as the ones representing *advocacy*

planning (Davidoff, 1965; Peattie, 1968; Heskin, 1980) and *implementation studies* (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Bardach, 1977; Barrett & Fudge, 1981) as internal variations of the rationalist model, because the idea of society and politics at the base of these approaches might appear, for many reasons, as an alternative to a conception of planning as a rational method of decision-making. The contrast between the interpretative analyses of economic and political systems and the methodological tendencies of planning as a rational link between knowledge and action remained strong. The break between rationalist, or structural, conceptions of planning and new experiences that were then topical – such as *transactive planning* in the United States (Friedmann, 1973; Alexander, 1995) or the *pragmatic* trends so widespread in practice – also remained solid (Bolan, 1967, 1969, 1980; Hoch, 1984a, b, 1994, 1996; Hoch et al., 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1996, 1998, 2001; Yiftachel, 1998; Verna, 1996, 1998).

Transactive planning kindled little confidence as a contingent ideological trend that was not destined for important development. Pragmatic approaches appeared as a negation of the very spirit and task of planning. Indeed, the “relapse of pragmatism” was acknowledged as a sign of defeat. Many theoretical attempts to provide foundations and effectiveness for planning policy were clearly not successful if the pragmatic view was still the prevalent trend in practice. In truth, from a theoretical standpoint, this thinking appeared weak. As we will discuss later, to consider interactive and communicative practice in this over-simplified way does not allow us to grasp the important issues and innovative opportunities. Eric Reade (in Healey et al., 1982) is correct when he maintains the weakness of the theoretical considerations. Too often disciplinary studies cannot describe real practices; they do not have normative value as effective guidelines for planning processes and they cannot indicate acceptable models for planning innovation. In many cases, they are only *ideal types*, meaning they are oversimplifying representations that extol selected themes and partial relations within a complex reality. It is difficult to use them for understanding real processes because it is not clear how much the inevitable discrepancy depends on the model’s limitations or on the irrational characteristics of real situations.

A few years later from the other side of the ocean, John Friedmann’s vast and ambitious theoretical work (Friedmann, 1987) was not of much help regarding these doubts. His well-known contribution was an extensive, although incomplete, review of multiple approaches, which might seem ecumenical owing to the comparative evaluations and critical opinions regarding the positions examined. He did, however, express a preference – perhaps more ideological than well justified – for those *transactive* conceptions of planning that his British colleagues had dismissed as minor deviations. The planning idea that Friedmann seemed to prefer was a radical one, essentially based on the capacities for *self-organisation and emancipation* by local communities even to the detriment of the role of public intervention and expert knowledge. In all truth, as we will try to show, Friedmann’s text is sometimes disconcerting because of the interpretations that were formulated. Critical argumentation is somewhat limited; and some visions and proposals seem ideologically oriented. If this is the disciplinary master document (Forester, 1990; Hillier & Healey, 2008a), Eric Reade’s doubts about the solidity of planning theory are probably still pertinent!

Towards the end of the century, a new theoretical manifesto seemed to have taken centre stage. This was the *interactive and communicative* conception of planning, to all appearances newly founded upon a different framework, that of Jurgen Habermas' "critical theory" (Kemp, 1982, 1985; Benhabid, 1985; Forester, 1985, 1989, 1993; Benhabid & Dallmayr, 1990; Sager, 1994; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998; Innes, 1990; Innes & Booher, 1999, 2000, 2003; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000a, b; Hoch, 2007). It was no longer the case of the sporadic opportunities anticipated in the first version of transactive planning; nor the radical view indicated by John Friedmann (1987) but rapidly repudiated by the real-world experiences (Fischer & Forester, 1993). The meaning of the "communicative turn" had become quite different (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Healey, 1997). What came into play was the theme of correct argumentation and deliberation in a public arena, which should respond to certain ideal criteria of autonomy, information and dialogue between the different subjects involved. Through successive oversimplifications, consensus-building procedures and techniques were based on this ideal model. According to some, they were destined for widespread influence (Forester, 1993; Innes, 1995, 1996, 2004; Healey, 1997, 2003a). Edifying models of *collaborative planning* should represent the solution that was theoretically most promising. It is a shame that supporters of these proposals seem to forget the teaching of earlier *political economy* studies, clearly underestimating the influence of interests, power and conflicts on real planning processes. It is a shame that the real dynamics of relationships between actors, institutions and social and spatial contexts which continuously transcend the simple ideal-type models were ignored. Those dynamics were, however, well investigated by planning movements inspired – on the contrary – by *critical pragmatism*. We consider the collaborative approach to be an exhortatory vision destined to peter out in a short time without significant and enduring effects.

Not by chance, the last ambitious disciplinary *Reader* (Hillier & Healey, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) does not indicate this as an ultimate frame of reference. Like 20 years earlier (Healey et al., 1982), this collection is restricted to uncritically juxtaposing the heterogeneous set of subsequent attempts to found a discipline whose history and identity appeared still uncertain. The intention once again seemed to be that of re-establishing a dialogue between an eclectic variety of positions, but not accumulating coherent common knowledge. After almost 20 years of enthusiastic experiments, the scarcity of indisputable results does not appear to be a problem for planning scholars. The collaborative approach is not, however, the final point of arrival. Other research can already be spotted, but – paradoxically for a discipline seeking sound foundations – they are mostly post-modern or clearly irrationalist tendencies!

If we reconsider this tortuous, unstable path, there are many good reasons for proclaiming the crisis of *this* planning theory. The attempt to find a base for planning in the social sciences was not successful, weakening the links with the architectural tradition. The two most ambitious interpretations subsequently failed. They were the *rationalist-positive-technocratic* one – modernist in David Harvey's sense (Harvey, 1989a) – and the *communicative rationality* alternative along with

consensus-building models for institutional and social cooperation. Not only does it seem essential, in our opinion, to recover the relationships with *physical transformations*, but as far as the contribution of the social sciences is concerned, it seems useful to reinstate the *critical pragmatism position* which Faludi, Healey and others underestimated in its earliest phases. In this sense, it seems that we might refer to the rise and crisis of planning theory. An ideological and scientific programme – or more than just one – failed. We can acknowledge this without regrets because other directions begin to open. Long overshadowed by some dominant views, they become more readily visible following the crisis faced by the more improbable attempts. The following chapters will describe and evaluate these directions.

Chapter 7

Urban Design: The Lost Object

In an extremely interesting text, Sir Peter Hall, in *Cities of Tomorrow*, managed to depict with great effectiveness the multiple, often incommensurable, planning cultures. He made use of outstanding testimonials – eminent personalities and noteworthy places and stories (Hall, 1988). With a pleasing narrative style, he helped us understand the problems of cities and planning better than many essays on theory or methodology. What emerged clearly from his portrayal was a negative view, which the author points out to us with intended irony. In the book, Le Corbusier's vision of the city was adopted as a paradigm for an authoritative, deterministic and formalistic conception of urban development (Le Corbusier, 1924); this was as difficult to agree upon as it was destined to fail (“the evil of the modern city”). The testimony was undoubtedly effective, though perhaps not particularly generous towards a great architect who should not be identified only with some basically secondary pedagogical statements, even if they are abundantly recalled by imitative, and often uncritical, scholars. In any case, for Hall, this was the icon marking the distance between the reformist/emancipative culture of planning and the technocratic one of urban design. Similar references, even more superficial and incontrovertible, are found in almost every planning theory text quoted in the preceding chapters. *Urban design* is considered an antiquated way of facing the problems of urban development and management. The thesis seems as obvious as to not require any discussion, but it also seems clear that we need to delve further.

The principal objections to urban design traditions are of two kinds. Briefly stated, they are *determinism* and *lack of justification*. The criticism regards the possibility of conceiving the master plan as a definitive project, as the expression of a single, given source of political and technical authority imposed upon the variety of values, interests, views and strategies that make up the planning context (the *blueprint planning* model). Experience demonstrates that real planning processes are much more open, incremental and unpredictable due to the multiple and inevitable causes of uncertainty. In addition, the dimensions of the planning problem are never just physical and formal; there are also problems of the meaning of place and its use that evolve together with urban practices over the course of time.

Architects are blamed not only for their propensity for suggesting formal and definite models almost as though they were an author's design but also for paying insufficient attention to the relationships between form, meanings and

practices – basically a partial and reductive conception of the contents of planning. The proposed models tend to express partial points of view, which seem to emerge from a “creative leap” that is always somewhat mysterious and difficult to evaluate (Fabbri, 1975; Taylor, 1998; Salet & Faludi, 2000; Healey et al., 2000; Healey, 2007). The architects’ method seems flawed by the lack of public discussion which could distance it from the sphere of scientific activity, but also from that of democratic practices (Dahl, 1961, 1967, 1982, 1989; Held, 1987; Rodwin, 1981; Putnam, 1993; Forester, 1999). These critiques raise real and reasonable questions, but they risk being elusive for at least three different kinds of reasons.

The first is that this representation of the architectural method is evidently superficial, or better, misleading. Only those who are not familiar with authors and experiences in this field could accept such an oversimplifying reconstruction. It is not a coincidence that the sources cited from the planning literature are very partial and, at times, patently inconsistent in relation to the issues. Often, they are second-hand accounts, superficially accepted with no deepening. The firmness of the conclusions is surprising and unjustified in relation to the poor quality of the analyses. In the third part of the book, when we discuss the Italian case, we will demonstrate the level of awareness and sophistication in some planning and architecture schools (Gregotti, 1966; De Carlo, 1992; Quaroni, 1996). They represented complex positions worthy of discussion and criticism and cannot be reduced to such elementary representations. It is truly surprising that the planners’ thought avoided any judgment regarding these contributions.

The second objection concerns some clearly asymmetrical behaviours leading to some deontological ambiguities. An uneven, arbitrary style is attributed to architects and engineers, but the unresolved problems of the alternative planning theories are overlooked. As we have already mentioned, and will discuss further in the following chapters, the search for an adequate alternative to the complexity of the challenges presented – collective decision-making, the ability to deal with the physical and social dimensions of problems and to produce legitimate and effective actions – has come about in contingent ways, which were generally eclectic and sometimes opportunistic, influenced by current ideas often relating to other contexts and finalities rather than through a specific, original elaboration. Unfortunately, we can observe a series of imitative, poorly argued approaches which have regrettably led to an endless sequence of intellectual and practical failures, and therefore to the continuous revision, bereft of rigorous interpretation, of both the errors already committed as well as the reasons and possibilities for change (Rodwin, 1981).

The first error was to confuse planning problems with *decision-making* issues, extending decision-related (whether individual or collective) theories and methods to the sphere of spatial planning. When Faludi distanced himself from the *object* of planning, he believed that he could re-found a more advanced theory, opting for what seemed to be a solid procedural approach underpinned by a rigorous public function of analysis, evaluation and decision (Faludi, 1973b, 1982). As we have already mentioned, these positions represented the belated reawakening, in Europe, of a line of research and action that rationalist policy analysis had already been exploring in the United States for at least 20 years. Hence these positions were

not even original. They were limited by inadequate attention to the critical factors in the model that had already been experimented. The idea of defining a method independent from the object really does not prove to be very scientific!

A radical revision of the new European schools of planning was also inevitable. Thus, the issues of practical interaction, disciplinary language (which does not only describe, but gives shape to, the world) and the institutional framework re-emerged. An idea of planning was rediscovered as a *process of plural interaction* mediated by communicative practices and by a set of norms and institutions. Moreover, this was an idea that had already been influential in many schools of architecture as the Italian case shows. However, the social interaction issue was not always developed in a radical way recognising the plurality – not always reconcilable – of visions and interests, the implacable autonomies of the actors involved, and the power relations that shape decisional games and do not allow irenic illusions. The other two themes, the communicative dimension and the institutional one, have become the objects of specific study as if each were, at different times, the dominant issue. New presumed “specialisms” followed even if they were second-hand. In many cases, they tended to avoid the crucial questions regarding interests at stake, power distribution, real practices in land use and physical development. Planning theory was configured as a new academic field (Reade, 1982, 1987) that was not authoritative given the fact that it was always indebted to exogenous references. It was not particularly influential, incapable as it generally was of effectively guiding practice. It became a tranquil and peaceful interstitial niche where discourse about planning could be nurtured.

With these arguments, it seems difficult to come up with a plausible alternative to the limitations of architecture and town planning traditions which, in the meantime, had been questioned and appreciably renewed thanks to many approaches and experiments. For example, in Italy (as we shall see in Part III) and France, it came about for the “projet urbain” (Devillers, 1986, 1996; Panerai, Castex, & Depaule, 1997, 1999; Novarina, 2003), in the United States for the “new urbanism” movement (Katz, 1994; Harvey, 1997; Ward, 1998; Dutton, 2000; Fainstein, 2000; Beauregard, 2002; Grant, 2006). They are controversial, debatable and not always convincing positions that have, however, shed light on questions of crucial interest for understanding and governing urban development, yet they have still remained at the edge of the field of planning theory.

We can thus formulate a third objection which is, perhaps, the most critical one. Suppose we accept the dissatisfaction with a series of contributions from the most traditional planning approaches. Suppose we share the attempts, though uncertain and incomplete, to deal with the complexity of the problems by introducing new dimensions – institutional, interactive, communicative and other – which were greatly underestimated by the dominant physical design culture. How, though, can we accept the surprising fact that neo-orthodox planning schools ignored or avoided the problems of *physical design* of urban and regional systems? Apart from a few exceptions (Rodwin, 1981; Schön, 1983a; Schön & Rein, 1994), the object lost in the partly legitimate criticism of traditional urban design has not been rediscovered.

It is as though the process-related and procedural approaches to planning could not consider the requirements of meaning and quality in transforming spaces and places (Wyatt, 2004). Incredibly, this responsibility has been forgotten even when, at the beginning of the new century, the search for legitimisation and meaning of the planner's work led to bringing the issue regarding "quality of place" back to the centre of attention (Healey et al., 2000; Healey, 2007). This is a contradiction that seems difficult for us to understand and accept. Apparently, the impossibility of defining an idea of environmental quality without exploring the physical, critical and design-oriented aspects has not been completely understood. It is as though the relationship between planning approaches and physical design could simply be reduced to a methodical sequence of steps following one another between substantially independent issues and activities. Undoubtedly, it is an error harkening back to the infertile banality of the rationalist methodical conception. But in this way, many planners condemn themselves to a merely exhortatory role. They evoke harmonious scenarios as obvious destinations but say nothing of the difficulties in achieving these visions, due to conflicts in social relations and the uncertain agreement regarding physical design. Having lost the connection with physical development, new planning theories suffer from a void that cannot be filled. This is due to the constant debt to various external disciplinary references (planning theories are always vicarious in relation to more mature fields of research and action), as well as to the avoidance of the critical issue of physical design, which should intervene only in a secondary, merely operative, phase. Moreover, it is a void that is full of concrete interests, which planning culture does not help to understand, evaluate and confront (Palermo, 2008b, 2009).

Chapter 8

Decision-Centred Views

To think that a planning problem can be formulated as a process of rational decision-making is a methodological hypothesis that regained strength halfway through the 1900s in an era of great expectations regarding the social application of new strategic choice technologies. However, this hypothesis was based on some specific premises regarding the interests involved and the dominant form of rationality in the decision-making processes and may have had some foundations only in somewhat restrictive contextual conditions. It should be admitted that the choices under discussion should be understood as solutions to a decision-related problem in which the overriding interest, the competent institution, its power of decision and control, the availability of a repertory of efficient instruments and the consequences of choices and possibilities for measuring the achievements are univocal and clear.

The most obvious reference is to a public subject, both political and technical/administrative, who can interpret the collective interest while exercising a form of *instrumental rationality*, selecting the tools for intervention that are the most advantageous in relation to a shared public goal. This model could be plausible for circumscribed, well-defined problems, but it is clearly unrealistic for new and complex challenges (Christensen, 1985). Only very special conditions of stability and cohesion within a social system on the one hand and of authoritativeness and operational capacity in the public administration on the other might favour the success of this vision, which is clearly not a new one. Without delving further into the past, suffice it to recall early modernity's rationalist culture in an era of dramatic technological growth, which led to the *Social Engineering* ideologies and later to *New Deal* public policies with outcomes, as is known, that were not always commensurate with expectations. Modern urban planning experiences could have become a laboratory of great interest if the planners wanted to study them in order to assess the aspirations and limits of those trends. It would be interesting and useful to understand why, in at least two crucial phases during the early 1900s, with the Social Taylorism movement and the *Great Society* programmes after the Second World War, this vision proved to be a clear failure (Noble, 1977; Wildavsky, 1979; Nelson, 1980). Obviously, reflections upon these questions are not lacking, but the critical point is that, in the world of planning, with an apparently unwitting delay, even in the 1960s and 1970s and in some cases later still, a similar conception regarding the rationality of public and collective choices was reinstated and explored in various

ways (Dror, 1964, 1971; Lasswell, 1971; Dunn, 1981). For what reasons? With what reasoning and what outcomes? We can find answers only through an accurate analysis of the disciplinary texts that continued this trend in order to comprehend the errors, resolve some of the ambiguities as well as avoid similar situations in the future. In this sense, the works of Andreas Faludi in the 1970s and 1980s constitute outstanding testing grounds.

In fact we owe to Faludi the most tenacious attempt to found a rational theory of planning based on the social science model. Disciplinary statements should be submitted to scientific validation or at least empirical tests, which can disprove the underlying hypotheses. It is not a substantive theory that concerns the planning “object”, be it land use, urban settlement or spatial development. In true fact, Faludi expressed a critical opinion of any conception of the discipline centred on its material objects. He acknowledged a crucial limitation of these views in the claim that adequate political choice can arise from objective knowledge of a planning problem in its context only through creative intuition (Faludi, 1982). Nor can the alternative be only a theory of regulation and public control defining constraints and justifying the norms that might outline and guide action. What was needed, according to Faludi, was a scientific theory for a *method of rational decision* by which knowledge could be transformed into action. Intuition and experience are not sufficient if they are not sustained by reason.

In this sense, the priority would be given to a *procedural theory* that could explain the most rational course for decision-making in any given planning situation (similar positions were expressed by Meyerson & Banfield, 1955; Davidoff & Reiner, 1962; Simon, 1969). Planning would therefore basically become a method for rational decision-making as an operative application of technical/scientific intelligence seeking to resolve practical problems. Its procedures should respect the criteria of scientific method even though Faludi himself doubted whether it was possible to *deduce* policy programmes from the rigorous knowledge of predefined problems in the same way empirical explanation of a natural phenomenon could be deduced from a scientifically validated theory. He doubted the possibility of a theoretical foundation in the strictest sense, but not the importance of the possible results. In fact, two types of important contributions seem to be guaranteed. If scientific method ensures more valid decisions, it may contribute directly to the quality of *human growth*. Even if it is not able to produce immediate actions, it is a value in itself, according to Faludi. In actual fact, any planning effort could contribute to *improving the possibilities* for future progress. In this sense, rational planning is not just an instrument or operative technique, but it can also delineate a virtuous model of society and politics. To this, Faludi gives the name “planning society”.

Unfortunately, this view is represented only by a series of statements of principle lacking in plausible argumentation. Suppose we accept Faludi’s idea of *identifying planning with decision-making* (the hypothesis is not an obvious one and, as we shall see in the following chapters, it has been largely contradicted). Is attributing the same *method of scientific research* to decision-making an empirically corroborated hypothesis? Current experiences, generally speaking, tend to repudiate this

statement. Effective decision-making does not in any way respect the canons of scientific method (Popper, 1963).

Is it at least a *normative theory* proposed as an ideal model to be progressively applied? If this is the perspective, we must note the model's generic nature. The rationality principle to which Faludi alluded is still *instrumental*. The crucial challenge would be to identify solutions that enable well-defined goals to be achieved in the most efficient way. The planning system would then be equated with a single rational subject, through superficial analogy with the way the human mind works, as a learning system by adapting and innovating problem-solving procedures. How should we apply and justify the analogical extension of this principle to a complex polity? Here, it is necessary to take for granted the organic or communitarian interpretation of society (like the "active society" of Amitai Etzioni, 1968, 1993). It is necessary to subscribe to an ideal model of the "planning society", imagined as a network of territorial and sectoral agencies (the hypothesis Faludi adopted in time), in which coherent, effective coordination of rational choices and actions is provided. These possibilities were not, however, documented or explained in the text. It became a mere petition of principle if the context did not present exceptional features such as the presence of a "benevolent dictator" intended as an undisputed authority that could interpret the general will; or a pervasive community model that could condition individual autonomy; or an aggregation of individual preferences guided by a pre-ordained idea of general interest. These are different interpretations of a common idea of society as a complex, relatively close-knit organism in which planning must carry out scientifically founded, and more or less centralised, functions of coordinating and guiding collective action and improving general welfare. In any other case, the ideal-type model cherished by Faludi proved to be altogether vague.

This observation is also true for a weaker version of the same theory which the author re-worked in the 1980s as a tentative response to clear and justified criticism of his preceding work. The orientation had become basically *methodological* (Faludi, 1986, 1987). The planning discipline was scientific not because it was able to validate its choices and actions on the basis of scientific knowledge regarding the decision at hand, but because of its capacity to formulate and verify rules and rationality tests for some of its more specific hypotheses. It was a more modest interpretation bringing into play goals, criteria and verification of interests, even if they were only local. Procedures and standards should enable the evaluation of whether a particular, contingent choice is founded on good reasons or not. We cannot know if it is the most valid choice, but at least the choice could not be refuted according to sound evaluation criteria. The new scenario appeared more reasonable but no progress was really made regarding two critical questions: how the notion of individual or system rationality is conceived and how it is possible to operatively evaluate the adequacy of a given choice or action. Faludi limited himself to pointing out some emerging lines of research and experimentation in the field of analytic and evaluation techniques regarding strategic choices (Friend & Jessop, 1969; Friend et al., 1974; Friend & Hickling, 1987), while overestimating their scope as though

they had become new paradigms. In reality, these were only operative, pragmatic and reasonable experiences which did not imply any particular vision of society, economy or politics (Palermo, 1981). The new version of Faludi's theory did not appear any stronger or effective than the preceding one. Formal analogies with Popper's conception of scientific method as a continuous process of potential falsification were not enough. On the contrary, Faludi's desire to adopt the method, but avoid Popper's social philosophy – which, as is well known, favoured an incremental view of learning and collective choices according to models of *piecemeal engineering* – appears contradictory (Popper, 1945). It is as though Popper's criticism of all forms of *utopian planning* was not also applicable to rational-comprehensive planning models (Popper, 1957; Camhis, 1979; Palermo, 1981).

Over time and despite contrasting empirical evidence, Faludi continued to support the dominance of a comprehensive view of the problems associated with a vision of society that should be organic or, if it were pluralist, should in any case be well integrated. Thus, he favoured a normative approach that also attributed the task of refining *policy aims* to the planner, because politicians alone are not able to ensure good choices. The political process should never prevail over *rational argumentation*. Furthermore, the way in which a non-organic society can agree upon policy goals is not the subject of any investigation. Finally, concentrating his attention on decision-making processes, Faludi completely underestimated relationships with the design of spatial form and its evolution. These limits suggest three directions for further discussion.

The first concerns the *coherence of the investigation and disciplinary thinking*. Andreas Faludi played a useful cultural role in the early 1970s, spreading significant, yet still relatively unknown, elements of American planning in Great Britain and Europe. His 1973 *Reader* was a very interesting text because it lucidly singled out the main positions in the America post-war debate (Faludi, 1973a; Hall, 1983). The author assumed a rationalist conception of planning as a topical issue, somewhat different from the European traditions. Furthermore, he did not seem to grasp the unyielding variety of the emerging positions.

The thinking and proposals of Banfield, Meyerson, Altshuler, Davidoff, Reiner and others, including the heretical Charles Lindblom (altogether, we are talking about almost all the contributions selected) already clearly represented *indisputable criticism* and a *conceptual alternative* to the standard rational-comprehensive planning model. This was because they highlighted the indeterminacy or inconsistency of the principles of instrumental rationality, the difference between individual and system rationality, the ambiguity and unreliability of the analytical and methodological relationship between scientific knowledge and rational action.

The *disjointed incrementalism* and *partisan mutual adjustment* theses (Lindblom, 1959) obviously represented alternatives that were incongruous with the editor's view, who, in fact, seemed to use these sources only as a pretext to carry out detailed criticism without appealing to the incrementalist view. This should have promoted the necessity for, and strength of, a rational paradigm. If Lindblom did not believe in the possibility of basing decisions on valid knowledge, he was again forced to trust unquestionably imperfect mechanisms like political or market choices. If he refused objective verification of the validity of choices, he had to trust consensus among

the actors involved. If conflicts of interest and incompatibility of viewpoints exist between the actors involved, consensus-building becomes difficult, while the probability increases that choices will be conservative – that they will reflect the strength of the dominant interests within any given context. Lindblom identified a series of limits to the exercise of reason (partial knowledge of problems and possibilities, uncertainty regarding the consequences of actions, ambiguity of communication between the actors involved and so on, Simon, 1983). Perhaps he underestimated the possibility for overcoming some barriers also due to the technological progress at the time. Moreover, his sceptical realism led him to limit the horizon of problems and actions. Most likely, it was a case of incremental, short-term, barely innovative choices. Finally, Faludi underlined the fact that some of Lindblom's criticism did not concern the rational-comprehensive model as much as it did *blueprint planning*. Only this traditional interpretation of planning is based on the long-term definition of detailed design choices, which need to be faithfully implemented over the course of time and run the plausible risk of having to resort to plan variances in relation to new urban or regional dynamics. The rational model, on the other hand, did not exclude a continuous process of revision and adaptation of planning choices, provided they were always disciplined by tests of their validity. Faludi transformed Lindblom's sceptical criticism into arguments supporting a *normative* model of rational planning as an ideal guide of a necessary reform of existing regulations and practices. But is virtuous exhortation sufficient?

Surprisingly, Faludi did not seem to recognise that the position paper at the base of his disciplinary review, “a choice theory of planning” (Davidoff & Reiner, 1962), appearing as an orthodox application of the instrumental conception of individual rationality to public policy problems, had already been subjected to indisputable, penetrating criticism by many authoritative scholars belonging to a similar cultural tradition, and whose works were documented in the same review. The principal criticisms were already evident in the early 1960s.

Edward Banfield, a former exponent of Chicago's rational planning school, highlighted the critical problems connected with *formulating and sharing the goals* of action programmes (Banfield, 1959) as follows: the future is uncertain and it might be careless to try to anticipate certain high-risk strategic choices; it is difficult to take into consideration a large variety of alternatives; preferences can be influenced by the current situation and pressures to preserve existing conditions; future scenarios are not always stable and coherent; to specify goals in operative terms and clarify their relations with possible action may be quite an expensive operation; we can speak of optimisation of choices only in ideal terms; the application of rational methods of decision-making is more difficult for public institutions than for private enterprises. Therefore, the model may have only *normative* value even if Banfield did not clarify the rigorous meaning of the following question: how can the ideal model be concretely used to improve the quality of the effective choices? Later his detachment from the rationalist paradigm would become even clearer (Banfield, 1968).

Alan Altshuler also highlighted the critical features of each attempt to technically define the goals of the planning process. A unitary conception of public interest was lacking or unlikely to be agreed upon. It was dubious whether the planner possesses

special competence to pinpoint these aims or find mediation between different hypotheses. Often some common-sense suggestions or those intuitive capacities that political actors acquire after lengthy exercise of direct responsibility prove to be more useful. Hence any hypothesis regarding the autonomy or supremacy of disciplinary knowledge in relation to political experience of government and common sense itself did not seem to be founded. In any case, only *public discussion* could lead to defining community's planning goals (Altschuler, 1965a, 1965b).

Melvin Webber continued the discussion on the non-technical nature of planning goals. *Ethical and social responsibilities* were at stake, as was the need to offer greater opportunities for access and choice to a plurality of subjects, to integrate mutually indispensable social functions, and to reconcile freedom and cohesion in a pluralist society. These were the fundamental challenges that were not easy to translate immediately into operative measures, not just for technical reasons but also because of the not-always measurable diversity of visions and preferences (Webber, 1963, 1978).

In addition, Amitai Etzioni questioned the possibility of a systematic use of the rational method, showing the utility of distinguishing ways of treating important strategic choices from those of more detailed choices, introducing the *mixed-scanning* principle (Etzioni, 1967).

Martin Meyerson reappraised the *temporal horizon* of comprehensive planning, which should not go beyond the medium term and should face only mid-range problems (Meyerson & Banfield, 1955; Meyerson, 1956).

Other thinking was even more radical. John Friedmann focused on the incalculable features of *innovative planning* problems compared with routine choices, showing that rational-comprehensive methods were not the most suitable ones for tackling emerging issues requiring a creative, experimental approach starting out from the formulation of the planning problem (Friedmann, 1967, 1969, 1971). Davidoff, distancing himself from the rationalist positions worked out a few years earlier (his "choice theory of planning" cited above), highlighted the *limits of cohesion* in contemporary society, which was described as divided into numerous identities and interest groups. The decision-making process became the arena for competing groups trying to promote their points of view. A system of goals agreed upon a priori does not exist and the very representations of problems can vary according to the parties' interests. Even *expert knowledge* can divide and sustain different theses in relation to the interests for which it works (Davidoff, 1965).

Richard Bolan stressed the crucial importance of the *context* in planning strategies. Thus, follows the impossibility of a general theory or, rather, the legitimacy of a variety of planning styles in relation to concrete situations, which seem to justify the possibility of *contingent* case-by-case theoretical preferences (Bolan, 1967, 1969; Bolan & Nuttal, 1975).

Ruth Glass' efforts confirmed the importance of the institutional and social contexts, pointing out how the notions of public interest, faith in public authority and the interpretation of the profession were appreciably diverse in the British and American contexts. Consequently, differences between the respective disciplinary

systems were significant – *town and country planning* in Great Britain, *city planning* in the USA – and yet some results did not seem all that different. The British system, intended to be comprehensive, continuous and solid, actually appeared to be subdivided into many branches that were unable to exclude opportunistic behaviours. The American one tended to avoid the idea of centralised State control in the name of the public interest and could consist in a variety of operations managed by different local institutions according to partial interests (Glass, 1959; Gans, 1968).

David Foley also emphasised the responsibility of a *social-political interpretation* of the scope of planning: an instrument for regulation, control and management of land use and urban development according to the British tradition, or a new conception tending towards more ambitious goals like the quality of the physical environment and the very quality of life in urban communities. This conception sought to integrate goals of regulation and those of development, and in general the physical and the social environment (Foley, 1960).

These are prominent figures who would be the discipline's protagonists for several decades in American planning culture. From the early 1960s on, though generally having their origins in the rationalist tradition, these thinkers were able to identify the fundamental reasons for the *crisis in rational planning*. To an independent observer, this kind of planning might seem like an excessively elementary and generic method with respect to the rich variety of themes and positions – an absurd outcome for a text that, in the author's intentions, should have acclaimed the good reasons for a rationalist approach! But Faludi limited himself to recording these contradictory opinions and did not take them on as critical problems to investigate and discuss. It is as though they were partial variants within a common and still indisputable paradigm. Instead, they were an indication of their *logical impossibility* and *meagre practical relevance*.

On the other hand, this kind of oversimplification was not unusual. The first important theoretical review in Europe regarding international perspectives in planning theory during the 1980s (Healey et al., 1982) appeared to tolerate similar interpretative errors taking *advocacy planning* and *implementation studies* as simple developments of *procedural planning theory*. Both trends introduced a vision of society and politics that could not be reduced to the "planning society" as outlined by Faludi. Indeed, this is a pluralist vision in which divergent interests compete in steering collective choices and in which problems arise – often of great complexity – regarding consensus and moral responsibility. This has nothing to do with the edifying yet abstract prefiguration taken from the rationalist model.

As we have just recalled, advocacy planning acknowledged the plurality of viewpoints and the ambivalence of disciplinary expertise, which can lead to contrasting conclusions depending on the interests involved (Davidoff, 1965; Clavel, 1991). Implementation studies questioned any simple linear conception of decision-making and policy design. Empirical analyses showed how implementation processes constitute arenas of conflict in which divergent interests and strategies confront each other and sometimes challenge the previously adopted planning decisions (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Barrett & Fudge, 1981). The outcome, in both cases,

may be a reinterpretation – sometimes not a marginal one at that – of the political and technical choices made during the course of planning processes. However, Faludi did not concern himself with these situations. Even later (Faludi, 1996), he continued to sustain, against all evidence, that the rational planning model did not face a crisis and that, in fact, it had already found complete answers to its main criticisms. The normative value of this model would not, therefore, be under discussion, also because this seemed to be the only framework that could link knowledge to action through the concept of decision, and measure the degree of validity of the decision itself. Perhaps only Franco Archibugi, an Italian scholar who frequented certain international circles, continued to propose such tenacious, unshakable positions (Archibugi, 2003, 2005).

We do not, of course, intend to deny that, in many real planning problems however formulated, it is possible to identify specific issues of evaluation and choice that can usefully be expressed according to instrumental rationality principles. This happens in Davidoff's advocacy planning models and in Lindblom's disjointed incrementalism, in Etzioni's active society or Simon's limited rationality. But Faludi's view has rather more ambitious implications. It presupposes that the rationality principle can become the fundamental paradigm with which to define the entire problem and which has descriptive efficacy or normative relevance in the planning process. It is a generous intention that cannot become an alibi. Any practitioner knows how difficult it is to identify and evaluate the consequences of a political or administrative act, to reconstruct reliable causal links, to reach consensus regarding both problem formulation and the results of the analyses. Several alternatives to the rational-comprehensive model have emerged from various sound critiques of its groundlessness or unreliability and, as we have noted, are well expressed in that same *Reader* (Faludi, 1973a). Should these difficulties be answered with a mere statement of principle?

The second aspect that deserves further study is the *weakness of critical disciplinary reflection*. The lack of critical discussion regarding these hypotheses and proposals is surprising. The most recent disciplinary survey, not lacking in ambition (Hillier & Healey, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c), sees in the rationalist paradigm one of the great trends in international planning culture. In any case, it is limited to describing its characteristics in a neutral way without any real attempt to interpret the underlying meaning of, and reasons for, this movement and without expressing any critical judgement. Consequently, Faludi's thinking and proposals, with those of other rationalist proponents, are presented once again alongside many other different or alternative positions, such as his precursors' projections, political economy studies, pragmatic or institutionalist trends, complexity or difference paradigms, up to some recent post-rationalist tendencies. A critical review regarding the sustainability of each single position and their mutual consistency is lacking. The eclecticism of the overall representation blends with the conformism of the specific references. The cultural project for a disciplinary foundation (Part 1, Vol. I, 2008a) brings Faludi's simplifying view (1973a) together with some sceptical positions (Wildavsky, 1973; Rittel & Webber, 1973) and the acknowledgement of the growing variety and contingency of planning styles (Galloway & Mahayni, 1977;

Hudson, 1979), without managing to reach convincing clarification within the interpretative frameworks of the 1980s and 1990s (Healey et al., 1982; Friedmann, 1987; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). The specific trend of “planning as rational scientific management” (Part 3, Vol. I, 2008a) basically reproduces the contradictory framework presented in Faludi’s first *Reader* (1973a) without any important innovations except for updating the “strategic choice” approach (Friend & Hickling, 1987) and the debatable reference to implementation studies (Barrett & Fudge, 1981), which, as we have hinted, belong to a different cultural vision.

The editors’ presentation deserves attention (Hillier & Healey, 2008a). Without critical discussion, acknowledgement is given to the concept of planning as a societal guidance process based on scientifically valid documentation and understanding of problems that should, at the same time, help limit the role of politics and facilitate more democratic decision-making. The criticism and alternative positions (which we have already referred to) are not hidden, but “a hope and project for the future” continue to be recognised in the rationalist position. These contributions should, in fact, have known how to focus on such *crucial issues* as the relationships between ends and means, facts and values, individuals and social organisation, public guidance and social complexity. They succeeded in guiding attention towards *the ways in which* policies are formulated and accomplished requiring normative requirements exactly like the policy contents. The fact that these issues were introduced in unfounded, misleading ways does not seem so important to the editors. On the contrary, much subsequent criticism is considered to be ungenerous. If planning theory does not face the ingenuity and errors of its youth, how can it aspire to more influential social and cultural roles in the future?

The third and more radical line of discussion takes up some matters that were already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. We stated that a rational planning model can be re-proposed only in relation to a congruent vision both of society and politics. But this has rarely been dealt with in the disciplinary literature. We find few traces in the texts cited up to this point. At most, some methodological indications are available, which, however, prove clearly reductive. It is not enough to describe the formal characteristics of a *systems approach* or a *strategic choice approach* to justify the sociological and political relevance of the rational paradigm. John Friedmann deserves credit for undertaking the first important attempt to tackle the issue. His volume *Planning in the Public Domain* is usually considered a watershed contribution to the planning discipline as a social science (Friedmann, 1987).

The author organises a wide-ranging set of contributions into four large groups, two of which clearly belong to the more traditional rationalist framework (the others will be discussed in the following chapters). Using the term *policy analysis*, Friedmann alludes to a variegated group of rational decision-making methodologies and techniques developed in mature western societies during the second part of the 1900s. Its principal references included the experimental models of the *sciences of the artificial* (Simon, 1969; Friend & Jessop, 1969; Dror, 1971) and the applications of the *systems approach* to the field of urban or regional planning (McLoughlin, 1969, 1973; Chadwick, 1971). The first references clearly belong to the *limited rationality* paradigm. In relation to other families of methods for qualitative

evaluation or analysis, they reveal a more pragmatic, experimental approach, suitable for treating uncertainty and relating both to value differences and to environmental issues or problems of inter-institutional coordination (John Friend's work, and that of the Institute for Operational Research in Coventry, produced interesting methodological and empirical results during the course of the 1970s).

It was confirmed, as in general for Simon's school, that cognitive activities maintain their primacy over practices of action and interaction. The strategic and communicative dimensions in decision-making processes associated with the competition, or possible agreement, among a plurality of actors remained marginal. It was again a case of experiments in rational decision-making, albeit in more problematic forms as compared with the earlier tradition. Notwithstanding the selected title ("policy analysis"), real in-depth study of the meaning of these contributions and experiments within the sphere of *policy studies* is lacking (Ham & Hill, 1984; Howlett & Ramesh, 1995; John, 1998; Regonini, 2001). Curiously, Friedmann attributes a *conservative* ideological orientation to this family of methods, as the variety of techniques for societal guidance by its very definition devoid of innovative value. In truth, this opinion seems to be based on the author's ideological bent rather than on founded arguments. They are *decision instruments*, and only the effective ways of using them in a given context can determine the real meaning of the experience.

The same observation also holds true for the *systems approach* trend that exerted ephemeral influence on planning disciplines for a brief period (Beer, 1966; Buckley, 1967; von Bertalanffy, 1968; Churchman, 1971, 1979; Ackoff, 1974; Bennett & Chorley, 1978; Quade & Miser, 1985). Indeed, the crisis in the attempts to root planning within the social sciences (Perloff, 1957) drove some schools or scholars to explore the possibilities of founding a *general* method of planning that would be relevant for a large number of sectoral fields. Some cybernetic analogies raised initial interest with respect to this goal. The attempt was made to conceive the planning system as a device for the social control of urban space and form, understood as an evolving system made up of specific and mutually interrelated parts. The plan became a servomechanism by means of which society and politics sought to exercise powers of control over urban and regional development (McLoughlin, 1969). Technical innovation thus concerned the construction of dynamic, unitary representations of urban systems and the design of a regulatory and control system that was morphologically appropriate for the complexity of the object. Cybernetics seemed to offer new hopes for studying and controlling complex systems (Beer, 1959, 1966; Deutsch, 1966; Buckley, 1967). It appeared that the main problem was the analogical transfer of this knowledge into a new experimental field. It seemed interesting to explore new, more sophisticated, diversified and powerful control techniques in relation to multiple and continually changing problems. Actually, the analogy was merely a formal one, devoid of substantive rationale.

In fact, an interpretative, critical analysis reveals its evident paradoxes and incongruities (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Palermo, 1981, 1983). The metaphors for the city as a system and for the plan as a servomechanism should be considered conceptually debatable and not particularly fertile in practical terms. As Crozier observes, it is just a case of a minor ("insipid and empty") variant of the most traditional

positivist rationalism. It reproduces all of its limitations and ignores the strategic, political character of the human interactions that are at the base of every important change. David Harvey is not wrong when he considers the approach nothing more than an irrelevant distraction (Harvey, 1969). In fact, the systems approach in the field of urban and regional planning gave rise only to a series of purely methodological statements from which no important results ensued (McLoughlin, 1969; Chadwick, 1971). Indeed a few years later, the authors themselves strongly reappraised the systems emphasis in favour of a more traditional representation (McLoughlin, 1973). The idea that planning must be more flexible and adaptive continued to be confirmed along with the fact that a continuous planning process can be more relevant, on a practical level, than the formulation of a planning tool in any given moment. But this conclusion can be reached through many other approaches without having to resort to a systemic one. Faludi considers this approach of little significance, understanding it only as a dynamic variant of the traditional “survey before plan” approach, incapable of deep investigation into the crucial theme of decision-making (Faludi, 1987). The most critical question, in our opinion, regards the idea of society and politics underlying this approach: nothing more, once again, than the image of a *collective mind* that should steer processes of societal guidance. How is it formed and legitimated? How does it produce the necessary synthesis? There is no discussion of these topics, but only some positive prejudices lacking in foundation.

It is very difficult to find any answers to these questions in the literature on systemic planning. The very fact of conceiving planning as a form of decision-making – basically as a nexus between knowledge and action – might become an alibi for avoiding more radical enquiries into the nature of society and possibilities for spatial governance. The other approach deriving from the rationalist tradition singled out by Friedmann, *social reform* (Friedmann, 1987), is a partial exception. The common thread is the attempt to apply scientific knowledge regarding space and society to the management of urban affairs. The roots are distant, perhaps going back to the Europe of the late 1800s, in particular in France and Germany (but Friedmann’s genealogies are also debatable as we will see later). Nevertheless, more direct references concern the United States in the early 1900s with the *Social Engineering* (Social Taylorism) and the *New Deal* movements. The tendency was consolidated during the 1930s and 1940s with figures like Mitchell, Merriam, Person and Tugwell, from whom the Chicago school of rational planning was to descend (Perloff, 1957; Padilla, 1975). According to this tradition, the metaphor of the collective mind as an organ of societal guidance was founded on an explicitly *technocratic* view, accompanied by a widespread, optimistic *pragmatic* culture (elementary pragmatism – neither critical nor design-oriented). If the experts work well, if they are able to propose rational solutions on the basis of indisputable investigations, social consensus is inevitable. All actors, both aware and committed (*active* in Etzioni’s sense, 1968), will be motivated to share the reasonableness of policies and actions. Important reasons for conflict will not arise. In this sense, there is no need to adopt an a priori organic conception of society. It is possible to concede that its composition is individualistic without losing faith in consensus formation.

According to Etzioni, guiding top-down functions can be positively entwined with forms of bottom-up participation and coordination ensuring social cohesion and consensus. Obviously, this hypothesis might be plausible only in conditions that are as special as they are rare. It could be supposed that, following the Great Depression, the public role of regulation and intervention enjoyed great authoritativeness, also due to the lack of any alternative, and that the dire uncertainty caused by the crisis may have engendered cooperation between different social components. In any case, the attempt to generalise this hypothesis with different scenarios is a very risky move. Basically, this is the most serious limit to Faludi's proposal which was formulated when the Great Society experiment – JFK's reintroduction of important public programmes at the service of collective development – was already on a downturn (Wildavsky, 1979). Most probably the attempt was linked to the hope of reconstituting in Europe (first of all in Great Britain) more unitary, coherent planning systems (a missed target according to Ruth Glass, 1959). But the model of reference was entirely unsuitable. By that time, it was well outdated in the very homeland of rationalist culture, as the analyses of Banfield, Lindblom, Hirschman, Wildavsky and others unequivocally demonstrate even if Faludi did not seem to realise it.

This does not mean that interest in decision-making issues in the world of planning was abandoned. From the 1960s on, alternative views were not lacking and later they gave rise to important developments. Melvin Webber was an important figure although, surprisingly, he was not cited in Friedmann's vast review (Webber, 1964, 1968, 1969, 1978, 1983). His premise was an individualistic conception of society in which single subjects are not robots seeking to satisfy given preferences (as in Davidoff & Reiner, 1962 "choice theory of planning"), but express differentiated identities that evolve during the course of social interaction processes. Urban planning cannot deal only with the physical size, shape and density of the city. Social organisation and human interaction are crucial for understanding urban structure and agreeing upon its development. Scientific planning is only a mirage, especially during periods of intense and partially novel social change. It could be understood only as a process of *public discussion* during the course of which the definition of, and possible solution to, problems gradually emerge from the actors involved through rational public debate. The planner's task is to facilitate this process by listening, providing information, clarifying, comparing and evaluating, that is by *supporting decision-making* enabling the political system to achieve reasonable choices. It is not so important to create a regulatory plan that presages a final solution to a problem (like the earlier master plan) but to try to guarantee the necessary conditions so that the policy making process can become more legitimate, dialogical, aware and effective. Melvin Webber drew an idea from this background regarding "permissive planning" aimed at putting into motion virtuous processes of interaction and collective choice rather than prescriptive solutions. The core of decision-making is the synthesis of a plural public debate. Only by following this framework will it be possible later on to take up again and usefully reinterpret the relationship between decision-making and planning.

Chapter 9

The Social Rootedness of Urban Planning

The rationalist view does not necessarily presume the dominance of the public decision maker. Other social or economic components can play guiding roles regarding urban development. The actual processes would, therefore, reflect the power relationships in an economic system, the cogent norms and values in a consolidated social system or the emancipatory aspirations of an insurgent movement. However alternative these views might seem, the logical mechanism is always the same: a causal relationship between structural factors and a series of social and spatial consequences. Consequently, the effective space of decision, learning and action is reduced for individual actors. Thus, the issue of the *political construction* of collective choices is underestimated and that of the *social roots* of planning practices is simplified. What ensues is a basically introspective, pre-ordained view which risks becoming ideological. In fact, this cultural perspective has, for some time, seemed less topical, but some reference should be made to past influential trends. The common thread is a deterministic, simplifying interpretation of the social rootedness of planning, which can take on different empirical forms.

The 1970s was the period in which these trends appeared the most significant and influential. In France, Great Britain and, more generally, in Europe, neo-Marxist cultural positions and political-ideological views emerged. In that period, these represented the principal alternatives to the *procedural rational planning* paradigm coming from the other side of the ocean (Healey et al., 1982). At the same time, American planning culture very quickly abandoned the fragile models of public rational decision-making and some emerging trends sought to give voice to collective bottom-up movements, local identities and capacities for the self-organisation of communities (Grabow & Heskin, 1973; Friedmann, 1973, 1987, 1992; Heskin, 1980; Clavel, 1991; Sandercock, 1998a, 1998b, 2003). They were clearly two non-equivalent trends, which can be assessed differently depending on the point of view adopted. Usually these approaches are considered relevant because of their attention to the economic and social determinants of urban development and their critique of the limitations of some planning theories. Their indications appear weaker and more vague, or too ideological and exhortatory if the purpose is to pinpoint alternative ways of managing urban development.

A first group of experiences involved an important reinterpretation of the *object of planning*. Not only was the necessity for specific attention to the object reaffirmed

against merely procedural viewpoints, but study was no longer limited to evident forms but sought to penetrate more deeply the causal relations linking physical transformations with economic or social roots. We have seen how the idea of society underpinning the rational planning model was elementary and largely unfounded. Political economy, urban sociology and economic and social geography open up new horizons for analysis and interpretation, which are not possible to explore fully in this work. What is of interest is the perception of this vast field of experiences in the planning culture in terms of its selected references, interpretative frameworks and disciplinary “contaminations”.

The picture that emerges is undoubtedly a fragmented and contingent one. Only in some cases has this group of topics been understood as an inescapable and substantive effort which should be respected in any planning theory. It is certainly an exacting statement but, from a logical point of view, it is almost obvious. How can the opportunity to investigate the economic and social roots of urban development be denied (Cooke, 1983; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996; Fainstein, 2000)? On the contrary, according to authoritative, widespread opinion, it appeared that this effort could be associated in a strict sense with a specific disciplinary trend which, according to Healey and others, presented well-defined spatial and temporal characteristics. It was concentrated in a few schools and over a few decades of the last century – a *political economy* approach pitted against the rational paradigm and destined to be quickly prevailed upon by other approaches. It was as if, having acknowledged certain limits of the principal neo-Marxist theories, it was possible to avoid some of the underlying radical issues (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1979; Healey et al., 1982; Hillier & Healey, 2008b). Let us briefly reconsider and compare these different positions.

During the 1970s, the notion of “political economy” did not just indicate one of the possible branches of economic knowledge, but represented a trend emerging from urban studies (Saunders, 1981) which investigated the role of urban form and space within capitalist processes of economic production and social reproduction. On the other hand, “spatial sociology” was assigned the task of further investigating the role of spatial forms in developing social relations. The analysis of the needs and demands of collective consumption by the urban population was considered the specific function of “urban sociology” within a framework of political competition between contrasting interests (Pahl, 1970; Pickvance, 1976; Harloe, 1977, 1981; Dunleavy, 1980).

Healey et al. (1982) accepted this point of view as one of the rival planning approaches at the time. They recognised the attempt to focus the impact of fundamental economic and social relations on urban development and on planning practices as its peculiar features. These are not purely technical for they must confront differentiated, and often conflicting, economic interests and social relations. Therefore, they admitted the relevant role of planning in capital accumulation and social reproduction, supporting the existing order or in critical and insurgent forms. However, these issues were not investigated further in the cited literature. It can be noted that the “structuralist” trend was not documented in significant texts, while planning policy problems were dealt with in more empirical or procedural studies

(see, for example Boyle and Darke in Healey et al., 1982). In fact, for the editors, the neo-Marxist position did not represent an influential perspective for the future (McDougall in Healey et al., 1982), although this assessment was not sustained by well-argued, critical opinions.

The same conceptual framework was confirmed after almost 30 years (Hillier & Healey, 2008b). In this more recent text, the political economy approach is still understood as a specific school that developed in Europe during the 1970s – in a phase marked by growing crisis, conflict and social change – as an alternative to the more influential models of scientific management dating from the preceding decade. In this context, planning had to measure up to power relations and dominant interests, but also to the insurgent practices of the lower class aspiring for greater social justice and equality. It thus became an intrinsically *political activity*, which always presupposes advocacy, moral responsibility and social commitment. These ideas were interpreted, however, in rather different ways at the time. Some scholars took up the inheritance of Marxist thought and, in particular, the French structuralist tradition. Others explored new utopian scenarios which exalted the possibilities of physical and social change through the insurgent movements that challenged the established order. Yet, others investigated the emerging innovations of social regulation in a pluralist society. The casual juxtaposition, neither justified nor discussed, of such different traditions and approaches was probably a limit for theoretical thinking at the time.

In effect, this section of Hillier and Healey's *Reader* includes, without any real critical framing, texts linked in various ways with Marxist culture (Scott & Roweis, 1977; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1979; Harvey, 1985c), as well as heterogeneous references to utopian traditions (Friedmann & Weaver, 1979; Boyer, 1983) or to reformist views (like Norman Krumholz's equity planning, Krumholz, 1982; Krumholz & Forester, 1990; Krumholz & Clavel, 1994). It should be noted, however, that what is missing is any specific reference to the field of *urban policy studies*, which should also have been useful to clarify the evolution of the social regulation and urban governance mechanisms in contemporary society (e.g. Logan & Molotch, 1987; Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989; Judge, Stoker, & Wolman, 1995; Jonas and Wilson, 1999). The problem of the social rootedness of planning is dealt with as a singular feature in a contingent family of approaches instead of as a basic issue in any planning practice. So it could be sustained that, from the 1990s on, this line of research progressively declined along with interest in its crucial themes while other paradigms occupied centre stage.

Only a few voices emerging from the planning world have tried to sustain a more critical position (for example Fainstein & Fainstein, 1979; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). Neo-Marxist perspectives are considered here a fixed point in the critique of some influential notions regarding the rationality of collective choices, the interpretation of the role of the State (perhaps less autonomous and at the service of general interest than is usually supposed), and the understanding of some real influences on current urban development. They are also useful for clarifying the true functions of planning – as an activity supporting the processes of capitalist growth, controlling social conflict or for reforming the policies of social cohesion

and redistribution. However, these multiple activities always risk creating new contradictions. This critical view is not linked to a contingent cultural approach, but presumably represents a condition that is difficult for the planner to avoid.

The planner can adopt choices having different orientations regarding ethics and social commitment and can decide to operate in harmony with the dominant powers or to play a reformist, or even more radical, role (albeit with limited probabilities of success). But the planner will not be able to ignore the crucial importance of these issues and the responsibility for some consequent choices. Nor will he be able to settle for consolatory ideological representations that tend either to legitimise the conservation of a dominant order (even if there may be doubts about its efficacy and equity), or to extol the possibilities for the formation of ecumenical consensus regarding strategic decisions, or to attribute to local movements great potential for radical change. What is needed, according to Susan Fainstein, is an ever *critical and realistic* attitude. It is not so important to design utopian scenarios for an unspecified future but to be able to grasp the real reasons underlying the problems (Scott & Roweis, 1977; Roweis, 1979): *reality as it is* and the concrete possibilities for modifying it *in spite of what reality itself is* (the obstacles that Albert Hirschman, 1991, rightly drew attention to). One should avoid, however, the lucidity of the analysis to become a source of disenchantment and mistrust in possible reformist action.

We share these positions but we also must observe that only a part of the planning literature feels the need to restate these principles. Thinking about the social rootedness of planning in the 1970s deserves credit for placing these issues at the heart of the discussion. Nevertheless, not all the proposed solutions were as convincing. In fact, perhaps in many cases, they caused disappointment, leading a large part of the discipline to explore less arduous or more easily consolatory routes. Here emerges a hard core of problems which would be pointless to try to elude. Perhaps it is worth starting over from these critical points with the awareness that many traditional dilemmas in planning theory have now lost their original innovative strength. “Comprehensive versus incremental planning, objectivity vs. advocacy, centralisation vs. decentralisation, top-down vs. bottom-up leadership, planning for people or planning for place” are themes and issues that belong to the discipline’s “adolescence” (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996, p. 10). The problems do not just concern principles or methodology and procedure, but are always practical and substantive. Planning cannot be understood as a disciplinary field in a more traditional academic sense. Rather it becomes a *crossroads* for the convergence of numerous fields of knowledge and practices. The political economy approach, properly perceived, is certainly one of its inseparable components.

Let us try to briefly re-examine the most critical questions from which we believe our study should begin. The first regards the “critique de la décision” (Castells, 1972; Sfez, 1973; Lojkin, 1977). The models discussed in the previous chapter are based upon the existence of a free, self-conscious subject – however vaguely defined – and a coherent, logical succession from the expression of rational will to public deliberation and implementation. However, behaviours, decisions and political stakes run the risk of appearing as just the facade of decision-making. Castells, Sfez, Lojkin and others raise doubts regarding the linearity and coherence of the

decision-making process (which is always political and not only administrative), the possibility of rationally debating its partial or final outcomes and above all the freedom of the individuals who should be responsible for the choices – their autonomy, capacity for control or negotiating within their specific context. According to the communicative perspectives, social action would only be the result – not strictly foreseeable – of a network of interdependent strategies managed by autonomous actors. This view risks concealing power relations as a mere ideological representation. All reference to individuals' social determination is lacking. What is their social position? What are their roles? What kinds of social contradictions are the individuals involved in? These questions are fundamental because the social rootedness of planning is an inevitable condition. In practice, planning is always a social product which cannot be explained if it is not anchored to real processes of urban development and to their social roots – that is to the resources, techniques, social relations and normative systems that characterise the organisation of a local society and its processes of production and reproduction. This conclusion is not always compatible with a large part of the new managerial views of planning, but leaves the key problem unresolved: how to conceive an alternative interpretation that is coherent with these principles. From this perspective, the research results are less satisfactory than the critical contributions.

Manuel (Castells, 1972, 1979) was one of the emerging figures in this debate. Developing Althusser's interpretation of Marx (Althusser, 1965), he proposed an original notion of urban structure as an expression of some fundamental economic functions – production, exchange, consumption and management – whose relations are analysed not only from an economic point of view, but also from legal-political and ideological ones. In this way, Castells built up an apparently powerful framework to explain spatial forms as dependent on a social structure determined by a given form of production (Poulantzas, 1968; Lojkin, 1972, 1976; Preteceille, 1973, 1975; Topalov, 1974; Lipietz, 1976). The premise is that the structure needs to be described and analysed as a system in order to be able to deduce the behaviour of each element within a particular combination of roles and relations. However, at least two important problems emerge from this approach. If structural relationships depend upon consolidated combinations of the different functions and upon the different social positions of the agents operating in support of each function, how should the evolutionary course of the social practices, as well as emerging contradictions, be understood? If it is true that some fundamental laws can explain the actual situation, it cannot be denied that practices continuously generate effects that are at least partially autonomous and unexpected. The risk is that these effects could create doubts regarding the structural relationships themselves. Castells' view enters a crisis when it becomes necessary to think at the same time about the structural conditions along with dynamics of change (Castells and Godard, 1974; Castells et al., 1978). The accurate and apparently stable formalisation of structural relationships becomes a hindrance to the possibilities for, and understanding of, change.

A second critical point should also be highlighted. By trying to single out the specific features of urban reality as manifestations of its underlying social structure, Castells favoured the dimension regarding economic consumption. The city

was basically a spatial unit of workforce reproduction. This schematisation seems unnecessarily rigid and risks underestimating the crucial role of cities and urban investments within processes of economic accumulation and development (which other scholars, like David Harvey, have usefully investigated: Harvey, 1973, 1985a, 1985b). Quite soon Castells himself was forced to acknowledge the limits of this theoretical view (Castells, 1979, 1983). The point that interests our study is the concept of urban planning that ensued during the 1970s. Inflexibility of the conceptual scheme leads to paradoxical outcomes: planning becomes understood as a mechanism which totally supports a dominant order, or on the contrary, social movements seem to be autonomous factors in radical change. Both hypotheses are clearly too schematic and eventually apodictic. Not only is there no place in this view for individual decisions, but opposing dogmatisms tend to deny the dimension of *politics* as an essential condition for change. Or rather, Castells attributed the task of managing the contradictions between the control functions of planning and the insurgent practices of social movements to the “politique urbaine”. The explanation of how to interpret this function, and with what chances of success, remained unclear. The correct need to overcome the limits of managerial decision-making led to a new deadlock.

To be truthful, many limitations of this viewpoint derive directly from explicit adherence to Marxist analytic methods involving ambitions and hypotheses that are difficult to sustain. It is based on the pre-existence and autonomy of the real world in relation to any interpretation and excludes the possibility of knowledge being reduced to the immediate experience of phenomena, because it would always be necessary to transcend empirical appearances to discover basic underlying relations. Furthermore, it aspires to *total knowledge*, that is, to the capacity to understand all essential interdependencies between the elements and facts that make up reality. These ambitious results could be achieved through a dialectical method, albeit quite vague and obscure.

This ideological approach prejudiced the relevance of the results. Perhaps the path of development of disciplinary thought and action would have been less contorted and more fertile if this school had been influenced more by Max Weber rather than by Karl Marx, because the interpretative views inspired by Weber excluded all claims to totality and were limited instead to partial surveys, always referring to a context to be assessed in relation to specific conditions. They express the constant, though always risky, attempt to maintain separate ideological visions and empirical analyses. They pay particular attention to individuals, to their degree of autonomy and self-consciousness, to subjective intentions and the conditions of context, to the consequent actions and interactions and emerging possibilities. They are therefore characterised by a desire to clarify the social rooting of collective choices without avoiding reference to the actors involved but also without accepting the ideological oversimplifications of a managerial decision-making culture. The first trends in political economy neglected this approach only to rediscover it sometime later. It is not useful now to imagine what different and more interesting developments might have been possible if, faced with that junction, Marxist influence had not been so dominant then and if pragmatic reformist positions had immediately obtained greater attention and credibility (Pahl, 1970; Pickvance, 1976; Saunders, 1981).

In fact, Manuel Castells' positions at the time were not an exception. At the same time, Henry Lefebvre demonstrated the strategic importance of urbanised space in the development processes of capitalist society (Lefebvre, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1974). The social production of space is not a natural process or a merely technical artefact but the outcome of spatial colonisation by a social model extending to ever new spheres of collective life. As with the analysis of any social formation, the essential structure of the relations between the concrete elements making up society needs to be reconstructed. This view is clearly an alternative to the more banal interpretations of urban planning as a technically more effective distribution of assets and functions in a predefined space – imagined as neutral, indifferent and objective.

The problem is to understand, and possibly modify, the dimensions of a set of social practices that are not only carried out in space, but which *produce new social space* where contradictions and aspirations, which are not always compatible, are reflected. Urban planning is neither a science nor only a decision-making technique but, indeed, an institution that is charged with managing this continuous flow of problems over time. As a rule, there is no doubt that this view is interesting as compared with the rather more ordinary conceptions of rationalist planning. However, Lefebvre's analysis stops short in the face of the crucial issue regarding how this institution can effectively function in a reformist way – not limited to the mere preservation of an existing order or support of dominant interests. The author confines himself to refuting the inherited cultural models (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925; Wirth, 1927; Hawley, 1950) which, placing emphasis on different mechanisms, always considered the city as an instrument of reproduction of the dominant social organisation. In his opinion, the urban condition can favour authentically modern experiences thanks to a high degree of social density and interaction; the break with cultural tradition and experimentation opens up new values and opportunities (Frisby, 1985; Berman, 1988). In this sense, it could become a determining factor in social innovation.

Therefore, the urban condition should become a “new right” for the individuals of modern society, one that can bring to life a revolutionary change (Lefebvre, 1968) like “a potential element of human liberation”, which passes through social mobilisation and conflict against capitalist domination over space and daily life. Thus, planning, too, could become a “vehicle for a project of freedom” if the more traditional conservative functions did not prevail (Dreyfus, 1976). Nevertheless, this vision also remains abstract and merely exhortatory. It belongs to the long libertarian tradition of planning culture (Choay, 1965, 2006; Fishman, 1977; Hall, 1988; Di Biagi, 2002) like a new form of utopia, which cannot, however, deploy specific instruments nor enable real hopes for effective change. Lefebvre shares with Castells the need to explore the social roots of planning, following a different route (which in fact seemed too subjectivist and arbitrary to Castells himself) to reach at equally abstract results: nothing more than an ideological vision.

David Harvey's contributions (1973, 1985a, 1985b, 1989b) were more rigorous and innovative, though initially conditioned, undoubtedly, by a prevalently Marxist approach. Spatial production was investigated first of all from the decision-making viewpoint regarding industrial capital investment, which can trigger virtuous effects because urbanisation processes tend to stimulate growth in the industrial economy.

Moreover, these processes are continually conditioned by concrete contradictions between capital and labour – including novel forms due to urban social movements – as well as between different capitalistic interests – those tending more towards productive growth and those linked with real estate values and the physical transformation of space. Harvey's analyses introduce a more complex idea of urban and social space in relation to the more elementary conceptual models proposed by engineers and planners, although still conditioned by an economy-based vision. However, the author manages to focus on the ethical and social consequences of the reproduction of the capitalist development model and clearly singles out the limitations of planning within that framework. The autonomy of the planning institution is relative, given the structure of social relations and the power of competing interests on the urban scene. The function of the State is not the abstract pursuit of a poorly defined general interest, but above all the stabilisation of the economic cycle in the face of the risk of crisis, with interventions and instruments of control and co-optation and with the tentative integration of emerging interests.

The planner is not the creator of the project for the future nor the arbiter or mediator between competing interests thanks to disciplinary knowledge. The planner is generally exposed to the risk of being co-opted by the most influential interests involved. He is presumably conditioned by a set of values and norms of common knowledge which may have decisive effects on his understanding of reality and social commitment. The critical revision of planning paradigms underway since the post-war period was meant mostly as a necessary renewal of technical-instrumental methods whereas the need to question the *dominant ideology* of planning, above all, was underestimated (Harvey, 1985c).

These brief references might be sufficient to clarify the meaning and limits of these schools. There is no doubt about the importance of their critical and interpretative contribution. The cursory simplifications, with which traditional planning culture represented society, economics and politics, and the actual decision-making processes, were rightly denounced. At the same time, certain directions were indicated and, though arduous, they might have led to a better understanding of real problems and possibilities for change, while the capacity to indicate strategies and tools for effective reformist policy remained partial or clearly limited. This was also due to the influence of some of the dogmatisms inherited from the Marxist tradition. It is true that some authors managed to free themselves from earlier ideological conditioning. Later, Manuel Castells again studied the relationships between social movements and urban policies according to a much more open, reflective framework (corroborated by important empirical surveys: Castells, 1983). If it is true that the city is a social product, the outcome of conflicts between contrasting interests, the author was no longer convinced that only one single part can, in general, carry out a decisive role for change – not even the urban social movements exalted in the previous years, which sometimes take on emancipatory finalities but often only represent specific interest groups. Neither was it possible to attribute the fundamental causes of change only to class conflicts. Thus, the Marxist tradition could no longer be considered the dominant paradigmatic matrix. It became necessary to patiently explore the game of interactions between multiple factors and separate actors according to

a pluralist vision of reality that could (in contrast to the classic liberalist one) better explore the social roots of individual and collective behaviours. It became an open field of complex problems after an era of ideological simplification.

Even later, Castells himself abandoned his original interest in spatially rooted social practices to explore the clearly growing importance of the flow networks in contemporary society; namely, to reconsider the relations between places and flows in the age of globalisation (Castells, 1989, 1997). This topic was developed even further over the last 15 years in the works of Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman (Beck, 1992, 2007; Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994; Bauman, 1991, 1999, 2000). At the same time, David Harvey proffered one of the most interesting spatial-temporal interpretations of contemporary society as a partly renewed form of early twentieth century modernity (Harvey, 1989a). We are indebted to Harvey for his subtle explorations of the forms of competition, or political cooperation, between economic interests in managing and developing large urban or metropolitan areas. His investigation of the pluralist city succeeded in being socially and economically rooted (Harvey, 1989b). A series of studies in economic, social and political geography with a critical, interpretative orientation continued to contribute to the understanding of the new relations between space and society (Brenner, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004; Brenner & Nik, 2002; Jessop, 1982, 1990, 1995, 2002; Smith, 1990, 1996, 2006; Swyngedouw, 2000; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002, 2003). Unfortunately this research has remained fundamentally separated from planning culture, which has long continued to prefer more simplifying views. As Castells observed almost 30 years ago, urban studies made enormous progress over the last decades, but the possibility of using this patrimony of knowledge to guide urban and regional development in legitimate and more effective ways remains uncertain (Castells, 1983).

During the same years, the principal alternative to rational planning in the United States was still the celebration of the innovative and transformative role of *territorial social movements*, usually meant in a more anarchical, libertarian way if compared with the structuralist models originally explored in Europe. John Friedmann added to the two large families of rationalist planning theories, already commented on in Chapter 8, two paradigmatic references denominated, respectively, *social learning* and *social mobilisation* (Friedmann, 1987). The first was the most robust, concrete alternative, in the United States, to technocratic *societal guidance* models. It was an evolutionary conception of change based on: the interaction between active individuals and their environment; mechanisms of collective learning through experience in a public arena; the possibility for the pragmatic revision of goals and actions through experimentation and finally faith in consensus-building practices. The idea emerges of a “learning society” that can progressively create conditions of cooperation between responsible and active individuals who dialogically build shared forms of action and collective life.

The ideological tendency is clearly a pragmatist one, but some doubts remain regarding the economic, social and political realism of this view. Strangely, this model, though rich in civic and reformist values, does not seem really innovative to Friedmann, as if the requirement for consensus formation excluded radical changes

in values and behaviours. With an ideological inclination that was, in actual fact, not discussed, the author attributes, instead, the ability of ensuring radical responses to emerging crises in cities and regions to the family of theories and practices called *social mobilisation*. He refers to widespread practices of self-organisation of local communities, networks of social movements that practise their emancipation from the existing order, referring to anarchical traditions or utopian trends confusedly intertwined with some lines of Marxist thought. The first two references are, however, more influential on the American tradition, from Mumford's regionalist view to the experiences of self-organisation in rural communities in South America. An idea of a "good society" is alluded to as a set of practices that are radical, autonomous and which question existing rules creating alternative values. In the name of the critique of the existing condition and in opposition to dominant powers, insurgent social mobilisation is proposed together with the rediscovery of *political communities*.

One should note that the principle is extraneous to the liberal culture of political pluralism and the utilitarian one inspiring the technocratic conceptions of planning. Even if this view could legitimately be considered a form of planning, its ideological nature and substantial arbitrariness remained. Friedmann came to these conclusions after having experimented, at different times, both the Chicago School rational approach with which he was educated at the mid-twentieth century and later the experiments of social learning in professional practice. Perhaps he overestimated some of the contingent tendencies. There was no reason to consider that this view was destined to become established in the near future, and in effect, most of the discipline distanced itself from his theses that were considered "too revolutionary" (Forester, 1990). Subsequent developments confirmed earlier doubts. Friedmann's position appeared just as unjustified and implausible as Castells' and others' temporary exaltation of the role of social movements. The difference was that the framework was structuralist in one case, community-based in the other. Moreover, Friedmann came to formulate his proposal when critical revision had been underway for some time in Europe (Castells, 1983).

To understand this approach, it is probably necessary to take into consideration some planning experiences in Latin America in which Friedmann played an influential role (Friedmann, 1992). In those particular conditions, it would never have been possible to foster development according to a technocratic model. The mobilisation of local resources (including latent or underutilised ones, as Hirschman, 1958, observes) is an indispensable step in development. It is not just a question of material resources because even more important is the potential that can be expressed in relation to society, economics and politics. In that context, Friedmann's view was not abstract or exhortatory but represented the only practicable course of action-conceived moreover with notable equilibrium and caution. For example, Friedmann clearly recognised that the role of the State is necessary, for both guiding and accompanying functions, and for large investments. This is a good distance from the antagonistic view referred to earlier. The desire to render democratic processes more inclusive and economic growth more sustainable represents an arduous challenge and an uncertain commitment. They cannot be understood as immediate effects of increased social mobilisation. As ideological and debatable as the alleged

paradigmatic view was, just as responsible and critical this experience appeared. It seems to be valid in specific empirical conditions. In this sense, Friedmann's view converged usefully towards a tradition of *local development policies* which enjoyed a noteworthy following for at least two decades (Friedmann & Weaver, 1979; Sachs, 1980, 1984; Magnaghi, 2000, 2005). It can also be observed that Friedmann's ideological drift arose from a real problem: the awareness that the new characteristics of the urban condition and spatial development in contemporary society could not be handled within the cultural and professional tradition of modernist planning (Sandercock, 1998a). The meaning and routes of an adequate disciplinary renewal do not, however, yet seem clear.

In conclusion, the general weakness of the social analysis that accompanied these explorations must be pointed out. The issue of the social roots of planning becomes an insidious indicator showing the fragility and incompleteness of certain alleged paradigms. The foundation of the technocratic conceptions was weak. The capacity for analysis and judgement of alternative views was no longer satisfactory; exploration of the relationships with economics, society and politics had to intensify. That the problem exists is beyond doubt. That the planning schools can face it is an assumption refuted by the facts. If the limits of planning were clear from this point of view, the subsequent progress made in planning theory seems rather unsatisfactory. Different interpretations of society and politics are acknowledged in an uncritical manner: from neo-Marxist positions to communitarian, pluralist or elitist ones, and so on. Sometimes preferences are expressed. So the rationalists become communitarian and then libertarian or something else without feeling the need to explain the reasons underlying these shifts. Above all, it is not so much the interpretation and critical thinking that is of interest, but the search for simplifying mechanisms to which to entrust the passage from knowledge to action. In this sense, it is difficult to see progress in relation to the elementary, unfounded features of the rationalist paradigm. We are still in a field of theoretical assumptions which need to be evaluated more in relation to practice than according to reasons of argumentative legitimacy. If the issues are highly complex, the way out always appears oversimplified or instrumental. Nothing more than "an ideology of planning" (Harvey, 1985c).

Chapter 10

The Interactive Turn

The positions outlined in the two preceding chapters continued to lose importance towards the end of the last century, especially from the 1980s on. It appeared clear at the time that the evolution of contemporary society and politics required a new direction in planning. In the age of globalisation, certain basic relationships between places and flows, local identities and exogenous pressures, mobility networks and multicultural contexts, spatial planning and development strategies were changing. Disciplinary innovation in the 1990s was generally understood as the logical consequence of these changes (Healey et al., 2000; Albrechts et al., 2001; Albrechts and Mandelbaum, 2005). Some important questions regarding theoretical revision remained in the shadow, their origins laying in the unresolved criticalities of the traditional approaches. Surprisingly, the most traditional topics lost their importance within the new framework. The social rootedness of planning problems and policies or the formation of collective choices in a pluralist, often conflictual, society apparently became marginal issues, having long been at the very heart of the dominant theories. Some pioneering visions and experiences which, through the criticism of the more orthodox positions, had foreseen problems and tendencies that were now at the centre of attention also appeared weak: for example, Lynch's and Rodwin's innovative interpretations of "urban form" (1958) or Melvin Webber's prefiguration of "non-place urban realm" (1964). Weak reflexiveness, lack of criticism, inadequate accumulation of knowledge, adaptive leanings towards emerging tendencies were all indications that confirmed the doubts we had already formulated: the discipline was not founded on a solid tradition and its paradigmatic definition was unstable.

In the late 1990s, Andreas Faludi also realised that it was essential to adopt a new framework. He singled out three perspectives that could, in his opinion, become influential: the *interactive*, the *communicative* and the *institutionalist* (Salet & Faludi, 2000). Planning is not generally a function and responsibility that can be interpreted autonomously by public authorities through their political and administrative exponents. Thus, *interaction activity* is undertaken among multiple actors and institutions. The discursive networks activated among these actors do not perform a merely instrumental function, but become *communicative actions* with influential consequences on planning process, that contribute to modifying expectations, relationships, strategies and individual behaviours. Moreover, the meaning and effects of the planning process cannot disregard the *normative framework*, meaning the set

of social norms that define the culture and identity of the context or the rules and procedures established to discipline individual action in the public sphere; it also means the systems of regulation or the new institutions deemed necessary to construct and agree upon in order to ensure legitimacy and efficacy to planning policy (March & Olsen, 1990; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

These trends have characteristics and meanings that are, however, not equivalent. Can the reassessment of the institutional dimension (Salet, 2000) be considered an original innovation? Could someone really think that it is possible to manage urban and regional development without concern for the norms, rules and institutions operating within a given context? Each affirmation in this sense is nothing more than proof of the limits of theories and practices that have long been influential. These limits have been harshly denounced in the case of more traditional town planning. The same critical attitude was lacking in the emerging planning schools when it was a matter of discussing the decision-centred views that generalist approaches favour independent of their contexts. Similarly, reductive simplifications of the social conditions were not lacking even in the more radical formulations of the political economy approach. Therefore, it seems strange that only at the end of the century did the discipline discover the *institutional dimension* (Healey, 1997). It must be admitted that a judgement of this kind implicitly involves harsh criticism regarding the inadequacy of the most influential paradigms of the past.

The other two lines in the theoretical evolution of planning are more interesting as paradigmatic innovations. The so-called *argumentative turn* in planning theory (Fisher & Forester, 1993) is a movement deriving from other fields (Rorty, 1982, 1989). In the 1990s, this turn effectively represented an innovative vision for spatial development processes. According to the more influential planning traditions, the idea of language was generally an instrumental one. It was a technical instrument for the formulation of problems and solutions, often disciplined by generalised codes, which tended to prefigure discursive forms, meanings and uses. It was as though the purpose were to reduce the ambivalence and attrition of communications as far as possible in order to establish a direct, univocal relationship among subjects, words and things. This claim, typical of positivist culture, soon appeared pointless. On the one hand, it seemed necessary to analyse the concrete forms of communication in real planning situations in order to better specify both the mediation effects of any communicative action as well as the impact that different types of communication can have on specific contexts and actors. This means questioning traditional models of instrumental rationality and recognising that planning practices require a variety of rationality principles that are more uncertain – but also more interesting – because they seek to explain the collective formation of strategies or agreements in a pluralistic context. It must be added, however, that some important attempts at anticipating “ideal models of communication” that could, in theory, guarantee certain criteria and objectives were not lacking either (Forester, 1985). These proposals belong to the Enlightenment tradition, with the pretence of providing predefined form and rules for practices that typically elude rigid codification. The ambivalence of the communicative paradigm has become a critical issue that is impossible to overestimate (we will take the point up again shortly).

Another premise might now be useful. Perhaps it would have been more difficult to explore these issues if, since the 1950s, some branches of planning had not undertaken a crucial turn – the most radical and the most decisive – that we might call the “interactive turn”, which remained marginal for a long time but gradually became more influential over the last 30 years. The idea of *interaction*, according to the most orthodox positions, represented only one of the emerging currents in the 1980s; but perhaps it was one of the most elementary ones (Healey et al., 1982). It must be noted that guiding spatial and urban development cannot be attributed exclusively to the public domain. The plurality of important actors and, in particular, the influential role of private interests must be acknowledged. The ensuing decisional games tend towards collective synthesis through negotiation and compromise. Basically the theme was reformulated according to political theories of pluralistic orientation. In this sense, the perspective could not be considered truly innovative. In fact, authoritative scholars have clearly considered the *institutionalist* or *communicative* tendencies more worthy of interest (Fisher & Forester, 1993; Healey, 1997). We do not share this view. To recognise the interactive nature of society first, and then of planning knowledge and action, seems a decisive way to overcome some of the limitations of the more traditional paradigms.

The first point concerns the underlying concept of society. Any organic or community vision risks being misleading – an undue simplification or rhetorical representation driven by ideological or instrumental goals. We do not believe that a *pluralist* vision can be left aside. This vision is, naturally, not unknown in the planning schools but is often underestimated due to some widespread prejudices. In fact, many scholars still continue to allude to outmoded models of political thought that acknowledge the plurality of the interest groups that are active in a social context, but offer too schematic a representation both of the actors and their identities – as if individuals were only self-referential robots pursuing goals of personal utility according to pre-ordained rather than evolutionary preferences, and to mutual relations of negotiation and exchange (Healey, 1997; Healey et al., 2000). Why? This representation is uselessly reductive and risks becoming a pretext in relation to which it could be easier to justify preferences for some alternative view. The principle of pluralism is fundamental in representing contemporary society. This view certainly does not exclude a richer idea of social actors, whose identities, goals and relations are formed and evolve within a real institutional framework, in which the possibilities for evolution through experience, interaction and learning become decisive. In this sense, mutual relations between subjects are not merely utilitarian and contractual but depend on numerous factors of meaning and forms of rationality (Dahl, 1967, 1971, 1989; Dahrendorf, 1979, 1983; Lindblom, 1990).

The second point regards the concept of *cognitive experience*. “Do you want to know? Act, that is, interact”, is a well-known pragmatic principle (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; von Foerster, 1981) that guided some leading interpretations of planning policy (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979; Wildavsky, 1979; Lindblom, 1990). We are far from both scientifically based hypotheses of decision-making according to a positivist notion of urban knowledge as well as any kind of structuralist determinism. Knowledge is formed through experience by means of the interaction

among numerous actors having different identities, interests and aims. The traditional expert is an external observer charged with studying and describing a state of things without prejudice with the goal of representing its authentic nature and plausible developments. On the contrary, the contemporary planner is someone who becomes part of a pluralistic process and, only through the networks of interactions in which he is institutionally involved, is really able to understand the nature of the problems, the possibilities for change and the most suitable way to interpret professional responsibilities in that particular context. Not only does the solution to the problems pass through numerous forms of interaction, but the interaction itself becomes a methodological alternative to cognitive investigation based in scientific tradition (Lindblom, 1990). In many cases, the exclusive reference to expert knowledge, and the attempt to apply its general principles to a specific context, is not sufficient and, in fact, may be misleading. The planner needs to know how to learn from interaction and also from local knowledge. Professional skill consists mainly in the ability to link, in a relevant and effective way, general principles, accumulated tacit knowledge and interactive experiences.

The third point is the concept of *planning action*. It is never only the pre-determined implementation – instrumental in relation to a given goal – of a decision made by an actor endowed with authority and competency, but it is also the contingent outcome of a decisional game in conditions of radical uncertainty, which does not depend on limits of information, resources or techniques but rather on the inflexible autonomy of each actor involved. This vision implies a more sophisticated idea of rationality as compared with the decision models criticised by Sfez, Castells and others (Castells, 1972; Sfez, 1973). Collective choices are the outcomes – not strictly pre-determined – of a set of strategic and communicative interactions between actors involved in a decision-making process. Implementation, too, is an emerging result as important empirical studies have shown disproving more traditional theories (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Barrett & Fudge, 1981). Processes of urban change may be explained as the progressive outcome of multiple games of interaction between conscious actors and contextual conditions and opportunities, which should not be understood as a state in nature but rather as a “concrete system of interactions” (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Friedberg, 1993; Ferraro, 1990). The “interactive turn” consists, first of all, in restating these three principles which open the way to new developments with respect to previous planning traditions. It is not, however, a matter of a univocal, clear approach because different profiles intertwine in ways that are sometimes confused. Let us try to identify and discuss these main lines of thinking.

In the early 1970s, John Friedmann, referring to more traditional positions, proposed a concept of “transactive planning”, which was not immediately legitimated in the academic world (Thomas & Healey, 1991; Alexander, 1995) but did, in time, become a milestone (Friedmann, 1973). The influence of Dewey’s notion of experience was clear (Dewey, 1929, 1938), but for many years its potentially disruptive impact on some of the traditional bases of planning theory remained less clear. At least three aspects deserve attention here.

The technocratic tradition posits that the planning process can be understood as clearly pre-determined *role-playing* in which the technician is one who suggests correct solutions based on expert skill, while needs are expressed by the population, goals by the political system and efficient execution guaranteed by the administration. This outline is probably overly simplistic. Not only can each party play many different roles but general functionalist models are not sufficient for foreseeing behaviours. What counts are the specific interpretations of the different roles within a framework of intersubjective relationships. Friedmann proposes returning a voice to the *concrete* subjects involved in planning processes. This entails new elements of uncertainty and precariousness but also a possible opening to deeper meaning which would otherwise have been precluded.

This perspective introduces a series of little-explored problems of communication. It is not just a matter of rendering the expert's technical language comprehensible to the parties involved by resorting to the most suitable forms of translation. According to a *transactive* logic, communication is never unilateral – from expert to user – but *mutual*. Each actor can learn from the others as long as they are all motivated to participate in the dialogue. The means of communication are numerous. They are not simply different forms of discourse, but of empathetic and intellectual intersubjective experiences as well as practical ones, often entailing moral judgements. Consequently, the variety of communicative techniques that need to be used can be considerable. From this viewpoint, it also follows that the planner's contribution is not merely a technical one, because it cannot avoid the responsibility of clarifying and evaluating alternative choices, elaborating on heterogeneous elements of knowledge or playing the role of process catalyser.

Furthermore, Friedmann reminds us that change, both in the form of collective learning and spatial development, cannot be imposed by a single actor, however powerful. It usually comes about as an *evolutionary possibility* within the system itself. This view is antithetical to the traditions discussed in the two previous chapters and, in general, moves away from western planning traditions (in fact, the author does make some references to Taoist thought). Two radically different concepts are at play here. On the one hand, is the hypothesis of direct and effective intervention by an influential actor (public or private, individual or collective) seeking to anticipate future development in a way that is coherent with given views and interests. On the other (as Jullien, 1996, 2005 explains well) is *indirect* action taken on forces and tendencies that are already active within a context to favour their *evolution* towards the hoped-for target, bringing about the desired collective result. This was a radical turn, even if Friedmann himself then followed more traditional routes. In place of the Enlightenment models of *societal guidance*, a more open, participatory and innovative *learning society* could be imagined. Could this be a new form of utopia?

These three lines of study were developed in various ways over the following decades. We can schematically distinguish two main tendencies. One is based on a liberal idea of society and politics, where mutual relationships between individuals are prevalently guided by incremental and utilitarian principles that lead – through a negotiation process – to acceptable compromise solutions. The other is a new

Enlightenment vision prefiguring the possibility of virtuous collective cooperation, thanks to dialogue between autonomous actors capable of good public debate. These are two borderline positions. The first is realistic but not particularly innovative. The second is more abstract and perhaps exhortatory. It is worth thinking about both to try to discern a different, more meaningful path.

The first model still refers to the “intelligence of democracy” as delineated by Charles Lindblom almost half a century ago (Lindblom, 1959, 1965; Hirschman & Lindblom, 1962; Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963). An interactive view of the processes of public choice was proposed as a critical alternative to the comprehensive conception of planning. Lindblom reiterated his positions in paradigmatic form in *Politics and Market* (Lindblom, 1977). The comprehensive view was based on the fact that a technical and administrative elite was able to interpret society and guide it towards progressive change. Political leadership would be able to legitimate the entire process. It was assumed that a unitary, shared development programme – able to overcome all divisions or contrasts between biased interests – could be identified. This would be a planning model founded not just on authority, but on reason, albeit technocratic, with foundations in the power structure. On the contrary, the liberal democracy model believed in the possibility of finding good solutions through social interaction – the confrontation of different, even conflicting, positions. Choices of collective interest are the result of decision-making deployed on different levels by numerous actors endowed with specific resources, goals and strategies with the awareness that their chances of rational choice are limited, but also that they always have relative autonomy (March & Simon, 1958; Cyert & March, 1963; Simon, 1969). This means that they can act and evaluate individually – without being subjected to superior, pre-ordained forms of control or coordination. However, they cannot ignore the interdependencies of their behaviours. The success or failure of individual action can depend on the ability to reach effective equilibria, although temporary and often partial, of *mutual adjustment*.

The solution to planning problems does not consist in pinpointing the best means to reach shared objectives. Adaptation of the goals to the means available is a more probable route as could be the selection of the problems themselves in relation to the solutions that seem most feasible (Wildavsky, 1973, 1979). Results that appear concretely possible to achieve are sought, rather than targets that are desirable in principle. The evaluation criterion is not the extent to which general goals are reached but rather the concrete progress made in relation to existing conditions. Progress is generally made through limited and successive steps taken in incremental ways. This means that choices are gradual and could be at least partially reversible. Consequently, the margin of error can be reduced and the possibilities to rectify mistakes are greater, thanks to continual trial-and-error processes. The fundamental point is that decisions of collective interest depend on discussion and accommodation among the visions of a number of actors. Each possesses a biased, probably oversimplified representation of the problem and first seeks to satisfy particular needs and interests, and is not obligated to pursue general ones. The result depends on agreement between all who have some interest in, and influence over, the outcome. This process of interaction produces a kind of “collective intelligence”,

which, according to Lindblom, could be guaranteed by no other method; neither by a central system of control nor by intentional forms of coordination.

Decision-making rationality is not defined beforehand through synoptic evaluation and analysis; it emerges a posteriori through social interaction. The multiplicity of points of view and the interactive, incremental method may involve risks of fragmentation and short-sightedness, but they can also guarantee pluralistic, compatible, cautious and effective choices. The more numerous the points of view involved and the more intense the interaction, the more meaningful the representation of the complexity of the system can be. According to Lindblom, like Wildavsky and others, no centralised decision-making system could produce better results (Lindblom, 1977, 1979; Wildavsky, 1979). A sequence of small steps can gradually lead towards important change, while comprehensive reform does not generally produce the desired effects, also because public policies are never definitively decided but can be redefined considerably during implementation process. What emerges is an idea of policy process that is quite different from the one more familiar to traditional urban planning. To face a development problem, it is not indispensable to establish centralised coordination or to rely on a single competent authority. To govern means to create the conditions for fertile cooperation between different institutional and social actors and for the interaction networks to favour processes of collective learning (this position alludes to the Taoist principles recalled by Friedmann even though this reference is not emphasised). The plurality of the actors involved can improve the quality of the public choices because each could represent complementary questions and interests. In the face of the risk of fragmentation, the remedy cannot be reintroducing synoptic programming models, but rather seeking institutional and social mechanisms that can facilitate mutual adjustment between the parties involved. In the urban planning field, this means that the plan should not reflect the rational-comprehensive view of a dominant actor but rather it should express a scenario of reasonable adjustment of policies pursued by the principal actors involved. Experience seems to suggest that this could be a fertile interpretation of the real processes of spatial governance, all the more so given the economic and social circumstances of the end of the twentieth century. It is legitimate to wonder whether it can guarantee the quality of overall results and their coherence with stated aims which generally concern preservation, equity and efficacy. It all depends on the quality of the interaction, mediation and the possible synthesis within a given context. There are no a priori *guarantees* except for the rigorous, responsible effort made by the parties involved over the course of the planning process. In any case, there is no synoptic method or general legal measure that can a priori ensure better outcomes.

Lindblom's approach does not take up and develop all the themes involved in the *interactive turn*. The theme of intersubjective relations expressed by Friedmann is clearly underestimated, while the notion of "communicative action" and "learning society" are not the specific issues of critical thinking. There is no doubt that the origins were instrumental and utilitarian (as Healey et al., 2000 denounced), but it is also clear that over time Lindblom's focus on processes of forming shared meanings and evolutionary change of actors' preferences greatly increased (Lindblom,

1990). The strength and weakness of this viewpoint are now evident and justify neither praise nor cursory criticism. The acknowledged autonomy of local actors and networks, denied by any centralist or paternalistic model, can be appreciated, and the average competence of subjects regarding certain local questions can be recognised. It is correct for individuals take a stance on choices that directly concern them. It can be agreed that plural transactions may become the most effective mechanisms for coordination especially after the failure of the massive policies regarding the centralisation of information and decisions. Gradualism and reversibility do not only represent limits. Perhaps specific and incremental problems enable the actors involved to express motivated preferences.

The weaknesses of this viewpoint lie in its reference to generally precarious and ambiguous individual preferences, often conditioned by factors concerning context, the partial degree of inclusion in the decision-making process and a certain inertia regarding design questions due to the incremental nature of the problem faced. Above all, it should not be forgotten that the exchanges directed towards compromise cannot disregard the fabric of shared norms. The pure self-referentiality of the actors involved in the process would be dissipative. Private interests might prove short-sighted to the actors themselves. We know that relations based on market criteria cannot face issues that are certainly important in this field such as common goods, public goods, externality or indivisibility (Hardin, 1968; Hardin & Baden, 1977; Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, Dietz, Dolsak, Stern, Stonich, & Weber, 2002). Without learning and self-organising mechanisms that can help the goals and preferences of the actors evolve in virtuous ways, the quality of the interaction might decrease. These limits are evident, but at least they emerge from a realistic picture that can represent many concrete processes and point out the principal criticalities. Other visions are perhaps more edifying but also more abstract and sometimes only exhortatory.

In our opinion, this judgement holds true for the *communicative theories of planning* that aroused such great attention in the 1990s (the ascending phase of the cycle now seems to be over). John Forester's work offers the most significant documentation on this topic (Forester, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1999, 2009). The author reintroduced the question of communicative action and intersubjective discursive relations that had already pointed out by Friedmann. He found a potentially fertile theoretical framework in Jurgen Habermas' critical theory (Habermas, 1981, 1985). *Communicative reason* is a form of rationality seeking harmony between autonomous and responsible individuals through forms of public argumentation that enable the verification and possible revision of the original proposals of the single subjects. A positive result of this process is conditioned by certain requirements concerning the actors themselves and communications in public. Habermas did not invent this view – already expressed as early in history as classical Greece – but he defined an ideal discursive situation in which agreement would become the most rational result (Habermas, 1981). The fundamental requisites of the discussion are meaningfulness, sincerity, legitimacy and truth (Forester, 1985). Statements must be coherent with a shared framework of premises and meanings compatible with principles of scientific truth, not distorted by biased interests and valid in relation to the norms regulating collective life, not subjectively mystified – the subject should

not deceive himself either. If these conditions are valid, then the discussion becomes comprehensible and reasonably founded, mutual faith is established between the participants, and there are no doubts regarding the legitimacy of the actors' respective roles. Thus, the premises exist for comprehension, reasonableness and faith that enable the convergence of each individual's discourse towards "true and fair" shared meaning. The reasoning actually risks becoming tautological and therefore not particularly useful for evaluating or guiding effective situations, which are generally distant from the ideal model. Indeed, communications are almost always ambiguous; they frequently underpin falsehoods or unsustainable normative claims or offer misleading representations of a given situation.

In the 1980s, John Forester attempted to develop this conceptual framework for the field of planning that has always been seeking an authoritative theoretical guide. Thus, for a time, he tried to "apply Habermas' thought" to planning practices (Forester, 1985, 1993) with not very interesting results due to the obvious distance of the ideal model from real situations. Subsequently, his investigations and reflections abandoned all immediate claims to normative validity to explore actual communicative relations, attempting to investigate and interpret real communicative distortions and their consequences, and to test the possible role of the *planner* as an expert in *public dispute resolution*. In this way, Forester resumed the *critical* orientation of Habermas' formulation without binding himself to its original *normative* claims. Instead, he sought to develop an idea of planning as an *attention-shaping* activity, which would encourage participation, communicate meanings, reveal mystifications and prejudices, and contribute to the formation of shared opinions and proposals. Through listening and public discussion, it would be possible to steer "public" opinion – public meant as a group of individuals involved in a common problem (Dewey, 1927) – towards desirable future scenarios. The planner's role is intrinsically *political* as he contributes to the collective construction of the future, influencing the representation and evaluation of problems, thus involving clear *ethical responsibilities*. If power structures influence the understanding of problems, citizens' trust and the degree of collective consensus regarding possible innovative actions, it would be up to the planner to guarantee conditions of transparent, undistorted communication (Forester, 1989).

A *progressive* profile of planning is thus outlined. While incremental visions tend to be conservative, advocacy planning carries out basically remedial functions, structuralist visions risk being without hope and radical ones overestimate the possibilities of spontaneous emancipation, Forester outlines the figure of the planner as an important agent in processes of social innovation, playing the role of facilitator or mediator and influencing the progressive evolution of the various planning situations. The "critical theory of planning" seems to clarify the criteria that must be satisfied by good communicative practices to reveal real situations and perspectives, correct false expectations, oppose cynicism, encourage investigation and broaden political responsibility, commitment and reformist action. In this version, social interaction is not reduced to bargaining, exchange or strategic competition but becomes the collective production of new meaning. The maieutic role attributed to the planner is anything but secondary. Indeed, it seems to aspire to a *vicarious role* with reference to the political authority (Palermo, 1992) because of its claim to

be able to reformulate expectations, opportunities and abilities of a variety of actors (as politics can do). However, we must note that the author tried to test this role in local micro-processes rather than in relation to large strategic choices (Forester, 1993, 1999, 2009).

The critical importance of Forester's contribution seems to lose its strength in these domains. The vision of the planner as facilitator, or mediator, tends to merge with the positive views, somewhat less problematic, espoused by Judith Innes (Innes, 1995; Innes & Booher, 2000, 2003) or by Lawrence Susskind (Susskind, Bacow, & Wheeler, 1983; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987; Susskind, McKernan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999). These authors, drawing on various interaction experiences, are convinced that the planner can methodically and successfully guide consensus-building regarding controversial choices. Innes seems to have no doubts about the method's possibility for success even where other analytical or negotiating approaches are destined to fail. The keys are the willingness of the actors to question biased points of view thanks to dialogue and public confrontation and the capacity of the planner to favour *creative reformulation* of the problem, which allows a reasonable solution beyond the controversies and without it being necessary to resort to conflict (Sclavi, 2000). It is almost as though it were only a problem of technique (paradoxically the figure of the expert re-emerges). Role-playing, simulations, bricolage and reframing exercises competently accompanied by the planner's expertise seem to be able to ensure satisfactory results. If, in some cases, it is not possible to reach agreement, the experience would not be devoid of any utility because it could create new social capital and learning opportunities for the actors involved. A vision without many doubts is proposed. In truth, it appears barely critical like some earlier technocratic traditions and yet it seems largely exhortatory because the faith in the possibility of finding agreement proves to be devoid of any real foundations.

Susskind's approach reveals slightly different origins insofar as the logic of the interactions, in these cases, is basically contractual. What is sought is a good compromise, which should respond, moreover, to requirements that Forester would have every reason to share: fairness, openness, participation and listening, transparency and the right to dissent. Susskind does not believe in the utility of techniques of consensus manipulation nor does he share the instrumental use of argumentation typical of advocacy planning. Instead, he believes in the possibility for the transparent formation of agreement through public confrontation steered by the planner. This process should enable each party to reconsider its true interests and could lead to reformulating the decision-making process to ensure partial benefits for each. This is the goal that seems possible thanks to the differences in the visions and interests of the parties, aiming at distinct yet often complementary advantages. Thus, Susskind suggests skilful "contamination" between contractual and communicative rationality, which may enable some professional success in specific situations. Nevertheless, some important doubts remain. Can we exclude the use of processes of manipulation of information and confrontation to encourage agreement? Does not the reformulation of the decision game, in a form ensuring benefits for all participants involved, come about to the detriment of other parties or places where negative externalities are transferred? Or does it not happen thanks to postponement of some particularly

critical issue, that is, to a non-decision that risks aggravating another problem? On the other hand, Susskind himself recognises that the method can function only if the power imbalance is not too great, meaning if the political stakes are not too demanding. Do not similar observations hold true for Forester's more ambitious view as well? This point deserves to be discussed.

In fact, issues tied to "communicative reason" became topical again, a few years later, in forms that were no longer strictly connected to Habermas' ideal model, but perhaps they had also lost many critical ambitions. The metaphor of *deliberative democracy* (Dryzek, 1990, 2000; Benhabid, 1996; Elster, 1998; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Regonini, 2005) introduces a weaker model of rationality in relation to Habermas' ideal type for it is clearly lacking in foundations and fragile, perhaps implausible as an experiment exposed to numerous forces and contingent fluctuations. Yet it is demanding from an *ethical* point of view. What is at stake is the possibility of reaching complementary forms of collective choice that are more advanced than representative democracy itself but which are mostly conceived and verified, in our opinion, with insufficient critical spirit. It is a matter of creating, and experimenting with, spaces and processes that allow the greatest possible degree of inclusion and in which autonomous and responsible subjects can confront one another in a discursive mode to move towards shared meaning in relation to a problematic situation. Thus, a process with greater participation would be configured that would be better documented and therefore more competent, ensuring a more representative synthesis than the more standard procedures. However, as with Habermas' conceptual scheme, certain conditions are decisive. How inclusive is the process? Do equal opportunities really exist among the players? Is each one's autonomy ensured? Are each party's communication and discussion not distorted? Are preferences transformed by an argumentative route that is coherent with some idea of the common good? And how is political synthesis achieved? If it is necessary to resort to some kind of aggregation of preferences, as in the models of representative democracy, can we underestimate the ensuing effects of mediation? These questions are obvious. What is surprising here is the fact that the emphasis recently placed, in various contexts, on deliberative orientation greatly neglects problems of this kind (Palermo, 2009).

We certainly do not intend to deny the importance of public discourse and discussion. Hirschman showed how this mechanism can be decisive for changing individual convictions, a factor that is often indispensable for the activation of new development processes (Hirschman, 1970, 1982, 1991). Forester himself rightly highlighted an innovation worthy of note (Forester, 1999). If Donald Schön's reflective practitioner manages to learn from experience (Schön, 1983a), the deliberative models presume a more specific condition: convictions are transformed because of interaction and dialogue with others. Public discussion of different viewpoints is a potentially fertile way of exploring problematic situations. Participation is not only an efficient device, as in the *advocacy* model, but becomes an opportunity for change, which concerns ideas before actions. Through experiences of public deliberation, understanding of the context is formed and possibilities for intervention are generated. The recognition of these positive values is not under discussion.

The point is that overrating the diffusion and efficacy of deliberative processes and experiments does not seem correct. Empirical observation points out, in various contexts, only a limited number of local experiences (deliberative surveys, consensus conferences, citizens' juries) which are nothing more than pilot projects in which circumscribed deliberative games are simulated (Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Macedo, 1999; Fishkin & Laslett, 2002; Gastil & Levine, 2005).

For now, the understanding of the mechanisms and the evaluation of their results does, yet, seem thorough. Any generalising hypothesis would be premature at the moment. The links, proposed by various observers, between principles of deliberative democracy and *strategic planning* do not seem any more convincing. There are at least two reasons for this. In many cases, consensus-building regarding a development strategy is founded principally on negotiation and incentives or subjective rationales. Various actors can agree upon a common programme for separate particular interests without producing any real shared meaning except perhaps for articulating some vague goal. In other situations, which are perhaps even more frequent, the experience does not achieve the definition of strategic choices and coalitions, but is limited to images of social conversation that have basically rhetorical goals, without bringing into play the effective possibility for plural, transparent and evolving discussion. In any case, these are not true deliberative experiences. The lack of empirical references renders all discourses quite abstract. As a rule, the *quality of the deliberation* would constitute an excellent evaluation criterion of the policies under discussion. But like Habermas' "communicative rationality", this seems only to be a *borderline idea* with respect to which the majority of current practices should be considered inadequate. For these reasons, the communicative turn in planning, according to Friedmann, Forester and others, seems, in our opinion, destined to remain an unfinished project, like so many other Enlightenment visions aiming at founding a planning theory.

Chapter 11

The Collaborative Shift

It should be acknowledged that, during the 1990s, *communicative* orientation enjoyed growing influence in diverse contexts especially in Great Britain and the United States. The most significant cultural manifesto can be attributed to Patsy Healey, who outlined a new paradigm called *collaborative planning* (Healey, 1997). It seemed to be a more promising alternative to the traditional models of physical planning as well as a satisfactory foundation for planning as a social science. Her proposal summarises a series of intellectual and empirical explorations that had already been underway for more than a decade (partly discussed in the previous chapter) but was presumably influenced by the new political trends in spatial planning which emerged in Great Britain after Thatcherism (Thornley, 1991) and with the advent of Tony Blair.

In the United States, the growing spread and noteworthy success of “public dispute resolution” was probably influential as an effective form of coordinating relevant, well-represented interests, rather than a new form of deliberative democracy. As Susskind observed, these practices tend to be repeated because they seem to satisfy reasonable criteria of legitimacy and efficacy; indeed they produce some benefit for the participants apparently without creating negative external effects (Susskind, 1994). The converging outcome of these diverse experiences was a planning ideology nurtured by good principles, though elusive in relation to many critical problems. So, in our opinion, it cannot provide a decisive contribution either to theoretical reflection or to the development of innovative practices.

The central question from a technical point of view is tied to the possible re-introduction of *strategic spatial planning* tools which had, in the past, represented a specific British tradition (Healey et al., 2000), considered by Thatcher’s policies as superfluous, or even counterproductive, forms of public intervention. The preference was to allow the market the freedom to single out the most economically convenient developments, possibly accompanied by architectural icons in a post-modern style. An attempt to re-establish the spatial planning approach was undertaken at the time of New Labour rule in Britain at the end of the century. As a well-rooted activity in the social and institutional framework, planning required adequate governance involving numerous institutions, actors and levels, legitimated by vast social participation that could build consensus regarding large-scale development strategies over the medium/long term, but that could also effectively guide real development while

focusing on the specific quality of place. At the same time in the United States, large-scale strategic planning was prevalently aimed at supporting regional development and at coordinating plural interests in the real estate market (Bryson, 1988; Bryson & Einsweiler, 1988; Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Ames, 1993). Healey reinterpreted these programmes and experiences as manifestations of a new *collaborative planning* style that could link precise understanding of social and spatial dynamics, the project for the fairest, most inclusive and effective governance processes and institutions and attention to the physical and functional quality of places. This would be the new paradigm that could ensure the expected solution to every problem, sought in vain by the previous approaches.

How was this approach born? On what rationales and justifications was it founded? Why did it seem acceptable to expect such significant results? Obviously it is not enough to restate the simplifications and shortcomings of the previous attempts at founding planning as a social science – both the decision-centred view and the political economy approach. The strength in Healey's reasoning probably consists in a number of elements. In the first place, there is no doubt regarding the need to conceive and evaluate planning regulations, processes and actions within its specific context of norms and institutions, focusing attention on social and economic structure and not just on environmental features and physical morphology. In this sense, theory cannot be merely procedural, nor assume universal value regardless of context. As a framework, the author adopted Anthony Giddens' "theory of structuration" (Giddens, 1979, 1984, 1990). It was an impeccable choice from a methodological point of view but could not offer substantial contributions to the debate. Based on Giddens' theory, Healey stressed that any action within a given context depends on a framework of structural conditions delineating its possibilities and effects and that the same action, if important, can contribute to partially modifying certain context conditions according to a continuous dialectic relationship between structure and agency. Similar ideas are not unprecedented. Let us think, for example, of the interactive games between specific actors and system conditions, which Michel Crozier studied as new forms of individual and collective rationality that were more relevant than the traditional decision-making models (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Friedberg, 1993). The critical point here is that this principle, which could be shared, is not followed by specific, significant contributions in terms of empirical analysis and evaluation. What are the structuring forces that most influence urban and regional development in specific social and spatial contexts? How is it possible to conceive new projects that are not completely subordinated to the constraints posed by the context even if they satisfy essential feasibility requirements? How can the dialectical relationship between actions and structures become a matrix for change – under what conditions, in what time frames, with respect to what stakes? The methodological reference to Giddens does not assure any progress with regard to these points, which are not concretely analysed.

A second salient feature of Healey's approach is the centrality of *communicative interaction* in the construction of the planning process and in consensus formation. In the economic and social conditions of globalisation and post-modernity with growing fragmentation and disenchantment, rational collective choices

cannot be the result of a spreading utilitarian individualism or only of competitive confrontation between constituted interests, which are the prevalent features of the interactions according to the view attributed to Lindblom. The possibility that single actors can weigh and rework their points of view on the basis of shared discussion and evaluation is fundamental. In this way, perception of the problems and possible solutions can be *socially constructed* (this awareness was not yet fully mature, according to Healey, in Friedmann's "transactive planning", 1973). Thus, experiences of modifying the single actors' points of view become possible. Their behaviours are determined neither mechanically by social role (according to the orthodox political economy approach) nor by pre-constituted preferences (according to the more unrefined interpretations of pluralist political theory), but can evolve in relation to the system of social relations in which the single actor is rooted. On the other hand, these evolutionary processes do not produce the subordination of the individual to his context. Through actions and interactions, the individual plays an *active role*, which (according to Giddens) can lead to structural change. Processes of communicative interaction that are as inclusive as possible should enable the regeneration of a *local political community*, thus contributing to overcoming the "crisis of the public domain" characterising the post-modern condition (Sennett, 1970, 1977, 2006; Bagnasco, 1999; Bianchetti, 2008). Unfortunately, the picture thus portrayed is merely exhortatory. There is no thinking about the social and institutional conditions necessary for guaranteeing these results in specific concrete situations.

A third crucial issue emerges concerning *planning practice* based on this paradigmatic vision. It is an interpretation that prefers *process* over final actions and decisions. But this process should respond to demanding requirements regarding inclusive participation and correct public confrontation with good discussion whose outcome should be consensus-building and cooperation among separate, diversely oriented parties. This would be not just because of the effect of utilitarian evaluations that could lead to compromises and agreements, but because communicative interaction allows new ways of perceiving problems and thus creates the possibility for, and formation of, new shared opinions. It is as though the ideal model of communicative rationality developed by Habermas, as yet unfinished (Habermas, 1985), could at last be completely played out in a real context. But on the basis of which arguments and tests can this hypothesis find empirical confirmation?

Some years later, introducing the Italian edition of her 1997 book (Healey, 2003a, 2003b), the author took into consideration some of the criticism that had been stated previously. The collaborative paradigm still belonged to the procedural tradition. Contributions principally concerned the planning process while the substantive points (are the emerging choices right and sustainable?) were widely neglected. The impact of power relationships on the planning process had been underestimated. The critical reflexivity necessary for investigating certain decisive structuration mechanisms was lacking. Giddens' view was of no help with these themes. Adequate exploration of the economic grounds underlying the processes was missing. An increasingly inclusive amount of participation was desired while the logic of governance was generally selective. Curtailing consensus-building practices (as Niklas Luhmann, 1981, observes) could become a condition for policy feasibility. These

critiques seem reasonable (Fainstein, 2000; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000a; Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Brand & Graffikin, 2007) and do not permit definitive responses. However, we believe that more radical objections are legitimate and highlight the substantial weakness of this attempt to found planning theory as a social science. The discursive style of the *collaborative planner* seems to be too superficial, partly arbitrary and often deficient in original thinking. The more cursory and merciless the criticism of some inherited traditions (town planning and pluralist political theory are the most common targets), the more indulgent and exhortatory seems the gaze directed at their own positions. If these were subjected to the same critical scrutiny, could they really pass the test?

Healey's theory does not seem very convincing to us in its critical reasoning. The traditions referred to are represented in a schematic way. The ordering criterion is merely sectoral or disciplinary. Traditions of economic analysis, physical planning and political analysis are distinguished; however, in each sphere, the better-known references are enumerated without any critical review. Radical differences in approach are thus underestimated, rendering the sources mentioned incompatible; and there is no critical judgement regarding their varying importance in relation to current planning problems. If the economic view is under discussion, it is clear that Marxist, Keynesian or neo-liberal positions introduce us into non-equivalent scenarios, such as acclaiming technocratic management rather than forms of bottom-up governance. If the issue is the interpretation of town planning, it is not possible to juxtapose – without distinction – regulatory techniques, models of good urban form or spatial development strategies which express differing visions and approaches. If the framework is policy analysis, urban regulation or urban regime theories (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Stoker & Mossberger, 1994; Judge et al., 1995; Lauria & Whelan, 1995; Lauria, 1997) represent specific approaches in relation to Lindblom's or Davidoff's interactive views that are more familiar to the planners. We have always believed that the scanty attention with which the theoretical thinking draws near its indispensable complementary traditions (economic, managerial, political and so on) has always been a limit having serious consequences.

Some of the fundamental passages in Healey's reasoning may seem just as cursory. Better understanding of the social and institutional roots of planning is necessary, the author tells us. But at the same time, we need to improve governance capacities with the design of new, more adequate institutional mechanisms. Giddens' institutionalist analysis and Habermas' communicative theory were the main sources, respectively, for the former and the latter goals. The first does not raise radical objections, although it should be noted that interpretation and empirical verification is limited. In fact, it is not clear why Giddens' work should represent the most influential framework while a vast repertory of sociological or political studies, focusing on an interactive, often conflictual concept of society from which it could be possible to obtain significant interpretations, criticism and learning, is ignored (among others: Boudon, 1984; Crozier, 1987; Dahl, 1989; Coleman, 1990; Touraine, 1992, 2004). The second hypothesis appears even more debatable. Habermas' communicative theory has *normative* value insofar as it represents an ideal scenario

in which, given certain conditions, collaborative formation of shared agreements seems possible. It is not at all clear how this framework might guide concrete practice. In fact, John Forester, who was the first to explore this route in depth, very quickly took the trouble to specify that, in his study, the “ideal communicative situation” – which according to Habermas could ensure this kind of agreement – has no importance (Forester, 1985, 1993). The principal purpose was, instead to investigate real communicative interactions, the effects of distortion and the other issues already mentioned in the previous chapter. These analyses clearly show the distance between the ideal model and many concrete situations of strategic interest. Yet, Patsy Healey sustains that this ideal model may have practical value. The design of new institutions should be based on Habermasian logic. How plausible this hypothesis is and how it can be implemented in actual fact are not explained. The first impression is that it is a pure statement of principle. Or perhaps the authoress imagines that this result could be obtained by interpreting some tools and practices in innovative ways, like the forms of effective *governance* of urban development, the degree of *participation* in the planning process and the reintroduction of *strategic spatial planning* experiences. Unfortunately, Healey’s analysis regarding these themes also seems both summary and exhortatory at the same time.

There is no doubt concerning the importance and topicality of the issue of *governance* in the field of spatial planning in mature western societies. The plurality of actors or institutions, be they public or private, is increasing. They have the right, legitimately and in practice, to participate in decision-making processes on the different administrative levels and spatial scales. The problem lies in finding more adequate forms for interaction and consensus-building between these numerous interests, powers and points of view. This experimental practice could be understood as a programme for the renewal of the planning system which, at this stage, is indispensable. But it could also represent an emerging alternative to traditional forms of planning for no other reason than the fact that it grants great importance to *informal* and ad hoc interaction modes among the parties involved.

The basic premise is that social complexity no longer seems compatible with traditional hierarchical models of government, which take for granted a dominant power authorised to impose univocal prescriptions within its territorial domain. If the pure autonomy of market negotiations is not accepted as an alternative, new forms of exercising government functions in the age of globalisation should be identified. *Governance* is a way of governing that tends towards the synthesis, in the public interest, of the competing goals and strategies of a multiplicity of institutional and social actors utilising multiple tools (Rhodes, 1996, 1997; Pierre, 1999, 2000; Le Galès, 1993, 1998, 2002; Gaudin, 2002). The partly conflicting and overlapping interests and plural strategies within the same territory require the coordination and management of interaction networks that are ramified within a space that generally transcends traditional administrative boundaries. This goal is pursued not only on the basis of rules and procedures, but also on the basis of relations of trust and mechanisms of consensus-building. The principal contents of a *governance* process are managing networks; establishing relationships that are no longer hierarchical, but cooperative, between public authorities and private interests;

integrating or substituting traditional administrative proceedings with negotiations or agreements ratified by pacts and contracts; mobilising private resources and steering the evolution of individual strategies towards collective goals; giving life to coalitions that share and sustain a spatial strategy (among others: Kooiman, 1993; Peters, 1996, 1998; Pierre, 1998; Peters & Pierre, 1998; Stoker, 1999; Osborne, 2000; John, 2001; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Albrechts, 2003). These are creative experiments for which it is difficult to find models of conformity even though the cases are numerous. In fact, these actions and interactions question the accepted institutional order precisely because they are born from the difficulties in facing emerging problems through standard administrative behaviours. Performance in a real context will therefore be an influential measure of the quality of the experience even though, according to EU guidelines, evaluation should take into account certain shared criteria of “good governance” – meaning the degree of openness, participation and inclusion, coherence and accountability. Obviously, a process that guarantees these requirements to the highest degree should ensure the best results. It would be an error, however, to underestimate the risks and critical issues inherent in such processes.

Their informal and interactive nature raises clear questions of democratic legitimacy and administrative discretion. Who decides on the make-up of the actors within a governance process? Who guarantees that the outcomes will be coherent with the public interest? Can private actors take part in the formation of decisions of public interest as well as in their implementation? How can it be guaranteed that the political and administrative actor reports to public opinion regarding the discretionary nature of his behaviour? Do governance actions risk weakening law and standard procedures? Do the informality and contingency of the processes risk requiring an excess of regulation in an attempt to foresee and control possible negative consequences? An even more radical question emerges. In the organisation of a mature democratic society, the task of guaranteeing the citizen with regard to power, subjecting the sovereign to the law and placing limits to his authority belongs to administrative law defining the possible liberties, legitimate interests, mediation between interests and the rules for exercising power. In this era, the need is probably felt to “rethink the ideas of public interest, contractual relationships, forms of consensus formation, the idea of common good as a foundation of law” (Giuliani, 2006, p. 209, translated by the authors). *Governance*, nevertheless, might represent a summary attempt to avoid these problems, replacing the model of administrative law with contingent practices sustained, in the best conditions, by rules and criteria drawn from positive experiences. This is a critical step that raises much doubt and dissension.

If the supremacy of the public interest diminishes or is under discussion, if administrative procedures come about through bargaining or if negotiation takes the place of legal measures, and if horizontal interaction prevails over hierarchical relationships, the hope that planning can become more effective thanks to *governance* mechanisms represents an evident paradox. After a phase of intense – but not always sufficiently critical or reflexive – influence, today the expectations for this

innovative trend already seem to be declining in several contexts. Models for and experiences in *governance* could be considered preliminary opportunities in the initial phase of decision-making, which basically carries out functions not dissimilar to the structural or strategic visions mentioned earlier. In any case, we are dealing with materials that are useful in the preliminary phase of the planning process, rather than mechanisms and tools that directly influence policy outcome. It is easy to observe that widespread *governance* rhetoric has formed; its functions could, however, become prevalently symbolic. The effective development of decision-making processes usually follows other more discrete and decisive routes. However, there is no mention of these problems in Patsy Healey's discussion. The tendency seems positive a priori; doubts or caution regarding emerging problems and possible negative effects have not yet surfaced.

The theme of *participation* also has become an object of edifying simplification. The inclusive nature of planning processes seems to be an intrinsically positive and practically attainable goal. Yet not only do doubts seem legitimate regarding the ideologies of "deliberative democracy" (with the arguments already mentioned in Chapter 10), but the notion of participation itself requires a series of distinctions and critical revisions. It probably needs to be freed from a dense layer of rhetoric surrounding it in order to manifest its utility. Otherwise it might boil down to an image that cannot be refuted – available for any instrumental use but devoid of meaning and intrinsic value. The idea that participation is a positive form of interaction, which should naturally correspond to the moral preferences of any conventional person, has no foundation and, indeed, may be misleading. It is really a matter of a variety of practices that can take on diverging forms and meanings. They can indicate more developed kinds of public debate and collective deliberation thanks to the inclusion of a plurality of voices, including those without representation. They can also be reduced to techniques of manipulation and social control under the political guidance or pressure of vested interests that can use this rhetoric in instrumental ways. Or they take on explicit conflictual forms when it becomes impossible to curb disagreement in any other way. Like any complex social practice, they therefore have ambivalent features. Over the last decades, certain mutually alternative tendencies have been manifested in several contexts (Fareri, 2000, 2009).

In the 1970s, the proliferation of forms of *conflictual interaction* reached its peak. Participation often became an essential feature of *social movements* according to Touraine's or Melucci's theories (Touraine, 1973, 1988; Melucci, 1982, 1984). Their underlying ideal-typical notion assumes that a group of individuals tied by a principle of solidarity could rise up against the social establishment; and such collective action could lead to a disruptive crisis in the social system itself. This kind of interaction is distinguished from simple deviating behaviour, which represents contingent anomalies without questioning a system of power, rules and roles. It is also different from individual conflict, which arises from private interests and does not usually have the force to bring the system's compatibilities into play. As a form of collective action, it is different from "mass behaviour", which does not require the solidarity of the actors involved, but consists in a replication of similar individual behaviours

carried out by unrelated actors in the same spatial and temporal context. Some caution seems necessary here for, in actual fact, rare situations in our field correspond to Melucci's rigorous conditions.

On the other hand, the reference to "movements" is often emotive or superficial. It may only allude to joint collective behaviours without being based on solidarity, the pursuit of particular objectives without ties to the general interest or simple threats of antagonistic ruptures that are part of the game of political interaction. Or it may be devoid of the necessary strength to determine radical change from the bottom-up, despite the expectations of prominent scholars (Castells, 1983; Friedmann, 1987). In all such cases, the threat to the system's stability seems to be under control but perhaps its potential contribution to innovation and change is also weakened or reduced. This, according to Hirschman, may be one of the positive effects of conflictual action, the true pillar of democratic societies with market economies. Hirschman is the author who perhaps better than others succeeded in drawing attention to the positive value of conflicts (Hirschman, 1994). Conflictual actions can often determine a crisis in more traditional forms of social ties thus hindering processes of innovation. At the same time, they can contribute to generating new values and social ties on the basis of shared purposes. This ambivalence seems interesting to us.

From a conservative point of view, the risk of a crisis in the system might be underscored, but a look ahead towards the future might focus greater attention on possibilities for change. In any case, many experiences of collective movements in Europe or the United States in the 1970s – with urban and regional and environmental issues at stake – seem more contingent and marginal today as compared with past expectations (Sandercock, 1998b, 2003). Some of the period's classic texts tell a *histoire à thèse* which was moralistic and assertive rather than argumentative. They become emphatic interpretations of facts lacking in critical spirit, introducing simplifying generalisations in space and time and foreseeing a future of radical, definitive redemption. Instead, the real contributions to experimenting new social ties and possibilities for collective learning seem limited with results that often rewarded particular interests. It is true that this thinking was driven by strong emotion and great hope for change, but it also paved the way for inevitable disappointment (Sclavi, 2002; Bifulco & de Leonardis, 2003; Bifulco, 2003, 2005; Savoldi, 2006; de Leonardis, 2010). It would be worth recalling these experiences, because today when social movements in western societies no longer seem to take on antagonistic forms, the risk still exists of ideologically overestimating some new trends.

We can pinpoint a later period in which social interaction took on widespread forms of negative protest. One example is the NIMBY (*Not in My Back Yard*) syndrome. Local movements oppose choices that have been forced on them from above or from the outside – for example, heavy infrastructure, water purification plants, landfills. This is an exercise in "negative freedom" (Berlin, 1969), which is not lacking in good local reasons, and which may temporarily strengthen community ties in the face of threats from the outside. The risk is localistic closure that is indifferent to the needs of the greater collectivity. The moral of the story is often a bitter one because the problem is usually solved by providing compensation, which seeks

places more inclined towards this kind of exchange. Society, through its administrative structures, “pays for the nuisance” and compensation overcomes the difficulties of certain ethical dilemmas (what is the right choice in some local situations? Elster, 1992). These results might suggest that, if the process had been less coarse and imperative – meaning assisted and orchestrated – perhaps the conflict would not even have arisen in the first place. Those who analyse these processes state that in any case they constitute important experiences for forming a collective consciousness and therefore shared values, for example in relation to environmental issues. We must hope that this opinion is well-founded; otherwise these processes would be pointlessly dissipative.

The questions outlined above already introduce some references to current and more widespread forms of interaction – meaning *structured participation* which has, for at least two decades, been a solid disciplinary reference. American society is in the forefront in this field and it is easy to understand why. A large development project runs the risk of being blocked by the protests of individuals, institutions or movements. It is reasonable to try to foresee and forestall potential disagreement and conflict. This is the main purpose of the increasingly careful and widespread institutionalisation of forms of consultation and agreement with potentially more active and influential parties. Thus, structured participation is also an ambivalent practice. It can be a tool to give voice to those who do not feel they are represented in the planning process, but it can also bring order to a plurality of disparate visions.

The process itself can perform a number of different functions. It can contribute to disseminating knowledge regarding situations, needs, expectations and behaviours, according to the hypothesis (already mentioned) that considers interaction a precious cognitive instrument (in agreement with the “interactive knowledge” concept proposed by Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). It can facilitate the formation of integrated development policies in local contexts, favouring the mobilisation and coordination of a network of actors. It can contribute to improving the self-guiding abilities of a local community according to the best Anglo-Saxon or American traditions that are now beginning to exert influence on other European institutions. In general, it can strengthen relations of trust and cooperation within a context, providing the possibility for forming new “common sense” to resolve dilemmas of collective rationality (Schelling, 1960; Olson, 1965; Boudon, 1977; Elster, 1979, 1983; Axelrod, 1984; Gaudin, 2004; Thévenot, 2006). It can help improve “social capital” intended as the set of cooperative relations that a local culture can make available to the individuals involved or that these are able to mobilise. In any case, it is a common good destined to decay if not constantly cared for and used. It can help fill a void in “civic culture” that may still remain in contexts long dominated by vested interests. It can also symbolically represent the recognition of a right to citizenship for apparently marginal categories. Finally, it can also become a merely predetermined ritual with the main goal of guaranteeing consensus. We believe it is useful to keep this complexity in mind and put it to the test without prejudices on a case-by-case basis.

Some positions appear to be clearly unsatisfactory. There is no reason to consider that a participative procedure can guarantee a shift in the direction of

decision-making processes in traditional contexts. The hope of improving social capital cannot be a secondary difficult-to-measure goal that should compensate for limited results achieved by a development project on other substantial fronts. It cannot become a ritual alibi. On the other hand, there is no reason to deny a priori the meaning of the experience for the practice of discussion and interaction could, in any case, leave important traces. In addition, a word of caution should be added concerning the problem of technique (for example, consensus-building), which is not, in our opinion, a decisive issue. Much more decisive are the context itself, the problem setting process, the degree of consensus regarding the formulation of the problem itself, the types of interaction and requisites of the process. These issues require local knowledge for which indications in handbooks are usually of little help (it would be better to discuss practical cases but empirical documentation is usually lacking). It is always an illusion to think that techniques are decisive, and this hypothesis is particularly weak in the case of interactive processes. The meanings and possibilities of participation techniques are strongly conditioned by the context. Possible models and ideas should be adapted, reinterpreted or invented in different situations. For this reason, we do not share the technique-oriented approach put forth in some recent handbooks (Susskind et al., 1999; Sclavi, 2000).

Legitimate doubts about the instrumental function of the more common forms of institutionalised participation have increased in recent years especially regarding the growing diffusion of this family of practices. Perhaps in reaction, another trend has emerged that aims more radically to *mobilise from the bottom-up* in order to influence the direction of change. Some of these movements are called “insurgent” by Friedmann, Sandercock and others (Sandercock, 1998a, 1998b; Paba, 2003). This is not a well-defined concept. All the criteria identified by Melucci do not seem indispensable – the antagonistic tension, if not solidarity. System rupture is not under discussion. The view is simply an *energetic* one (Friedmann, 1987). It seems important that positive energies of change be liberated especially by those who are normally excluded or marginal, beginning with everyday life practices where individual needs and desires are directly experienced. Indeed, the disparity between an existing situation and hopes and desires for the future should become a source of energy for change. Once these energies have been liberated, something will happen, such as increasing the ability to establish new social networks, constructing locally shared projects, gradually producing conditions and actions of change within a transformative process that does not necessarily need to pass through catastrophic rupture but is more like self-organisation.

If this is the scenario, it seems to us that the view is exhortatory, like a new form of utopia seeking to become concrete. With a somewhat more traditional attitude, we would like to learn more about the social conditions and interests of these actors, about the interweaving of various mechanisms of social organisation and about the possibilities and effects of institutional mediation. There is silence on these points. What remains is an abstract potential for energy, but bereft of clear social rooting. It is not even a question of exploring autonomous, hopeful subjectivity that can question western society’s models, as some had imagined in the 1970s. Basically, it might just be an immediate manifestation of differences in the visions and rights,

desires and opportunities of various segments of our society, especially those at its edge. Would giving voice to these social components be sufficient to ensure change? Probably not; we cannot underestimate the role of the vested interests and institutions as well as the need for leadership in innovative processes. However, a pleasant sense of creativity remains. This is a good thing, even if it causes some embarrassment for the discipline. Some sustain, in effect, that the facilitator/mediator planner should not have or express ideas, interests and emotions but should only try to facilitate the emergence of “insurgent” solutions. The suggestion seems not only implausible to us but also plainly wrong. The expert cannot act in place of individuals, but neither can he deny his very existence. It becomes then a question of *interacting in a responsible way* with the context. Otherwise, the mediator should just preside over the process, apparently already destined for a positive outcome. The outcome of the planning game might be positive insofar as it sets in motion inexhaustible energy as well as the insurgent, creative character of the settled communities. We can share this hope, but we are not entirely sure that these expectations are reasonable and constructive. Most probably, there is no social analysis of the real processes that can sustain these apparent certainties. The scenarios are numerous, ambiguous, uncertain and controversial. We find it disconcerting that a high degree of inclusion may be adopted as an obvious requirement for communicative interaction without seeking comparisons, diagnoses and evaluations regarding this complex issue.

The attitude towards the apparently innovative instrumentation of *strategic spatial planning* is equally oversimplified (Salet & Faludi, 2000; Healey et al., 1997, 2000; Albrechts et al., 2001; Healey, 2007). A crucial underlying issue is how to interpret urban policy making today. Some classic questions are now being formulated in a partly renewed way. Who governs the city? What interest groups steer the process? How were they formed and how do they operate? And what forms of legitimisation and partnership between new interests are mobilised? Notable empirical developments in policy studies, especially in the United States, have, for a long time, made important contributions to this area. Such notions as “growth machine” and “urban regime” have focused on both the centrality of the processes of urban growth and economic development in contemporary cities, as well as on the formation, through these practices, of composite interest groups (political, administrative, entrepreneurial, and rent-seeking actors) that have been able to control and manage crucial contents and forms of urban growth in the mid-to-long period (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Lauria & Whelan, 1995; Fainstein, 1995). Study of the “theory of regulation” with its principally European origins has explored the role of important public policies in relation to the necessary local interactions between public and private actors (Elkin, 1987; Jessop, 1982, 1990, 1995; Judge et al., 1995; Jonas & Wilson, 1999).

These sources were well known to Patsy Healey and to the planning schools, yet they have been surprisingly underestimated. The point is not to adopt these contributions as a pre-ordained, definitive conceptual framework, because we could risk generalising contingent results. However, we cannot help but recognise the need for an approach inspired by “critical realism” aimed at exploring and clarifying

empirical processes and the concrete possibilities for plausible forecasting and change. A large part of the planning culture avoids these responsibilities preferring to rely on uplifting, but unrealistic, hope. Is it fair to understand the city today as a “collective actor” that can move in an inclusive, collaborative way on the competitive global stage? The ideologies of urban and regional marketing take this possibility for granted. The policy studies previously mentioned prompt us to be cautious, for usually particular and self-referential coalitions only give life to the “urban regime”. Prominent scholars take positions that waver between these extremes. David Harvey lucidly represents the networks of public and private interests that guide the new entrepreneurial capacity of emerging cities (Harvey, 1989b). Castells and Borja, surprisingly, limit themselves to celebrating presumed new professional roles and technical skills in agreement with a merely methodological vision of spatial marketing processes (Borja & Castells, 1997). Patrick Le Galès takes an ambiguous position: on the one hand, he proposes interpretations of urban phenomena that are coherent with “critical realism” but, on the other, he does not exclude the hypothesis that a dynamic, active contemporary city could today operate as a collective actor (Bagnasco & Le Galès, 2000; Le Galès, 2002). However, he does not explain what conditions are necessary for this to happen or what the limit is between an inclusive and an elitist process. *Collaborative planning* also glosses over this problem or, rather, accepts its most simplifying version (Healey, 2007). In still vaguely organic, community or utilitarian forms, the image of the collective actor confuses the effective functioning of the “urban regime” and the formation, not always clear, of coalitions of vested interests that can dominate urban competition.

Whatever the coalition governing the city, *strategic planning* should be an essential tool for giving shape and providing substance to innovative change. These experiences should create a *new shared vision* of conceiving urban problems and strategies; of modifying individual convictions and rendering coherent and shared both diagnoses and prospects. In addition it should introduce a framework that can guide overall strategies and at the same time justify specific interventions in space and time, like a strategic, proactive, integrated and place-based model of spatial governance (Healey et al., 2000). Through processes of social mobilisation and deliberative interaction seeking agreement and leading to legitimated choices, not only would it be possible to solve the problems under discussion, but it could also become possible to improve *institutional capacity*. Results would not only be contingent because this ability tends to reproduce itself: like social capital, the more it is used, the stronger it gets. Under these conditions, public action could become truly pragmatic, reflexive, capable of adaptive learning and coherent with high-quality standards. It is a pity that much real-world experience is nothing like this ideal model.

In practice, the extent of inclusion in a planning process is limited. The actors’ motivations are self-interested, often utilitarian and not particularly inclined towards change through discussion. Typically interactions are more competitive and contractual than agreement-oriented. Consensus, if it comes about, can be based on the distinct motivations of different types of actors without the true creation of new, shared meaning. The interest groups that guide the process are often pre-ordained

and so the entire process may become a useful tool for pursuing predetermined strategies. Only in some cases does the strategic experience lead to a selection of new priorities and even more rare is the possibility of a project-oriented exploration of the more critical aspects. Or perhaps the function of strategic planning is mainly rhetorical – a well-intentioned exercise of social conversation carried out without true conviction and often among secondary figures, while waiting for the dominant strategy to materialise within the context. In any case, it is not possible to overestimate the innovative strength of both strategic planning and the related experiences. Their meaning and effects will depend on the different conditions within the contexts themselves, first of all on social traditions and political cultures that encourage autonomy and individual responsibility and the pursuit of cooperative relations. If these conditions are not satisfied, there is no reason to expect significant results (Gaudin, 1993; Chaline, 1997; Donzelot & Estèbe, 1994; Donzelot et al., 2003; Pontier, 1998; Mongin, 2005). None of these problems seems to have been taken into consideration by the more orthodox *collaborative planning* scholars. It was taken for granted that the city was truly a collective actor, that the functioning of *integrated approaches* to planning was obvious (not a novel goal but almost always unsuccessful) and that the institutional and social conditions necessary for carrying out good practices were generally widespread. A significant symptom of the approach's superficiality is the rediscovery of the issue regarding *quality of place* (Healey et al., 2000; Healey, 2007) described in an urban marketing style, placing no real attention on the physical, environmental or morphological characteristics of space and physical form. These dimensions were lost quite a long time ago, as we have already shown, and they continue to remain extraneous to some schools of planning.

The most serious limitation of *collaborative planning*, in our opinion, is that it risks being reduced to an ideological manifesto expressing the will for participatory, democratic governance of urban and regional development in apparently favourable political circumstances, without investigating the critical underlying issues and thus without giving reasonable hope for innovative policies. Nothing more than an enthusiastic exhortation? Should we adopt it as a normative model in any case? Perhaps. But of course this is not a *concrete utopia* (Meyerson, 1961; Reiner, 1963; Giddens, 1990). The lack of empirical tests is surprising unless Healey truly believes that the recent strategic experiences, for which she offers a barely critical account, are the solutions to the problem (Healey, 2007). The years that have passed have confuted this hypothesis if it had ever appeared plausible.

Chapter 12

Escaping into Irrationality

The failure of the cultural programme outlined in the preceding chapter is confirmed, in our opinion, not only by concrete experiences but also by the evolution of planning theory. Healey and Hillier's *Reader*, which we have cited several times (Hillier & Healey, 2008c), does not adopt the *collaborative approach* as the point of arrival, but is forced to highlight another, more confused phase of research and experimentation concerning topics of diversity, complexity and new forms of rationality. The most recent planning experiences seem to confirm an unbridgeable distance from any modernist paradigm. It is a pity that the authors do not acknowledge that the roots of "communicative theory" are intrinsically modern (if the reference to Habermas' work has any meaning). Otherwise it is only a confused tangle of practices that are perhaps rich in good intentions but exposed to many risks and uneven contingent outcomes. On the other hand, the *increasing diversity* in contemporary societies – not only differences in class or rank, but in gender, ethnicity or culture (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Young, 1990; Zukin, 1996; Melucci, 2000; Sennett, 2006; Sassen, 2006) – renders the pursuit of consensus through public discussion more difficult, the design of new relational mechanisms more complicated and the conception of the real role of planner more uncertain. Moreover, the increasingly unmistakable elements of instability in institutional and organisational systems and the possibility of unexpected and sometimes "catastrophic" changes, that put the existing order at stake when some crucial parameter exceeds particular thresholds, can cause a crisis in the presumed capacity of planning to envisage, anticipate and guide development processes. It might be understood that part of the discipline, in a constant search for new, more effective theoretical references, casts its gaze towards so-called *complexity thinking*, a variety of research and practical approaches that found its roots above all in France and the United States. The general purpose of this research was to help better understand the dynamics of change in complex systems and to guide such evolution according to shared values and aims (for example Ashby, 1956; von Foerster & Zopf, 1962; Bateson, 1972, 1979; Morin, 1973, 1977a, 1977b; Watzlawick, 1976; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967, 1974; Atlan, 1979; Maturana and Varela, 1980, 1985; von Foerster, 1981; Prigogine & Stengers, 1979; Prigogine & Nicolis, 1987; Bocchi and Ceruti, 1985; Varela, 1989, 1999; Varela, Thompson, & Rosh, 1991).

However, a theoretical outlook that had already been mentioned in some previous phases leaves us baffled. It is not based on adequate critical revision within the planning discipline. Some leading reference is sought *outside* the discipline, sometimes on the basis of superficial analogies. Often literal, rather than metaphorical, transcription within the disciplinary field of concepts and models elaborated elsewhere proceeds without critical verification of the conditions of transferability. Can it surprise us that the results are modest – often no more than a convoluted statement of principle?

In effect, Healey and Hillier do not offer us more solid arguments than those just summarily cited. Their gaze is cast towards some lines of development in post-structuralist thought in France and the pragmatic, critical, experimental and co-evolutive trends in cognitivist research in the United States. It concerns both the critical reconsideration of some earlier structural or systemic visions that had been influential until the end of the 1970s and more recent interpretations of the effective formation of collective choices in a pluralistic society. It seems to be born more from disappointment with earlier theoretical experiments than from argued hopes of finally embarking on the correct route (Alexander, 1984). These heterogeneous references have sometimes little in common. The first error is to suggest a presumed “complexity theory” as if it were a unitary, coherent paradigmatic reference (Byrne, 1998, 2003; Chettiparamb, 2006).

There is no doubt today that the planner, too, must contend with the dimensions of the manifold, the temporal and the complex to use an expression of Prigogine’s (Prigogine & Stengers, 1979). The project context is distinguished by various, often contrasting, principles of identity, which evolve over time in ways that are not strictly foreseeable due to the autonomy of the actors and the emerging effects of interaction. Interaction cannot be prefigured according to schemes of transparent, generalising relations, but mostly take on inevitable features of contingency. *Pluralism, autonomy, interaction and contingency* are the basic categories of the condition denominated “complexity” (Palermo, 1983). Obviously planning has always dealt with this family of problems, but at other times the field attempted to order it within some dominant paradigm such as the decision-centred view, the political economy approach, and also, in our opinion, the “communicative turn”. Having ascertained the difficulties of these attempts, it would now be paradoxical to repeat similar errors with only seemingly new references. Yet this risk seems plausible to us. Instead of placing a critical reinterpretation of the fundamental problems and profiles of planning at the centre of the disciplinary review, new influential references are sought elsewhere, not without naivety or undue intellectual subordination. The most probable result is the formal rediscovery of some well-known principles after having pursued a course that is as brief as it is tiring. Sometimes there is the risk of falling into more serious contradictions with unaware superficiality.

Let us briefly consider some trends among the most notable. Significant examples are not lacking and seem to be multiplying. Bent Fleybjerg carried out interesting studies on the “dark side of planning” – the influence of *power relations* on the evolution of urban development and policy making, but also on the importance of “practical reason” – as compared with instrumental or scientific rationality – for

interpreting and guiding real processes (respectively Flyvbjerg, 1992, 1996, 2004). Unfortunately, he introduces the subject in a disputable way, which is probably not the most fruitful one. The issues of power and conflict are set out in an essay entitled “Planning and Foucault” (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). To criticise the undeserved use of Habermas’ communicative theory (criticism we share, as indicated in Chapter 11), the author considers it useful to introduce another authoritative source, Michel Foucault. But by doing this, he commits a similar error, even though his reasoning is potentially more interesting. It makes little sense to connect an uncertain, immature discipline like planning to the sophisticated thinking of an authoritative and original scholar who expresses intellectual interests and targets an audience that are both very different. It might have been more valuable to select a particular theme in Foucault’s work relating to problems of government and local power, and the consequent conflicts, all the better if developed from specific sociological and political research showing closer relations with planning practices (Miller, 1991; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007).

The outcome is a partial review of a high intellectual profile that needs great rigour and respect. The same observation seems to be true for the issues tied to the idea of *practical reason*. Flyvbjerg’s approach seems significant and could be shared in light of the misuse of the instrumental rationality models or the assumption that planning is a scientific activity. However, the reference to Aristotle (Flyvbjerg, 1992) seems academic and inevitably superficial. At the same time essential references are missing in the interpretations of practical reason in the social and political research that is more relevant to planning (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1977; Bernstein, 1976; Rorty, 1979, 1989; Bourdieu, 1980; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001), as well as in the controversial relations between practical reason and pragmatic culture in its different interpretations (Sini, 1972; Rorty, 1982; Murphy, 1990; Putnam, 1992; Santucci, 1992). The search for academic legitimacy produces acts of formal imitation, which rarely manage to inspire truly innovative thinking and acting.

The same limit appears in other realms as well. As already mentioned, so-called complexity theory is at the heart of many proposals. Some planning theorists feel the need to connect planning culture to issues belonging to that world. The meaning of this operation is dubious due to the vagueness of both references. As we have seen, planning theory allows countless interpretations that may have incomparable features. It thus becomes necessary, at the very least, to clarify the chosen paradigm but this does not happen here. On the other hand, the idea of complexity alludes to a heterogeneous set of systemic or cognitivist visions, which usually represent radical criticism of some traditional models (we have already pointed out an eclectic series of references that were in fashion at the end of the twentieth century). Most often, they are conceptual frameworks rather than empirical or normative theories in the strictest sense of the term. From the point of view of planning practices, potential interest could be metaphorical rather than directly theoretical or operational. Yet attempts to establish direct relationships between planning problems and some categories or formulations drawn from alleged “complexity theory” are not lacking. For example, Angelique Chettiparamb repeated this exercise several times in relation to

the ideas of “metaphor”, “autopoiesis” and “fractal spaces” (Chettiparamb, 2005, 2006, 2007).

We can find some points of interest in the first two explorations. The idea of *metaphor* is certainly important for understanding some of the evolutions in the post-positivist epistemology of social sciences, in the rhetoric of planning as a communicative practice and in the innovative methodologies of urban design. But it is not explained why it is necessary to refer to the traditions of complexity rather than discuss this problem using the disciplinary interpretations that have been available for some time. Suffice it, in this sense, to recall the exemplary contributions of Donald Schön (Schön, 1978, 1983a, 1987; Schön & Rein, 1994). Similarly, there is no need to refer to the works of Maturana and Varela to introduce the concept of *autopoiesis* as an innovative contribution to the planning discipline when it has been known for some time that many regional development processes can be usefully guided only by institutions and processes of *social self-organisation* (for example, Ostrom, 1990; Bagnasco, 1999, 2003). The reference to “fractal theory” seems less interesting; its main contribution may be vaguely metaphorical, as with René Thom’s theory of catastrophes almost 30 years ago. That was yet another formulation of great technical complexity that did not deserve the inconclusive attention it received (as suggested in Palermo, 1981). After all it is basically possible to imagine significant discontinuities in the evolution of complex systems without having to make use of such sophisticated analytical representations (Thom, 1980).

In much the same way, the critical review of the traditional notions of Euclidean space, whether absolute or relative, is not a novel theme and does not necessarily require a comparison with Mandelbrot’s fractal representations (Mandelbrot, 1975). Paradoxically “fractal theory” offers more sophisticated dynamic descriptions and explanations regarding geometry to a discipline that has for some time had widely neglected the problems of space and form. The two most obvious contributions regard the criticism of the concept of Euclidean space, which does not vary with changes in scale, and the renewed problem of the relationship between the observer and the observed: forms change depending on the degree of resolution of the representation itself. In this way it could be possible to conceptualise urbanised space as a “place” that can be a closed local system, or, with a broader horizon (Sassen, 1994), it can become a “node within a global network”. But it is hard to maintain that this contribution is truly innovative. Basically the “relational” concept of space (Harvey, 1989a, 2000; Graham & Healey, 1999), already formulated in an autonomous way in the planning world, constituted a more significant innovation. It would be useful if transdisciplinary explorations like these were accompanied by preliminary analysis of expected results and the underlying rationale that led to the exploration in the first place. A generic curiosity regarding fashionable topics or authors is not sufficient.

Chettiparamb’s contribution is limited to underlining some evidence, following a scholastic and inevitably superficial review of generally sophisticated intellectual traditions, whose metaphorical contribution to planning had already been highlighted for some time. To presume that it is fair to expect further contributions from more in-depth technical analysis is a doubtful hypothesis. In many cases, this is clearly destined for irrelevance. The same observations are valid in various other

fields. For example, Schönwandt follows up a statement of a series of well-known limits of the traditional planning theories with a scholastic reformulation of the basic principles of semiotics (Schönwandt, 2008). With an even more disputable, less fertile preference, some scholars refer to the sophisticated and, in part, not readily accessible thought of Jacques Lacan (Hillier & Gunder, 2003, 2005) to express an obvious idea, like the link between design-oriented tension and incomplete subjective desires, which any phenomenological or hermeneutic theory of architecture would be ready to confirm (Gregotti, 1966; De Carlo, 1995; Papi, 2000). The reasons why these exercises of literal transcription should open up new perspectives still remain obscure.

The problem is not one of opening new horizons. Albert Hirschman explained the importance of reformulating wicked problems in new, more fruitful ways, without limiting research within disciplinary boundaries. The *art of trespassing* has some demanding requirements. In order to avoid the common risk of foolish ambition or inconclusiveness, exploration must be guided by concrete questions within the discipline and its relevant practices. At the same time, one must know how to construct justified discussion and innovative proposals from transdisciplinary references. It is difficult to sustain that this result has been achieved in the cases mentioned previously. The internal questions do not seem clear. Indeed, it may often seem that the gaze beyond the boundary descends from the limits of planning theory and argumentation. The conclusions that can be drawn are very obvious: already known and difficult-to-face problems are simply reformulated – often adopting a uselessly sophisticated language – in ways that are new only to planning scholars. Perhaps some could imagine that this is only a first step while awaiting methodological developments and further techniques. How often this wait has proved pointless. There are good reasons to fear that the results associated with the explorations referred to here will be just as inconclusive.

We can, however, distinguish some cases in which not only the proposed intellectual exercise appears belated or futile (or, in any case, not at all innovative) but represents a *contradictory approach* in relation to some consolidated convictions within the planning discipline. The concept of rationality has always been a cornerstone in planning culture, both in the more orthodox instrumental form and in accordance with the new utopia of communicative reason discussed in the previous chapters. Some more recent trends also challenge this premise. The unfinished search for a rational foundation for an open, inevitably contingent, practice – even if undoubtedly influenced by certain structural conditions – is followed by an unjustified drift towards some trends in post-structuralist thought, which, in some cases, are clearly oriented towards *irrationalist* outcomes.

The recent work of Jean Hillier, inspired by Gilles Deleuze' complex research, documents this line of development quite well (Hillier, 2007). The author considers it essential to renew planning theory and practice no longer fit for the new conditions and problems of contemporary society. In an increasingly uncertain, dynamic and fluid world, numerous and changing trajectories of development – designed or more often co-evolutionary – intertwine in time and space in contingent ways to configure new temporary social practices and future opportunities. It is necessary

to imagine and understand this dynamic multiplicity. If this is the point of view, Hillier maintains that she has pinpointed useful references in the work of Deleuze to conceive a “post-representational theory of dynamic complexity” (Thrift, 1996, 2007). She attempts transcending traditional scientific codification of reality by a supposedly autonomous and neutral observer to enhance, instead, new links between numerous dynamics and relational networks, the performances of interactive systems, and the related forms of practical knowledge emerging during the planning process (a set of relations from which the observer himself cannot escape). The framework itself also seems useful in sustaining a “speculative and creative” concept of planning as a social practice that can explore virtual opportunities and synthesise the plural tendencies emerging from action contexts. Each plan, be it a programmatic framework or a local project, becomes both hypothesis and experiment representing a possible dynamic vision through which an existing order is questioned and some potentials take on temporary form. In the meanwhile, adaptive processes concerning the expectations, strategies and intentions of single actors open up, creating the conditions for further change. It must be accepted that these dynamics can arouse tensions among the subjects involved, but it also seems correct to hope that planning processes would be as inclusive and collaborative as possible. It should also be the task of the planner to bring to a synthesis, albeit temporary, desires and projects that are not mutually congruent or that are even incompatible.

This vision raises at least four radical objections. First, to emphasise her innovative contribution, the authoress underestimates some important existing traditions, which are rather less rigid and restrictive than commonly maintained. For example, it would be easy to show that planning’s *pragmatic culture* (well documented in the excellent contribution by Donald Schön, 1983a) already presupposes both a post-representational perspective as well an experimental, creative conception of planning. Richard Rorty’s reflections are illuminating regarding this first point (Rorty, 1982), but it would be sufficient to recall the notion of “interactive knowledge” and its implications. Regarding the second point, we need only observe how, according to Aaron Wildavsky, the concept of policy process is “creative and experimental” with indisputable dynamic, adaptive and collective learning features (Wildavsky, 1979; Stone, 1997, 1998). Hillier might object that this view of individuals, society and policy process, or even planning, still belongs to a pluralist tradition and is therefore not sufficiently “relational”. However, it is not enough to articulate this methodological requirement. It should be demonstrated that Hillier’s view is truly innovative in practice.

In the second place, the reference to, and use of, Deleuze’s thought in this case involves a very traditional idea of theory, which paradoxically reveals a background that still leans towards a positivist paradigm. A pre-established theoretical language is chosen that is intended to better capture real phenomena (“casting the nets” according to the well-known neo-positivist metaphor). Pragmatic and hermeneutic thought, as well as the post-structuralist one, have highlighted the limit of this *dualistic* vision of theory and experience (for example in geography, Soja, 1989, 2000). Hillier, on the other hand, turns to Deleuze’s theoretical language as a given

model to be applied to planning. This thinking might contradict the characteristics of the inexhaustible openness and contingency that should distinguish the approach.

The third critical observation concerns the merely formal use of this language. With apparent naivety, it is supposed that *fluid concepts* are necessary to describe dynamic contingencies. Not only: if cities are fluid and often conflictual realities, a new urban policy should also be equally fluid and process-oriented (Amin & Thrift, 2002). A “rhizomatic” view of spatial and social organisation as non-hierarchical structures – rich in horizontal connections, capable of continuously multiplying on the basis of contingent factors and conditions – seems to offer new prospects (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972). The authoress does not appear to consider, however, the substantive implications of some of Deleuze’s important contributions, which are not compatible with certain planning traditions that Hillier apparently does not want to exclude from the debate. For example, Deleuze, following Nietzsche, described an interesting concept of evaluation as an *artistic practice* that generates new visions of the world. On the contrary, Hillier does not distance herself from the more orthodox evaluation methodologies, which perform prevalently instrumental or barely rhetorical functions in several conceptions of the discipline (in fact, she even takes Brian McLoughlin’s traditional “systems approach” seriously). Deleuze considers sense-making as a *contingent, singular event*, independent from any deep essence or dominant tradition (Deleuze, 1969). But this position is antithetical to various planning currents – both radical and culturalist – that are still influential (see the *Reader* edited by Hillier & Healey, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). Above all, Deleuze, along with Guattari, proposes *irrationalist escape* in relation to the problems of contemporary society. He does not work out critical interpretations of the world because this commitment always seems destined to compromise. Instead, he does try, in vain, to deny the existing order in favour of a utopian space where desires can expand in every direction without constraint, like rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). We believe that, instead of imprudently adopting this view as a planning paradigm, Hillier should ask herself what process is more rhizomatic in these days than globalisation itself in the absence of adequate “governmentality” (Sassen, 1995) and how it might be possible to imagine that these autonomous, irresponsible trends can find a collaborative synthesis!

Finally, as our last objection, we believe it is fair to examine the *concrete results* of a new theoretical vision. The usual distinction between programmatic frameworks and local projects is confirmed. The experiences in strategic planning, which are often rhetorical or conservative, are referred to as promising innovations. An embarrassing Deleuzian reinterpretation is given to that laborious bureaucratic compromise that was the European Spatial Development Perspective, or an implausible virtuous reinterpretation of the simplifying “decision tree” to which spatial-economic planning resorts when it seems difficult to produce more significant results (as in the case of the Kosovo transport plan). These exercises of pure formal re-elaboration do not, until now, seem to justify Jean Hillier’s intellectual experiment, but neither do we believe that more interesting results can be possible in the future. This is an exemplary document describing a widespread approach that

requires, in our opinion, clear redirection. It is useless to continue seeking *elsewhere* a possible framework for interpretation and action – that could be more topical and satisfactory – if rigorous critical thinking about the meaning and possibilities of disciplinary practices is lacking. This is the deontological commitment that “planning theory” cannot escape if it wants to avoid irrelevance.

Chapter 13

Designing the Possible

The long journey described in the preceding chapters does not necessarily lead to a common destination. In fact it seems to show the criticalities of the more influential paradigms that have been posited – their logical incoherence, both internal and mutual, their simplifications and cultural ambiguities, their modest practical implications and effects that are often merely rhetorical or instrumental. Our hypothesis is that disciplinary renewal can come about only if there are more rigorous, innovative paradigmatic choices focusing on themes and issues, technical expertise and concrete modes of intervention as alternatives to some still influential traditions. In our opinion, the main attempts to establish planning theory as an autonomous social science have not achieved satisfying results and reorientation is necessary. *Critical realism*, a pragmatic approach towards the *construction of the possible* (in the most noble sense) and a *project-oriented ability* (addressing the project for concrete development, since plans and policy design are not sufficient) are categories and issues that should come back to the centre of attention, along with thinking about the possibilities and real processes of *change* in contemporary society. Part IV will examine different ways of interpreting these themes and the frameworks that can stem from them.

Let us begin with the “sense of the possible” which, in our opinion, becomes the first crucial question. We can recognise more than one trend tied to this concept. The most banal belongs to the popular pragmatism tradition, a framework which, on the threshold of the 1980s, according to Healey represented a minor current, almost a distortion of the responsibilities and legitimate ambitions of planning scholars (Healey et al., 1982). What are the goals of public action? “They coincide with what is possible” declared frankly the entrepreneurial mayor of an Italian city which for years had managed to implement a dynamic, active urban development policy (Palermo, 2009). This view represents a widespread trend and is confirmed by some of the more current modes of evaluating spatial policies and strategies. According to the more elementary interpretation of the pragmatic tradition, the guiding criterion for evaluating public policy might be *practical success* rather than validity of the scientific positions or the right reasons for, and social effects of, action (Sini, 1972; Rorty, 1989; Murphy, 1990; Putnam, 1992; Santucci, 1992). It would therefore be a performative and substantially self-referential vision permeated by a utilitarian perspective that can lead to short-sighted choices (Sen,

1982; Sen & Williams, 1984). In fact, in such reductive terms, it is difficult to find explicit reference to the pragmatic tradition in planning theory. Perhaps similar situations are not unusual in practice but the most common rhetoric does not settle for this view. Moreover, we cannot be satisfied with virtuous rhetoric.

The meaning and effects that some classic principles of pragmatism end up taking on in planning are much more important. It might be accepted that assessment of a planning experience will depend, to some extent, on the practical effects of its outcome or will at least be correlated to this. For the pragmatic tradition, inquiry originates in doubts emerging from a critical situation and concludes with a provisional agreement among the actors involved. The hypothesis may be accepted that *shared beliefs* are always at the base of every opinion. Investigation does not produce an objective representation of real conditions, for each interpretative experience is guided by a practical goal and mediated by a variety of strategic or communicative interactions. Thus, the representation does not reflect the intrinsic properties of the object, but depends on contingent interplay among intentions, actions and interactions that take shape in a given context. This means that pragmatic culture always produces *post-representational* visions of reality. There is, therefore, no need to draw inspiration from post-structuralist (or irrationalist) thought, as we have already pointed out in Chapter 12. From the pragmatic point of view, interpretative experience is not different from artistic creation; both are guided by performative criteria that have already shown themselves to be empirically effective. It could be recognised that, however temporary, the outcome of an inquiry as an artistic experience can satisfy some general requirements. It should be conscious, able to respond to contingent doubt and generate views, habits and behaviours, even if each new action will continue to arouse reasonable doubts. Are we sure that these positions are trivial and out of place? Links with some fundamental planning issues seem clear. It is true that the interpretation and use of these principles could be restrictive or merely instrumental, but it is not always so. For instance, two *critical* versions of undeniable interest emerge from Donald Schön's and John Forester's research (Schön, 1983a; Forester, 1989, 1993). Thus cautious judgement is needed along with an ability to distinguish and verify the uses and the practical implications of each pragmatic current. In principle, there is no doubt that this is a possible framework for a fruitful planning paradigm.

From another point of view, a borderline position lies in the concept of the possible as outlined by Jean Hillier and already mentioned in the preceding chapter (Hillier, 2007). In this case, the possible is not a variant of the real, but a *virtual dimension* that the planner should develop as a potential for endogenous transformation. Here again we find the *energetic* view already mentioned in Chapter 11. Ideal worlds and possible forces could coexist to make sense of, and give consequence to, important developments, if suitably disclosed. This would be one of the planner's roles; not just as mediator or catalyst of planning processes, but as agent contributing, with a variety of tools, to releasing influential forces for social and spatial change. There are clear utopian elements in this viewpoint, which could remain voluntaristic and exhortatory, or succumb to an irrationalist drift. The analysis lacks a true principle of reality, as well as a critical attitude towards present conditions and

even more towards their possible evolutions. In policy processes, the idea of public intentionality is often missing. This remains indispensable even if destined to find mediation in social interaction. These actors often seem indifferent to an “ethics of responsibility”. Can it be that anything goes if only some energy is released? So it seems, even though the meaning of the viewpoint is not merely utilitarian as in the case of common pragmatism. Effectively, it is a matter of totally abstract virtualities that elude any kind of judgement, except perhaps when they have materialised and one must acknowledge their consequences. This would be a strange destination for the planning discipline, paradoxically evolving from the ineffective will for “command and control” to a radically permissive attitude leaving the planner almost at the mercy of events. We find it difficult to understand the reasons for this approach and disagree with Jean Hillier’s use of Gilles Deleuze. This tendency could be interpreted as symptom of the poverty of today’s planning theory (Palermo, 2008b).

Another point of view seems more interesting to us. We can identify an additional approach in the *Taoist sense of the possible* that aroused John Friedmann’s attention even if the idea was not thoroughly developed by the author (Friedmann, 1973). Innovation comes about in the social and spatial context as the actualisation of some potential intrinsic to urban systems due to their morphological features, their local identity, the social networks of mobilised actors and the impetus and steering action of development policy. Planning, but even before that, the political system, must be aware that real conditions exist for which it is no longer possible to oppose the “potential of the situation” as the dynamic and situated outcome of the interplay among different and often contrasting interests, powers and expectations. Planning and politics should understand, with the wise ability to anticipate the course of events, how and to what degree it is possible to direct emerging processes in a desired direction, influencing the debate underway usually through an indirect route. Only apparently does the Taoist view seem passive or inert. In truth, it expresses practical wisdom, strategic intelligence and ability to influence as modest as it is potentially effective; the role of the planner is carried out mostly behind the scenes. It presumes a critical and dynamic interpretation of evolutionary processes, both underway and possible, as a realistic base (not merely virtual) for new scenarios, goals and projects. It brings into play prevalently indirect tools that could be used at the right moment to steer the course of events. Later, it might be possible to let the “potential” of the situation that has been created come about (Jullien, 1996, 2005).

If the work done corresponds to expectations, the results of the process will tend to be coherent with political aims, because the necessary conditions have been created or promoted for this to occur spontaneously. At the same time, the idea that the course of events can be predetermined according to an established plan seems abstract and unlikely. Communicative ideologies do not raise great hopes in this sense: before trying to persuade other subjects, an attempt should be made to induce them to converge towards a desired position acting in advance on conditions and possibilities (“everything is done before the word is spelled,” Jullien, 1996, p. 101, translated by the authors). The planner is not the recognised author of a new project (apparently a single indispensable author does not exist), but he

is certainly an influential craftsman shaping the course of events. This is not just a case of *metis* – cunning reason knowing how to take advantage of contingencies (Detienne & Vernant, 1974). What comes into play is a public vision as a component of a social discussion as along with disciplinary knowledge corroborated by experience involving the ability to produce interpretations, opinions, proposals, decisions, actions and thinking regarding the course to undertake. These are clearly key questions within the disciplinary experience for such planners or policy analysts of the pragmatic and critical current like Rodwin, Schön, Hirschman or Wildavsky (Wildavsky, 1979; Rodwin, 1981; Schön, 1983a; Hirschman, 1981, 1986). Perhaps this is the most current vision of the way to govern contemporary societies with a high degree of complexity. According to this scheme, it would be possible to reconsider the strategic and future-oriented role of planning, as long as certain crucial issues are studied further; in particular three important ones: *the context, the project and change*.

One family of questions concerns the representation of a problematic situation within its context. To accept the post-representational nature of a vision does not mean justifying any opinion. Some more perfunctory experiences tend to oversimplify the idea of context and situation. This limitation does not only concern the extreme interpretations of modernist architecture, but also, over the last 20 years, an important part of *urban design* (Zukin, 1988; Lang, 1994, 2005), *landscape urbanism* (Corner, 1999; Mostafavi & Najle, 2003; Waldheim, 2006), and in general, the so-called *new urbanism* (Duany & Plater-Zyberg, 1991; Calthorpe, 1993; Katz, 1994; Ellin, 1996; Talen, 1996, 1999, 2005; Dutton, 2000; Duany, Plater-Zyberg, & Speck, 2001; Grant, 2006); these are approaches which often appear clearly ephemeral or instrumental. The same criticism holds true for many *urban marketing* or *strategic planning* experiences, so greatly influenced by everyday managerial culture that they lose their ties with urban studies (Bryson & Einsweiler, 1988; Mintzberg, 1994. Perulli, 2004, 2007). But, in our opinion, it also holds true for various new tendencies in *urban planning*, as discussed in Part II. Since the time of the separation, in many situations, of the dominant planning culture from ways of conceiving and designing spatial development (according to Ellin for at least four or five decades), more than one sign of decline can be noticed in both disciplines. As we have attempted to show, many new theoretical and methodological visions of planning are not convincing, while the language of urban design often becomes over-simplified if not unscrupulously instrumental. In our opinion, this direction should be corrected.

For this purpose, two requirements seem essential. One basic principle is *political realism*. Investigation must face the real interests, powers and decisional games that condition development processes and enter into a dialectical relationship with public institutions and government programmes. These issues were faced some years ago by certain policy analysis currents but then were surprisingly neglected in planning research (Lauria & Whelan, 1995), which could become irrelevant if it continues to ignore the social and political roots of possible actions and decisions, the strategies of the influential powers, and the interests at play in an *urban regime* which, as a not-always transparent coalition of urban actors, guides development

processes (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Stone, 1989, 1993; Harding, 1997; Lauria, 1997). To bring up these issues does not mean a return to former political economy approaches (Chapter 9), the structural basis of which seems biased by excessive determinism. Since the 1990s, notable studies on urban policy have been available. They investigated real processes from the point of view of the emerging actors, the coalitions of interests, decisional games, redistributive consequences of the policies and the evolution of the actors' visions and strategies, based on a "learning from experience" assessment (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1986; Stone, 1993; Fainstein, 1994; Judge et al., 1995). According to Susan Fainstein, these perspectives are necessary to revitalise planning culture, to ensure an institutional and social framework and give true political meaning to current theories (Fainstein, 2000). Planners cannot deal principally with process and communication. They must return to investigating the concrete situations of the political economy and their possibilities for development – as well as their alternatives if necessary (Fainstein, 1995). A strong demand thus emerges for discussion with some critical trends in policy analysis. It is not a case of new experiences; some schools of planning had already studied in depth the political economy of urban development (in Britain, for example, Healey, 1983; Bruton & Nicholson, 1987; Reade, 1987). Today planning theory should try to emerge from the vicious circle it subsequently entered (Lauria & Whelan, 1995).

A second characteristic, just as important and equally underestimated for the purpose of analysing the situation, consists in focusing attention on the *city's physical dimension*. It is difficult to understand how a large part of planning theory has been able to sever its ties with this issue, relegating it to other disciplines like *urban design*, which is considered, moreover, a separate, almost extraneous field (Ellin, 1996). There are few exceptions. We can recall Lloyd Rodwin and Kevin Lynch's study of the interpretation of urban form (Lynch & Rodwin, 1958) followed by Lynch's seminal work on its evaluation and design (Lynch, 1960, 1981; Banerjee & Southworth, 1990). We may recall Donald Schön's attention to architectural design, the method of which, reinterpreted according to a pragmatic view, becomes an influential paradigm for planning (Schön, 1983a, 1983b). We can point out some other rare attempts to integrate planning with urban design practices after their separation in the 1960s. For example, Emily Talen observes that the edifying rhetoric of *new urbanism* has now, for two decades, celebrated some ideals that, in North America, any urban reformer would always have dreamt of (Talen, 2005): aspiration to a vital, beautiful, just and sustainable environment and the subsequent ability to reconcile potentially diverging objectives, such as the will for order and tolerance of diversity, individual freedom and social control, a comprehensive, and at the same time detailed, view, the generation of a communitarian space, but also the uniqueness of outstanding places.

Unfortunately, we must recognise that, in practice, the trend appears to lose strength in relation to the formal models of the *planned community* (Banerjee & Baer, 1984; Calthorpe & Van der Ryn, 1986; Fishman, 1987; Grant, 1994; Calthorpe & Fulton, 2001; Walter, 2007), neglecting other great traditions of the past such as the search for change of the urban reform or regionalist movements,

the forms and values of spontaneous urban life, the grand urban projects celebrating a city's beauty or functionality. Talen hopes for a renewed capacity to integrate these views that, in her opinion, could confer new meaning and value upon the *new urbanism* movement. Unfortunately she underestimates the substantial reasons for the differences, which cannot be eliminated by mere slogans. There is a logic in the conceptual simplification of *urban design* and perhaps its practitioners do not really feel the need for a more integrated approach. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the principal international planning schools discussed in the preceding chapters avoid these issues, while some interesting thinking can be found in the Italian experiences (Part III) that have assumed the relationship between *city planning* and *urban design* as a fundamental issue.

In fact, a second family of questions, which, in our opinion, are crucial for a paradigmatic renewal of planning, concerns the theme of *design*. The modernist model cannot become an alibi, an easy target of an inexhaustible dispute, justifying often debatable alternatives. Today can we still imagine that the urban project must express an ideal final state, following the will of a dominant force and the technical ability of a single author? Can we really suppose that, having methodically reached that state, problems will be solved and further modifications will not become necessary? Can we accept the idea that this solution can be imposed on the context "from the top down and from the outside"? Obviously, for some time, this has not been the way urban design has been conceived and practiced. Coherent with pragmatic theory, design is a creative and experimental process that submits a hypothesis of change to collective scrutiny not only through discussion, but also through interaction. This experience is a collective process. As in the case of Deweyan inquiry, the subject is not external but becomes part of a situation through a network of transactions. Design, like inquiry, does not consist in the selection of a course of action from other pre-established ones but is the *production of new possibilities*. This does not exclude a utopian dimension as long as it is not the exercise of authoritative or evasive imagination in relation to present problems, but it is still a "concrete utopia" (Meyerson, 1961) like the "celebration of possibilities" in a real situation (Baczko, 1978).

In this context, the designer does not confine himself to applying predetermined disciplinary knowledge to the solution of a well-formulated problem, but actually defines and sets the problem itself and applies the relevant expertise through interaction and practical knowledge. Academic scholarship is not usually self-sufficient and does not take on a dominant function in relation to common sense, professional practice and knowledge formed through interaction (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). Design experience itself becomes a form of creative inquiry and collective learning developed over the course of the actions undertaken. If the project is, at this point, the fundamental instrument for the interpretation and modification of the *urbs*, it cannot just be a matter of formal invention or modelling; a collective process of interaction and learning is required. Moreover, urban design enters into rapport with strategies and policies that do not follow deterministic relationships as pure spatial projections of pre-constituted goals and programmes, but rather through a process of mutual adaptation. Design also affects policy making and the relationship between urban policies and development projects. The emerging field of *policy*

design concerns both the construction of a programmatic framework and its organisation into agendas and actions (Schön & Rein, 1994). The interactive process can promote the resolution of controversies or conflicts which are not faced through an argumentative process as much as through progressive adaptations – by-products of purposeful actions and interactions. This vision appears as an alternative both to the methods of consensual dispute resolution (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987), as well as to those of negotiation and exchange that still rely mainly on microeconomic models of individual rationality (Lindblom, 1977). According to Schön, it is not possible to underestimate the influence of the “frames” that guide the views and behaviours of each actor. Discussion and mediation must bring this dimension into play as well. In many cases, without a *reframing* operation, it is not possible to move towards shared solutions. Thus, some fundamental cultural premises of the planning process become evident. It is clear that a process understood in this way is not guided by a single actor, but rather by a coalition that takes shape and evolves over the course of events.

Architects who still believe, not without reason, in some of the values of the modern project (emancipation, social justice, transparency and democracy of decisions) also basically accept this pragmatic vision of planning. In Part III we will present some of the more authoritative figures in Italy. Interpretations can be diverse, sometimes more critical and at others more benevolently optimistic. In any case, it is a problematic framework in relation to the uplifting, but over-simplified, representations of *new urbanism* (Calthorpe, 1993; Katz, 1994; for a critical review, see Harvey, 1997; Beauregard, 2002; Grant, 2006). It is evident that this framework does not in any way correspond to the coarser ideas of physical design that some planning currents aim for as critical targets (Salet & Faludi, 2000; Healey et al., 2000). As Lynch sustained for some time (Lynch, 1960, 1976, 1981), we cannot discuss urban form without investigating the reasons why individuals created it and the ways in which they inhabit it. The theory of good urban form cannot be an ideology, a model, a new utopian vision of the world nor can it be a set of general prescriptions. It will just be a matter of directions and criteria correlated to specific requisites that concern well-being and social needs as along with morphological and environmental features and the possible sustainable developments of a given site (Alexander, 1964; Alexander, Ishkawa, & Silverstein, 1977, 1987; Banerjee & Southworth, 1990).

The third family of critical issues for the paradigmatic renewal of planning theory concerns the idea of *social and spatial change*. According to the modernist ideology, change is deliberated and then faithfully brought about by a legitimate authority. At that point, paradoxically, society no longer needs to change. We would have to imagine a stationary state without end! Many lucid analyses have shown that this view is implausible, although admittedly it might be considered desirable. Albert Hirschman’s contributions regarding problems of economic and social development (Hirschman, 1958, 1967, 1971), which were closely connected to our field of thinking, were exemplary in this sense. Hirschman showed how the most orthodox disciplinary paradigms can become a cage hindering the understanding of, and solution to, problems. The dominant development theories propose synoptic programmes for intervention aimed at ensuring virtuous, balanced growth in each

important sector – exactly like blueprint planning. How is it possible for a developing country to simultaneously and promptly guarantee availability of all necessary factors – human resources, capital, technology, decisional systems, entrepreneurial and management capacities and so on? If taken literally, the theory seems to indicate that development is an impossible process within a context characterised by serious deficiencies. The dominant view needs to be questioned.

According to Hirschman, development is created through *partial imbalances*, concentrated in space and in certain sectors, determining temporary unstable situations that can promote medium-term virtuous change. The impulse generates *unexpected effects*, which influence actors' expectations and behaviours, bringing hidden, scattered or underused resources to light. The capacity to generate development is a *common good* which is not consumed but grows with use. The actions inducing effective development are discovered only by doing. It must be noted that this view centres on a series of notions that, for orthodox theory, are anomalous or marginal. They are the relevance of secondary effects, the radical degree of uncertainty, the reinterpretation of constraints as opportunities for action (great freedom does not always facilitate the process), the "principle of the hiding hand" (if the knowledge of difficulties in facing a problem is too accurate, this could lead to inertia preventing intervention), the possibility of learning by doing (circuitous and discontinuous paths may facilitate the emergence of more adequate project-oriented thinking). Inquiry and design must deal with multiplicity, with creative disorder, uniqueness and novelty of experiences, not just regularity, stable relations or uniform sequences. Of course, these are complex, risky processes, which create serious dilemmas – first of all, between equity and growth and between competition and cooperation – but the possibility of generating positive externalities as common goods and mobilising potential agents of innovation become fundamental requirements for initiating a virtuous course.

Thus, a radical alternative to the most traditional paradigms emerges: incremental processes instead of the synoptic view; learning from experience rather than relying on disciplinary knowledge; a conception of the project that places more importance on the process than on the final state; orientation towards *possibilities* rather than forecasts and technical decisions. It is not enough to indicate the goal or choices without further pursuing ways to achieve them. The course is not a given but must be determined through action and interaction. A trans-disciplinary framework is suggested since a dominant discipline (let alone economy) does not exist. *Trespassing* is necessary to move beyond traditional borders. This action is not arbitrary but guided by the issues and hypotheses of the investigation. All these remarks seem fully applicable to the planning field (Palermo, 2009).

In this sense, it appears clear that change is a *collective construction*, so it is legitimate to wonder in what conditions, and by means of which mechanisms, sustainable change can become possible. The question is even more relevant for those rarer processes that take on features of *innovation*, insofar as they bring into play the modification of rationalities within a given context (Donolo & Fichera, 1988). In the early 1980s, we posited the hypothesis (Palermo, 1983) that Michel Crozier's social, institutional and organisational investigation offered important conceptual

instruments, even while breaking with the traditional images of the city as a machine or an organism (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Crozier, 1987). Change is not brought about by objective structures following the political economy approach, nor is it brought about by relatively autonomous actors or collective systems according to models of instrumental or communicative rationality. It is, instead, the contingent outcome of the *games of interaction* between actors and structures (Rusconi, 1983, 1989). It is necessary to reconstruct and interpret the systemic constraints, the margins of autonomy of the individual actors and their intents, the strategic use of the resources controlled by each actor in conditions of uncertainty, consequences that are both intentional and unexpected and the possibilities for learning and coordination that originate during the process (Bifulco & de Leonardis, 1997). Effects of social and institutional change emerge as a process of collective creation in which actors learn together and therefore create new forms of participation, new relational abilities and new strategic behaviours. This is an excellent conceptual framework for the critical trend of policy analysis we mentioned previously. It can be observed, instead, that Albrechts, Kuntzmann and other planners express a still-abstract notion of creativity because the material conditions, organisational and strategic models, and above all the power relations that make change possible, remain largely indeterminate (Albrechts, 1999, 2005; Evans, 2001; Florida, 2002, 2005; Holden, 2004; Landry, 2006; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010).

Crozier, on the other hand, proposes a *strategic analysis of change*, which pin-points goals, constraints, restrictions and resources pertaining to the individual actors and to the overall system. But the crucial variable lies not in the *goals*, which are always vague, ambiguous and changing (a preferred theme in urban marketing or strategic planning, since it is easy to face without demanding commitment), nor the *restrictions* that can become a cage or an alibi (as in traditional urban planning) and that are only rarely reinterpreted as opportunities. It is the allocation of *resources* in the hands of each actor that is decisive as is the way in which they are strategically utilised during the interaction process. Decisive resources can be of various kinds. They concern laws and procedures, finances, budgets, shared norms and degree of social cooperation, autonomy and intentionality of the strategic actors, the system's capacity for self-organisation, administrative functionality, technical expertise and so on. Without adequate resources, change is impossible. Moreover, interaction can mobilise latent or under-utilised resources and design experimentation often enables necessary resources to be discovered or reinvented. This theme does not allude to an ordinarily allocative conception of planning, but becomes an essential condition for a truly innovative approach (Friedmann, 1967, 1969). These perspectives could be more promising in a society possessing greater institutional and relational capital, namely, having complex ties, including redundant ones, that can be partly modified without risking the system's rupture (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). The task of public policy is not to impose a model of order or a pre-ordained reform programme (usually this leads to outcomes that are the opposite from the expected ones, as Hirschman, 1991, has shown). It is not a matter of changing the life of citizens or designing new urban models. Society does not need "doctors or judges", the most common images of the town planner according to modernist

culture. We need modest public intervention because it is aware of its limits (Crozier, 1987), but it must also be specific and effective, aimed at improving society's capacities for integration and innovation, guaranteeing those *common goods* that neither society nor the market can normally assure although they are indispensable for the quality of collective life and development (Hardin & Baden, 1977; Ruffolo, 1985; Sen, 1987, 1999; Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom & Hess, 2007; Donolo, 2007).

This *strategic* conception of social change and public policy as *collective outcomes*, together with a *realistic* and *critical* interpretation of the nature of emerging problems, and a conception of planning experiences centred on *resources, interactions and possible transformations* could constitute, in our opinion, a useful framework for the theory and practice of urban planning. This is the most convincing picture if the alternatives are those described in the preceding chapters. What is proposed is not a substantive vision, but the recollection of such fundamental principles as: the actors' relative autonomy (in opposition to any organic metaphor) but also the essential function of contingent games within concrete systems of interaction (in opposition to any vision of society as a merely individualistic one); the essential question of material conditions and resources for interaction (with respect to the procedural or merely communicative tendencies) but also the possibility of regenerating resources through interaction and design (in opposition to a merely allocative logic); a modest public role (rather than an authoritative and pervasive one) but essential insofar as it can guarantee resources and opportunities that contemporary society can barely produce (the common goods necessary for high quality development); the project orientation of each policy programme (in opposition to conceptions that are only descriptive or normative), which can find effective measures of quality and efficacy only in terms of concrete physical transformations (good intentions or simple resolutions are not enough). From different disciplinary perspectives, authors like Schön, Hirschman, Crozier and others contribute to delineating an interesting framework with the goal of interpreting the problems and tendencies of urban policy design. This is our first conclusion.

Part III
Mediterranean Planning Cultures: Italy

Chapter 14

Characteristics of the Italian Model

There is no doubt that the Italian contribution to the debate as outlined in Part II was meagre and almost insignificant to the point of making us imagine two separate worlds, which did not feel the need for dialogue and discussion. According to widespread opinion in international planning, the Italian case was a variant – and not a particularly significant one – of a presumed Mediterranean model that was still too conditioned by traditional problems of physical planning generally handled with over-simplified techniques and excessively rigid solutions. This classification was portrayed in the European Union’s comparative studies on spatial planning systems (Faludi & Janin Rivolin, 2005). In truth, it was a superficial representation that avoided the problems of rigorous definition and testing. We might doubt whether the planning systems in force in Mediterranean countries fully belong to a common ideal type, but what appears clear is the influential role of a set of issues and features that seem less important in Northern Europe or US systems: the traditional pre-eminence of physical planning over functions of spatial management; the regulatory rather than strategic nature of the main planning tools; command and control action by public authorities rather than coordination and partnership. In the Italian case, these trends seem to be accompanied by some specific criticalities. There are great difficulties in achieving the institutional reforms necessary to render often obsolete legislative and organisational models more suitable. Ineffective public action, due to structural or contingent limitations, often struggles to ensure efficient project implementation. There is a dramatic crisis in the public domain and great ambiguity of relationships between private and collective interests in contexts where hidden pressures or attempts at corruption of the public administration by powerful economic forces are commonplace (Healey et al., 2000).

This representation seems to us as superficial as it is quite useless. Some specific descriptions do actually correspond to the truth, but could perhaps merit greater respect and attention insofar as they contribute to a critical revision of some trends in planning theory that have raised doubts in the past. According to some Italian schools of planning, many of the research traditions already discussed in Part II constitute a hybrid and not very convincing framework (for which we have presented more than a few critical views). This is not a case of autarchy, but perhaps some good reasons do exist for considering a less schematic reading of the different planning systems. Perhaps it is worth questioning some of the more superficial opinions that

tend to consider so-called Mediterranean urban planning a residual, outdated model in order to find, in these alternative and controversial experiences, interesting testing grounds for research and innovation where certain critical issues concerning the city and contemporary urban life were anticipated and tentatively faced. We may be able to agree on the importance of at least some, if not all, of the views and experiments, which might also be applicable in other cultural and institutional contexts. These are the main issues guiding the concise reconstruction of the Italian case presented in this part of the book. The purpose is certainly not a thorough representation but rather an *histoire à thèse*, in which references and themes are selective and reflect the authors' interpretation and critical view.

The first feature is the rootedness of planning studies and experiences in the *world of architecture*. This is a fundamental assumption shared by the most significant exponents of Italian urbanism, especially those who have felt the need to strengthen and clarify the discipline's specificity in relation to the vast field of architecture. During the 1960s, some exemplary references clearly documented this trend. Two of the most outstanding figures in Italian planning dating from the second half of the twentieth century, Giovanni Astengo and Ludovico Quaroni, almost simultaneously proposed two paradigmatic visions of the new discipline, introducing the entry "urban planning" into two different encyclopaedias (Astengo, 1966; Quaroni, 1969).

Quaroni had no doubts. He did not deny the cognitive, normative and managerial dimensions of the discipline, but he did wish to reaffirm the essential function of urban planning as an activity for the *design of the physical transformations* of the city and region. In this sense, planning must maintain a continuous dialogue with history and architectural culture, with the evolution of ideas about the city and the multiple interpretations attributed over the course of time to inhabited space as material forms of living – meaning a background where urban functions and subjective experiences take place. Quaroni did not confuse these themes and profiles with the traditions of architecture but neither did he accept hasty identification with the economic and social programming of spatial development, which may be considered a complementary field belonging, however, to a different cultural tradition. Indeed, he expressed unrelenting, far-sighted criticism of any perfunctory attempt to transfer ideas and techniques from the social sciences to the urban planning field without the rigorous verification of the adequacy and accuracy of the intellectual operation. This was the case, in the same years, of the presumed foundation of a scientific planning discipline based on quantitative analysis, forecasting and evaluation (Perloff, 1957; Chapin, 1965; Chadwick, 1971; Faludi, 1973b).

Urban planning was understood as a field of study and practice emerging from the architectural tradition. The formation of a new technical profile was needed; it would be a distinctive figure laying somewhere between the architect who designs specific projects for physical transformation and the regional planner who measures and evaluates the economic and social phenomena taking place in space in order to formulate diagnoses and propose justified goals for public action. This figure appeared essential for enabling dialogue between these different realms and for fostering synthesis. Quaroni called this figure the *architetto-urbanista* (*architect-urban*

designer) whose task was to devise patterns of spatial organisation appropriate for translating desired social dynamics into coherent, effective physical form. In his opinion it was not possible to pass directly from the analytical schemes of economic programming on the regional scale to the urban development project without the mediation of an “image of urban form” (Quaroni, 1967). This passage was the urban designer’s primary duty. The aim of creating a spatial order and functional organisation to render the city a well-structured organism was not enough. A form also needed to be created that was able to express the cultural contents of a place and time in an architectural mode. Quaroni not only reaffirmed the centrality of physical design, but outlined an original interpretation of it, avoiding the roughest objections already formulated by some international planning currents and opening up interesting perspectives for research and experimentation.

Perhaps more than any other master of Italian planning, Giovanni Astengo never doubted the discipline’s cultural and professional specificity, which requires a foundation that is targeted in relation to the vast field of architecture studies and practices. In this sense, he took the trouble to explore the relationships with the field of the social sciences, seeking a rigorous methodological approach and pertinent substantive knowledge. The primary purpose was to produce sound knowledge to support good planning choices in order to promote consensus despite the plurality – often conflicting – of the interests at stake. It was a generous, Enlightenment-inspired approach in which the appeal to scientific reason was not born from a technocratic aspiration but expressed, first and foremost, an active hope for civic renewal and social emancipation. However, this tendency never questioned town planning’s physical and environmental roots. Much of the author’s thinking (Astengo, 1966) was dedicated to a scholarly, refined analysis of the evolution of ideas regarding the city and the changing morphologies of urbanised spaces over the course of time. There is no doubt that the hoped-for innovation within the discipline could help improve the functional organisation and structural form of human settlements. For this goal, it was considered essential to face the rich tradition of architecture. As we shall soon see (Chapter 15), Astengo was convinced of the need to overcome the well-known paradigms of regulatory and functionalist planning to move in the direction of a new “organic and structural” approach that was more exhaustive from an argumentative point of view and able to produce solutions that were better justified and shared. He mistakenly assumed that these innovations would be possible in a short time, thanks to the scientific re-founding of disciplinary knowledge and methodology. Moreover, by working on some exemplary planning experiences, Astengo himself helped to rapidly clarify the limits of this hypothesis suggesting possible revisions of the initial orientation. At no time, however, did he imagine that this process would be separate, or even independent from, architectural theory and practice. This is a crucial difference from many positions referred to in the previous part of this book. This view is still the most influential in Italy.

The second point concerns the relationship between *planning and politics*, which may only apparently seem to be independent or alternative in light of prior conclusions. The times are distant when Le Corbusier would proclaim without any doubt that “le plan n’est pas de la politique”. Urban planning was, and had to be, “without

politics". The urban project expresses the author's intention according to the most advanced disciplinary canons. It cannot be disrupted by the pressures of contingent interests and cannot be put at risk by negotiations and compromises between the different participants. Design and implementation are problems of a different kind and the planner's responsibilities concern, first and foremost, the sphere of urban design. The expert should be able to heal the diseases of the world because the possibility of solving these problems had already been demonstrated by good theory. An act of faith by political authority would be sufficient to achieve human happiness in cities. It is easy to understand why Sir Peter Hall chose this view as a target for a polemic attack (Hall, 1988). Instead, authoritative exponents of Italian planning between the two wars, from Piero Bottoni to Luigi Piccinato, and in general the current one inspired by international principles of rationalism and functionalism were basically willing to subscribe to this view (Bottoni, 1938; Piccinato, 1947; and see Lanzani, 1996; Palermo, 2004).

Even quite soon in Italy, the intrinsic political dimension of urban planning was inevitably recognised. The first step, however, was not a radically innovative one. "Urban planning is part of politics", observed Leonardo Benevolo since it needs a political authority for legitimation and effective implementation. But Benevolo's view was still founded on an idea of synoptic rationality and an authoritative conception of the planning profession (Benevolo, 1963). Support from the political system was considered indispensable to assure that the planners' good ideas would be effectively applied. Politics was understood as the necessary instrument to give strength and influence to a planning theory that was still basically *pre-political*, insofar as it did not explicitly face the need for the political mediation of competing plural interests and social tensions. Fundamentally, the distance from Le Corbusier's original doctrine was not great but it is correct to note that similar tendencies were repeated in more recent times. We have already observed that Healey's "collaborative planning" or Le Galès' idea of the "city as a collective actor" also offer reductive visions of the political nature of the planning process. The concept of planning as a public function of local administration represented mainstream Italian planning during the second half of the twentieth century from Giovanni Astengo to Giuseppe Campos Venuti, Federico Oliva and the vast reformist current that still today constitutes the major movement (Campos Venuti, 1967, 1987, 1991; Campos Venuti & Oliva, 1993). The idea of "planning policy" underpinning some neo-modernist currents in Italian architecture was not very different. During the 1980s and 1990s, this approach attempted to reconcile planning culture with urban design principles (Gregotti, 1986, 1991, 1993). Moreover, for this research tradition, the political dimension of practice, even in this limited sense, remained marginal as compared with the design-oriented efforts of the architect-urban designer (Cagnardi, 1995).

Few voices expressed a different method following two main lines of research. Early on, between the 1950s and 1960s, some masters (few, but authoritative: Carlo Doglio, Ludovico Quaroni, Giuseppe Samonà, Giancarlo De Carlo) wished to investigate the social roots of planning practices more deeply. If Doglio's profile, which was somewhat unusual in Italy, was nearer to the Anglo-Saxon community planner (Doglio, 1953; De Carlo, Doglio, Mariani, & Samonà, 1975; Doglio & Venturi,

1979), the other authors were outstanding architects, original figures that cannot be classified according to a common point of view but who certainly shared the same convictions (Samonà, 1959; De Carlo, 1964; Quaroni, 1967). The creation of plans and projects cannot discount listening, dialogue, debate and synthesis shared with the context's social actors, institutions and cultural traditions. The tools for intervention cannot be imposed "from above and from outside" following a normative view justified by presumed general interest, but must be legitimated by the local community, thanks to the political integration of individual and collective interests both on the regional and local scales. There is no doubt regarding the need for the planner's technical role, which proves to be an irreplaceable specialist one by virtue of his interpretative and design capacities. However, it also seems clear that the expert should become part of the place to be able to orient himself. In this sense, the functionalist and rationalist planning paradigms do not offer adequate indications. Various directions for experimentation come to light. Some are more geared towards sustaining a *local society's self-organisation*, with the prevalent disciplinary function of orienting and accompanying spontaneous and virtuous processes, while others are more committed to forms of *participatory and reflexive urban design*. The former represent the Italian version of the organic tradition (from Geddes to Mumford and to American regionalism) with the most significant contributions developed by Alberto Magnaghi, Giancarlo Paba and the Florence school of urban planning (Samonà, 1959; De Carlo, 1964; Quaroni, 1967). The latter is more akin to the pragmatic views of Rodwin, Lynch, Schön and other authoritative exponents from MIT, Berkeley and other American schools. With the innovative contributions of some of the founding fathers (like Samonà, Quaroni and De Carlo), it became a pioneering trend in various Italian schools (Balducci, 1991; Balducci & Fareri, 1998; Balducci & Calvaresi, 2005).

Later, even more pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of *planning policy* was reformulated in a few contexts (Venice, Milan and Naples) as the interactive formulation of problems, strategies and solutions. The discontinuity was not marginal. No longer was the public function of administrative management of urban development processes at stake, but so were the mechanisms and practices of the "social construction" of decisions and projects. Pierluigi Crosta provided watershed contributions to this conceptual revision, disseminating and redrafting the positions of Lindblom, Hirschman and other similar scholars (Crosta, 1973, 1984, 1990a, 1998). Luigi Mazza succeeded in reinterpreting the planner's specific functions (land use and mobility planning) within a more realistic and critical paradigmatic framework, casting doubt on the equilibrium models of urban development and the well-ordered systems of functional relations between regulation, visioning and design. In this way, he managed to unite lucid comprehension of the political nature of the planning process with the defence of the technical specificity of the planner's work (Mazza, 1997, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). Urban planning thought received further innovative stimuli from the emerging trend of "public policy analysis" which, at the end of the twentieth century, also saw significant developments in Italy (Dente, 1990; Capano & Giuliani, 1996; Regonini, 2001). An original space of thinking and action was configured at the crossroads between architecture, planning and policy

research with reciprocal contamination. The exploration of this transdisciplinary field provided good reasons for renewing the different research traditions (Palermo, 1981, 1983, 1992). Once more, the directions were numerous. On the one hand, the cold logic of *urban governance* opposed the will to favour *local self-organisation*. On the other hand, the mushrooming of *strategic plans without effective development projects* risked becoming a new alibi for avoiding real urban design problems. Important attempts to reconcile political realism, a critical but purposeful view and design-oriented efforts have not been lacking (among the most significant in our opinion, Clementi, 1996, 1999; Maciocco, 1996, 2007, 2008b; Gabellini, 2001, 2008).

Over the last 20 years in Italy, the crucial issues of the renewal of planning culture have, in our opinion, caused the unrelenting erosion of any vision of “planning without politics” and the questioning of the traditional conception of “planning policy” as an eminently public administrative function. At the same time, original investigations and practices have opened up around a common goal – to reconcile the rootedness of planning in the schools of architecture with a political conception of spatial development. We know that the architect’s work is apparently easier and clearer when he can operate in a direct relationship with the “Prince” of the moment. Any reference becomes much more uncertain when, in a pluralist democratic society, the planner finds himself in an apparent “void full of interests” where the shared principles of authority and guidance seem weaker and more uncertain while the pressure of the visions and strategies of vested interests grows (Quaroni, 1967). The traditions of architecture and policy analysis in the modern age, and even more so in the contemporary one, have not always been available for immediate confrontation. This problem has been explored in depth in Italy over the last decades. We have only to think about how the disciplinary ideas of knowledge and design have changed over the course of time. The canons derived from modernist culture are clearly outdated. The alternative does not boil down to the confused or instrumental fashions of the so-called post-modern era (Chapter 19). Italian experiences have faced, in an honest way, the challenges and dilemmas typical of the contemporary period. Without overestimating the results obtained, we can say that, over the last decades, this complexity has remained largely extraneous to the prevailing thought and proposals of international planning theory.

Chapter 15

Towards a Planning Science?

We do not have settled for the “plan that is possible in a given context” as sustained by Giovanni Astengo in the 1960s taking an alternative position to our conclusions in Part II (Astengo, 1966). Urban dynamics and complexity have grown enormously in the modern age – appearing largely out of control following the industrial revolution – despite the attempts at formal organisation in the Baroque or neo-classical ages. They require more rigorous efforts to integrate multiple factors regarding not only environment and urban form, but also economics and society, with strong public guidance towards goals of collective interest. This would not be a utopian plan because, in more than one context, the institutional conditions and professional skills necessary to achieve similar goals were already mature (Astengo referred to some very renowned experiences such as the Amsterdam plan of the 1930s, or the Greater London plan at the end of the war). With the efforts of post-war recovery, the challenge seemed to lie in the pervasiveness of an increasingly aware, active “urban planning conscience” that could make use of the more advanced results deriving from the renewed science of town planning (Astengo, 1952, 1966).

This was a high point in a line of research and practice that had been influential in Italy between the 1950s and 1960s; not that focus on the theme of disciplinary foundation was lacking before that. “Art, technique or science?” This question regarding the specific nature of planning was very topical in the early twentieth century as in other western nations. The point is that it was not an intellectual debate but a contention between different professional unions – above all engineers, architects and municipal officials – who, not without some grounds, all aspired to guiding and managing the important processes of urban development that were underway at the time (Zucconi, 1989). Planning always brings significant powers and interests into play requiring a political system that can legitimate and guarantee its effectiveness. It is common for disciplinary foundations to be the result not of a “communicative agreement” between experts but the outcome of a political choice – a mandate attributed by the dominant political system to the profession in which it has most faith. In Italy, the nascent Fascist regime clearly favoured the figure of the architect in a number of roles – designer, manager of development processes and educator of future specialists (from the production of regulatory plans to the management of professional schools and architecture competitions). Approximately a century ago, the Rome school of architecture provided a reply to the initial query – art, technique

or science? – that was as simple as it was instrumental. The capacity for design synthesis, the main capacity of the architect, considered superior to the technical skills of the engineer and the management skills of the municipal officials, would enable all aspects to be combined – quality of artistic skills, innovation and efficacy of techniques, rigour and validity of scientific method. In this sense, the emerging planning discipline would simultaneously be “science, technique and art” confirming the profile of the “integral architect” (Giovannoni, 1931). In actual fact, this was nothing more than a fallacy devoid of meaningful rationale founded basically on the preference of the political regime at the time. In this book, it is not possible to explore more in depth the process of the disciplinary formation in Italy (see Palermo, 2004), but it might be useful to note that at approximately halfway through the century, Italian planning seemed to be an eclectic manifesto, which tended to absorb (in a way that was not particularly reflective and not at all critical) a heterogeneous set of ideas and practices that had already been tested elsewhere but were not always entirely coherent. This eclectic knowledge seemed instrumental in relation to the strong will for managing and controlling urban development processes. At the time, the political authorities gave the architect the technical responsibility for urban planning and development problems.

Luigi Piccinato was an exemplary interpreter of this trend in Naples and Rome (Piccinato, 1947). For a long time, Piccinato was the dominant figure in Italian planning under the Fascist regime and later (Di Biagi & Gabellini, 1992; Malusardi, 1993). He resumed and developed Gustavo Giovannoni’s profile of the *integral architect*, delineating the figure of the architect-urban designer who sought to reconcile formal synthesis with normative demands. The master plan was meant simultaneously as an architectural creation and as an instrument of social order, justified by disciplinary knowledge and imposed upon civil society in the name of a legitimate power that the public authority exerts in the general interest.

The conception of city was organic if we look at the communicative rhetoric, but the technical interpretation was still essentially rationalist. According to Piccinato, in the industrial-age city, the ability to provide a unitary response to the numerous emerging problems – housing, hygiene, traffic, economic growth, public services, urban development and preservation, aesthetic quality – had weakened, owing to lack of balanced solutions capable of “resolving in beauty every problem of necessity”. The city as an organism was the metaphor chosen to express the need for a new unitary vision. Like every living body, the city can be analysed in its single parts, but it exists, evolves and can be regulated only as a system in continuous transformation. An organism is composed of different elements that carry out particular functions: central places, road networks, urban fabrics and spatial zones. The whole needs to be assessed and organised in a rational way regarding the demands of the population and the characteristics of the context. Each spatial component is made up of technically precise elements (local road networks, blocks, plots and single buildings – the organism’s smallest cells) defined according to canons of modern architecture which establish types, density and building technologies. Coherent definition of the components gives rise to urban structure. Form is nothing more than the empirical implementation of this structure, which has boundaries and volumes that

are determined over time. As with every living body, structure and form are subject to evolution. They cannot grow by pure expansion or addition of new parts if these are not coherent with the size and functions of the organism itself. The organic city must be able to reorganise its structure as its size varies. Beyond certain thresholds, change becomes irreversible, and the organism no longer exists or it becomes something else. Generally a living body is capable of self-regulation. Within certain limits of external solicitation, it can adapt its structure and form to safeguard its identity. By analogy, a well-designed city should be able to absorb any disturbances produced by its context (demographic variations, new functions, demand for economic growth and development) with appropriate modifications to structure and form. The organic analogy therefore seemed to offer a conceptual scheme that was useful for representing and studying urban dynamics and organisation, emerging problems and design possibilities. The influence of numerous international sources was evident (Geddes, Unwin, Mumford, Lavedan, Pöete and others), and the meaning and relevance of the analogy, which only has heuristic value, should not be overestimated. In Piccinato's creative hands, this simple image fostered a conception of planning research and design that was more attentive to the overall organisation of the city than the functionalist currents (Chiodi, 1935; Bottoni, 1938).

However, this does not mean that, in this way, the discipline earned the statute of "science of urban studies". According to official rhetoric, planning should scientifically study all the conditions, manifestations and needs of life and urban development to be able to harmoniously compose, through the use of norms, "an architectural synthesis of all urban values". But it was not considered an exact science, in contrast with what the American planning engineers believed, since between analysis and project, an inevitable "creative leap" must come about. Indeed, it was that artistic synthesis that Piccinato claimed as the specific gift of architects, while engineers were considered specialists in analysis or creators of a mechanical synthesis, namely, the technical definition of the single functions – always of an inferior quality to art. In this way Piccinato established a hierarchy between the different disciplinary figures involved in urban planning at the time, reaffirming the supremacy of architecture that had already been supported by the Rome school since the early twentieth century. In actual fact, the success of the architects in disputes with other professional figures during Fascism did not depend so much on the strength of their arguments as on a greater compatibility with the regime of academic architects and professionals, as compared, for example, with municipal officials, who often tended towards autonomist, decentralising and local organisation – something certainly less appreciated by the Fascist political system.

According to Piccinato, the study of urban phenomena should include a variety of statistical investigations, social surveys and, in the 1960s, important topics of economic analysis and programming. These were necessary contributions for making a concrete diagnosis of the problems – an indispensable background for designing. Nevertheless, these references always appeared secondary and perhaps routine. Piccinato's handbook, published in 1947, did not present any significant innovation compared to the international town planning literature. The analysis of the elements of urban structure was limited to reaffirming the most advanced concepts of the time.

The interpretation of the *structure of form* was guided by the best known principles of urban form: radial or grid models, concentric or multi-axial structures, spindle-shaped models or other types deriving from the vast repertoire of medieval cities. Each precedent suggested some preferential design criteria. If the form of the existing city was radial, expansion favouring star-shaped development was preferable to concentric growth. If the form was axial, comb-like expansions were recommended. If the form was a closed one because of morphological or environmental constraints, the design of a new external centre as a pole of attraction for future expansion was advised. A bipolar urban structure could suggest the development of a new intermediate centrality with rebalancing functions. Urban design was guided by the application of the most consistent morphological model. The method still fully belonged to the town planning traditions of the early twentieth century and justified the objections formulated in different international planning schools.

Was this method fit to “create an organism” that could evolve in a coherent and functional way in relation to the economic, social and spatial processes? Could it guide, harness and measure all the forces that were potentially dangerous for urban organisation? We might doubt the first point. Perhaps this schematic, instrumental vision was sufficient for performing a normative function. In the confused post-war era, the social and political function of planning was considered fundamental, perhaps even more than architectural quality and urban design. To plan meant to intervene and guide the true vital forces of society without repressing them. Of course, Piccinato knew well that it was unlikely that rigid, coercive control would be accepted by a society that was just recovering from a long war and facing the problems and anxieties of the new cold war. He was convinced, moreover, of the need for planning to control individual spatial choices and behaviours, as he believed that private interests were unable to spontaneously lean towards a well-ordered structure. He claimed the role of “doctor and judge” of development process for the urban planner, a role that should be exercised with rigour and with no illusions regarding the possibility for meaningful social participation because he believed that urban planning is always top-down. It is a shame that the technical and scientific arguments supporting the disciplinary claims were still very traditional and basically weak.

Giovanni Astengo who, at the end of the war, was a young, up-and-coming architect from Turin, never intended to question this disciplinary framework. Indeed he always paid public homage to Piccinato’s great mastery. However, he felt the need to strengthen the discipline’s foundations, both regarding knowledge as well as its capacity for action (Astengo, 1952). His motivation was certainly not academic. It was related, above all, to an intense and generous reformist hope. Urban planning always needs the support of a legitimate authority, but it can only become effective if it has the convinced consensus of institutional and social components. If civic awareness regarding development problems grows and if the arguments sustaining the solutions proposed by the experts become more explicit and convincing, it is more likely that planning interventions be successful. Urban planning must assume civic responsibility and its pedagogical function. It should lead to an understanding of the fundamental features of spatial problems and choices. In the face of the

indisputable strength of good discussion, vested interests will be encouraged to take the back seat and it will become easier for the public administration to manage spatial conflict. It is obviously an Enlightenment-inspired vision, formally similar to the most recent communicative ideologies, but it was most certainly animated by strong civic passion in the difficult post-war era. Astengo firmly believed in the possibility of translating this dream of “buongoverno” into action. Important international experiences in modern urban planning, especially in Northern Europe, seemed to demonstrate, in his eyes, that public capacity for governing urban development was now possible even in complex realities. Certain institutional models should have been strengthened and disseminated, enhancing technological progress.

These were the essential roots of Astengo’s attempt to scientifically found the discipline in Italy between the 1940s and the 1960s. It took a century to liberate urban planning from being merely equated with urban art, but also with building regulations or the techniques of road engineering or construction; finally it had become possible to identify a new, more adequate paradigm: “the idea of planning as a global, continuous process” (Astengo, 1966). The differences from the preceding views seem evident. In the 1930s, the most influential approach in Italy was the functionalist one, in accordance with other European experiences, especially in Germany. The crucial theme was the organisation of urban networks and places in the way that best conformed to the functionality of each and to higher social needs (Bottoni, 1938). Criteria and techniques of analysis, problem setting and urban design that the handbooks represented in codified forms, derived from that principle. Nevertheless – Astengo observed critically – the principle of functionality of the parts was not specified properly, nor was the problem of the passage from the functionality of the parts to that of the whole; or better, the indications were only technical and the problematic relations between economy, society and physical, natural or built environment were not faced in depth. Later an organic conception influenced by Anglo-Saxon or American thought emerged. To Astengo, this seemed an improvement on functionalism’s technically oriented position, but its analysis of economic aspects, and the social and political structure was still insufficient. This was also because it still left the criterion by which to evaluate choices and express preferences unspecified. A method for knowledge, decision and rational action was needed. According to Astengo, this had already been tested in important European experiences between the two wars. It was a unitary view of the development of the city and its regional context, long-term planning, the formation of a comprehensive plan as an integrated framework and then its implementation as a sequence of urban design and architectural operations to be coordinated in space and over time. In this way, it was an attempt to overcome the fragmentation of previous rationalist experiences which only acted on parts of the city or dealt with the problems of expansion separately from those of the existing city (Palermo, 2004).

Astengo considered that model interesting because, in the 1950s, despite the variety of disciplinary trends, Italian planning had not generally succeeded in avoiding substantial vagueness of aims, timing and resources, nor in evaluating the most suitable means for achieving the stated goals. In truth, those limitations were also the consequence of difficult obstacles that stood in the way of achieving reformist

planning action. But Astengo placed great importance on another factor – insufficient methodological and technical innovation. The discipline had not yet managed to adopt the more advanced model, already tested in other national contexts such as the use of preliminary surveys – possibly exhaustive; attempts to reach scientific objectivity regarding the greatest number of choices possible; the anticipation and rigorous evaluation of the relative consequences as a necessary background for a truly rational decision. That was, according to Astengo, the frontier of urban planning studies in the 1960s. The results were still partial, but the problems were conceptually well-defined and there already existed a substantial legacy of scientific and operative methodologies (Astengo, 1966).

It thus seemed possible to outline a new conception of the discipline. Rationalist planning instruments were valid indefinitely or for such a long period as to prove indefinite. They acted through a combination of restrictions and incentives with regulations regarding physical form and indirect control on economic activities. Implementation was left to the free will of public and private initiative with formal respect for normative conditions. The master plan was therefore conceived in a static, comprehensive way, largely independent from the development processes underway as well as from any time frame. A final state was represented. This should have guaranteed an ideal balance between the parts, from the functional, dimensional and distributive points of view. Instead, the ways of enacting planning decisions seemed less important almost to the point that the implementation process was frequently dispensed with. To this view, Astengo opposed the model of *continuous creative planning* that could generate a spatial framework most suitable for the desired development processes, pinpoint the best forms to implement strategies over the course of time in connection with the context's evolution, design detailed operative projects with defined aims, locations and timing, and local specification of public functions and conditions for private initiatives, and assure temporal coherence between urban planning activity and economic programming. In each phase, the comprehensive vision of the plan had to coexist with the search for specific partial balances. Each phase of implementation had to represent a temporary state of equilibrium within the overall process of development. In the face of an unexpected situation, at unforeseen intervals between design and execution, the possibility for periodic plan revision would have to be resorted to.

This was the sense of *continuous planning*. From this standpoint, the plan for a single phase would have been less important than the sequence of plans produced over the course of time in relation to the dynamics of the context. The continuous process of analyses, choices and evaluation would end up being the true essence of planning (Astengo, 1966). The possibility of using scientific methodologies should offer the best guarantee for rigorous evaluation independent from the interests at stake, even if rigorous method, as Astengo had already sustained in the 1950s, did not exclude the need for intuitive capacity and creativity (Astengo, 1952). These qualities are essential for interpreting urban form and conceiving new possible organisations, to be tested and perfected with the support of the appropriate techniques. Integration of scientific method, creative activity and legal regulation was therefore necessary. Pure creative intuition without a basis composed of positive

facts and logically demonstrable principles could risk reaching arbitrary conclusions. The scientific method alone, not enlivened by creative activity, would neither be able to guarantee coherence, quality and unity of intent to a comprehensive master plan, nor guide it towards solutions to complex problems that cannot be deduced, as necessary consequences, from a set of general premises. Without precise legal regulations we would have just a theoretical study with no possibility for implementation. Creative reasoning, uniting quality, objectivity and rigour, can encourage proper, democratic collective choices. Thus the “creative leap” that troubled Faludi and other planning theorists (Hall, 1988; Salet & Faludi, 2000) was not repudiated, but found richer meaning within a more sophisticated conceptual framework. If the method supplies the analytical elements, as abundant and certain as possible, the creative act formulates synthesis and guides choices. The more complete and in-depth the preliminary research is, the more morally and socially valid are the general principles and the value judgements and the more aware and harmonious is the plan (Astengo, 1952).

In the 1960s, faith in the resolving power of technique, the possibility of conceiving political processes as procedures of rational decision-making and consensus-building thanks to scientific legitimisation, seemed to convince Astengo that it was possible to give life to a new disciplinary foundation. This would have entailed passing from a functional kind of planning, which was limited to rationalising the system, to structural-organic planning, aiming at a systematic reorganisation of the urban structures and their workings, namely, towards a form of global, creative, unitary, coherent and continuous planning. It should be noted here that the structure does not only consist in physical characteristics, following Piccinato’s view, but also involves forms of economic, social and political organisation according to a richer and more complete image of urban complexity.

Many decades later, we know that this passage did not come about. It could not be otherwise because its fundamental premises proved to be unfounded. Not only did the analytical techniques fail to guarantee effective performance, but real processes of the formation of political decision and social consensus did not respect the forecasted models. Today, Astengo’s position appears inspired by noble convictions and intentions, but it is spoiled by some simplifications – if not completely technocratic, at least Enlightenment-oriented – that later became more evident. On the other hand, Astengo himself, through some exemplary experiences of a quality comparable to the great models of European urban planning, was the first to demonstrate that his approach was not sustainable.

In the case of Assisi (Astengo, 1958), he carried out an excellent survey of the physical environment, local society, living conditions and even the rural economy, to verify the economic and social sustainability of the hypotheses for the planned development. He did not stop at producing a comprehensive plan but simultaneously drafted two detailed projects for strategic areas, anticipating a model of governance that is still interesting to us today as it managed to integrate coherence, efficacy and sense of priority. In the case of Bergamo (Astengo, 1970), the drafting of the municipal urban plan was preceded, through an autonomous choice by the designers, by a comparative evaluation of different possible arrangements of large-scale spatial

organisation, in order to study the coherence between the urban and regional scales. This can be considered an anticipation of the structural experiences still unknown at the time in Italy. To radically face the readily foreseeable difficulties of implementation, he decided to conceive of the master plan as an “action plan” defined in its basic technical terms and ordered over time according to criteria of priority and interdependence. The land use plan was no longer a functional zoning map, but was a detailed mosaic of interventions, each of which represented a minimum project unit defined by intended use, forms of intervention and basic quantitative parameters. Management of the process presupposed innovative instruments like multi-annual programmes and transfer of development rights and other planning compensation techniques.

In both cases, the will to pursue the public interest in a transparent way through an efficient, well-ordered programme of planned choices according to a synoptic view based on thorough analyses, shared goals and transparent evaluation criteria, is obvious. These are two notable planning experiences where significant forms of collective rationality were tested. Unfortunately, the indispensable institutional and cultural conditions were lacking for this design to prove feasible (Palermo, 2001a, 2006). The disciplinary technique was refined but planning policy was inadequate for the context. A clear hierarchy of actions and interests was lacking within the sophisticated instrumentation. Barely sketched-out hypotheses for intervention were placed on the same level as options that could already count on negotiated interests and available resources. In general, concrete action seemed to depend only on public will, while today we know that it requires a complex set of political, economic and social conditions and mediation. The Enlightenment aspirations were perhaps admirable but they were also exposed to all the known limits of blueprint planning. Astengo deserves credit for having enabled Italy to anticipate and put important hypotheses for innovation to the test, despite the weakness of the previous planning experiences. His concept of scientific urban planning was still current in the debate during the 1970s in some international contexts. Indeed, it could even be considered intellectually more sophisticated, methodologically more rigorous and practically richer in indications than other subsequent proposals. The important point is that the hypothesis for the discipline’s scientific foundation was a closed question and had already been superseded in Italy at the end of the 1960s (Palermo, 1981, 1983) when Andreas Faludi had not yet launched his methodological manifesto (Faludi, 1973b) and when the failure of similar trends had not yet become a widespread conclusion in many international planning schools (Dyckman, 1978). On the contrary, in Italy, science-based illusions had already shown themselves to be irrelevant in relation to the actual dominance of politics. It could be concluded that there was a logic in Piccinato’s simplification and traditional urban planning, which did not seek further futile analytical or methodological development, but dealt with seeking support in the political system. For those who would have liked to debate the choices further in the public domain, it soon became clear that the path to follow was not that of scientific method but of “practical reason” with its pragmatic, rhetorical, interpretative and, of course, design dimensions (Palermo, 1992), as some noted architects have understood for some time. Of these, we will speak in the next chapter.

Chapter 16

City Design

This title introduces a concept that is notoriously polysemic. It can take on profoundly different meanings ranging from the revival of some pre-modern conceptions of the *art of urban composition* to the modernist dream of *total control of urban form* through architectural design, or to some instrumental contemporary trends that interpret *urban design* as a technique for increasing real estate value largely disregarding any planning logic. We will reconsider this range of positions in Part IV, but the point that interests us here is a different one. In two different periods in Italy – specifically in the 1960s and then in the 1980s and 1990s – important disciplinary trends were directed towards a conception of urban planning founded on principles and practices of *city design*. In this sense, it was not conceived as an alternative to, but as a possible reinterpretation of, the discipline which aspired to be more rooted in architectural culture (Lanzani, 1996; Durbiano, 2000). These attempts brought into play complex relationships between the city, architecture, politics and society and could not, therefore, be assimilated to certain superficial views appearing in the international planning literature. They were a series of original practices in Italian urbanism, which arose as concrete alternatives to science-based programmes. Here we will present an outstanding figure for each period, Ludovico Quaroni and Vittorio Gregotti, each of whom proposed a variation on the same theme. In both cases, it cannot be maintained that their research met with total success, but the experiments contributed to the focus on a set of critical questions and exerted fertile influence on subsequent developments.

At the same time that Giovanni Astengo was attempting to found a “science of urban studies”, Ludovico Quaroni continued to consider urban planning as *design-oriented* knowledge and practice, whose specific mission was the organisation, design and control of urban form (Quaroni, 1969). This goal, however, did not hinder Quaroni from facing planning’s social issues. Indeed, between the 1940s and 1950s, Quaroni was absolutely convinced of the *social dimension* of substantial planning problems, insofar as they influence the relationships between environmental factors, settlements and forms of living. Functionalist theories tend to regulate the relationships between urban objects, following pre-established patterns and rules with as general validity as possible. But urban objects and relationships are always the results of actions and transformations carried out by humans over time in conscious or unconscious ways. If planning must affect these processes, the reasons and

possibilities for change need to be explored, seeking the origin of the phenomena that make up the structures and forms of the physical city. Therefore, disciplinary knowledge should be *historic and anthropological*, an interpretative reconstruction of facts, actions, attempts, plans and programmes, with which different social actors have tried to guide or modify urban evolution. To identify the possible reasons for, and forms of, planning action, it is necessary to explore the ways in which a population – with a specific identity and culture – is accustomed to *inhabiting a place*, giving life to concrete urban forms which are then reinterpreted and modified over time according to contingent possibilities and needs. Thus, Quaroni established a link among the development of certain building types or morphologies, given structures of social and economic organisation and urban practices. These investigations were considered essential for understanding the evolutionary trends and identifying any changes with the *participation and consensus* of the inhabitants.

As Quaroni maintained, the urban designer needs to start from reality as it is, studying and experiencing it until he feels part of it. *The knowledge of the present situation* is already basically planning. Through an original course, Quaroni thus appeared to sympathise with a pragmatic conception of research and the aforementioned *sense of the possible* which, in our opinion, represents the most fertile branch of the planning doctrines (Chapter 13). In this way, the author joined the critical voices – few, but authoritative – that distanced themselves from the orthodox traditions of “planning without politics”. Among others, Carlo Doglio made consensus-building and participation of the local community a key practice (Doglio, 1953; Doglio et al., 1975). Giuseppe Samonà, appreciating the ability of evolved society for self-regulation and for “planning without planners”, explored the possibilities for bottom-up organisation of urban and regional development (Samonà, 1959, 1978). Giancarlo De Carlo, to whom we probably owe the most innovative conception, believed that planning was a practice founded upon architecture and dialogue with society and politics (we will take up his position again in the conclusion of Part III). Quaroni, instead, distanced himself from the contemporary positions of Aldo Rossi, who was better known in the international sphere and who proposed a self-referential vision of architecture as an autonomous discipline creating ideal forms and types – valid above and beyond time and context. The city was the structure that could best represent the values and memories of collective life through its monuments. The architect would, by definition, be the privileged interpreter of the ideal forms of the city (Rossi, 1966). This position was criticised by Quaroni as well as by Kevin Lynch (Banerjee & Southworth, 1990).

Sensitivity towards these themes could not, however, become an alibi for disciplinary evasion in the direction of the social sciences. The dialogue between society and environment must always find a structural dimension, albeit temporary, in the “unity of spatial representation”, namely in architecture. Only thanks to architecture can planning and urbanism become the environment for, and form of, living. These principled positions have a series of consequences regarding the choice of urban planning technique. Master plan form and the planning process cannot be, as far as Quaroni was concerned, closed, rigid, static, absolute, of indefinite duration, imposed from above, but must be flexible, open, continuous and democratic

according to a *pluralistic and participative* conception of spatial decision-making. It is the outcome of a democratic process in which numerous economic and social forces confront each other and find a point of equilibrium without excessively restrictive preconditions or ties. In contrast to the conception of *continuous planning* sustained by Astengo, there was no appeal to public authorities for the rigid function of *management and control* but a constant capacity for *steering and coordinating* the aspirations emerging from the local society. Willingness to listen, dialogue, participation and collective learning were therefore required as well as an almost pedagogical function of assisting endogenous practices of *local self-organisation*.

The relationship with architecture was considered fundamental, but required conceptual innovation. A return to formalistic design, often indifferent to the planning and social context, would not be enough. Quaroni tried to identify an original disciplinary realm as a necessary mediation between planners' socio-economic evaluations and the creative work of the traditional architect. Regional planning was understood as an autonomous discipline, with a prevalently spatial-economic matrix, whose task was to analyse scenarios of evolution, formulate diagnoses, identify and measure goals and needs and propose lines of intervention. In contrast to the architect creating individual buildings, the *urban designer* ("architetto-urbanista" in Quaroni's words), would be the specialist who could assure spatial form and organisation to urban settlements, by designing structural schemes and defining criteria and rules for development projects. *Urban design* became the indispensable intermediary between the planners' purely functional diagrams and specific architectural projects. The problem was to provide a *structure* for the city by formulating a convincing hypothesis for the organisation of its different parts. This goal could be pursued by following criteria that were not only technical and functional, but that also concerned integration, coherence and formal quality evolving over time. The problem was also to secure urban *form* as a hypothesis for morphological definition and material realisation that could figuratively express a shared vision for the future city. A symbiotic relationship would need to be established between the physical city and the social city, separate yet interdependent entities.

Nevertheless, the modern city was no longer organic. It was not inhabited by a single community. Since it had lost its structure and form, urban society had become fragmented and divided. It was necessary to recreate new urban forms that were appropriate for the new habits of contemporary society. It was not enough to design new formal models as settled systems like the projects for the city produced by Piccinato. The "structure of urban form" should be understood as an *evolving network of interconnected parts*, each endowed with a *social and formal identity*. This vision anticipated some of the more recent research on the reticular structure of Italian urban systems (Clementi, Dematteis, & Palermo, 1996).

This is not the only important anticipation we find in Quaroni's work. From an analytical standpoint, the Roman school, which he inspired (at almost same time as Aldo Rossi in Milan and Carlo Aymonino in Venice, though independently), initiated a tradition of urban morphological studies in the 1960s. This was understood as the identification of the kinds of elements: *unique places*, focal points due to their physical or symbolic characteristics, and relatively uniform *urban fabrics* due

to their functional, typological and architectural properties (for example, residential areas that are homogeneous due to their period of construction and typological features). This was a very concrete way to interpret urban structure and was widely taken up again in the 1990s. It represents a more problematic conception of the modern idea of the urban organism, going beyond both the simplifying functionalist vision of the “city as a machine” (Bottoni) and some rationalist/organic conceptions (for example Piccinato).

From a methodological point of view, the idea of urban design as the re-definition of the “structure of urban form” sought to reinterpret the studies of the physical city in relation to those regarding local society. In Astengo’s approach, the socio-economic survey constituted a supposed basis for the main planning choices, even though in practice (as Quaroni himself faced in Ivrea, halfway through the 1950s) their use for purposes of clarification and direction often proved too uncertain or generic. According to Quaroni (illustrated in an exemplary way in the Bari plan at the beginning of the 1970s and basically shared by De Carlo as well), socio-economic investigation could contribute to a general understanding of a context but it was, rather, the analysis of the *physical city*, in the aforementioned sense, that should offer the fundamental indications for urban design. Quaroni’s method was neither deductive following the logic of civil engineers, nor was it inductive, following some interpretations of Astengo’s method. With a creative leap of particular interest, the approach followed an *abductive* logic typical of pragmatic culture. In this sense, the interpretation of the structure and possible evolution of the physical city was put forward, and then probed through the necessary enquiries including analytical-quantitative ones. Socio-economic studies performed a selective function of *testing* – from technical, economic, functional, sociological, symbolic and communicative points of view – the *urban design* hypotheses conceived in the first instance. These studies are meaningful and useful only if they can respond to questions emerging from the context, while a priori schemes and generalisations risk not making any important contributions. Quaroni thus reversed the positivist logic of “knowing to be able to deliberate” as too elementary. The knowledge-accumulation process can be boundless if selective and pointed questions are not posed. These questions can be born only from interpretations and preliminary hypotheses and must not concern only diagnosis but the actual projects for intervention. The positivist view seems reassuring insofar as it implies that a vast cognitive effort can guarantee a rational basis for decision-making. An interpretative and design-oriented view recognises the risks and responsibilities of making choices thanks to the exercise of critical reason, experience and public discussion.

Another very interesting theme is the technical conception of the *plan’s form*. The design of a city that represents the backbone of its future cannot be completely executed, in most cases, through unitary intervention under the guidance of the same responsible political and technical parties. The lengthy time span of the plan’s validity and the complexity of urban development usually exclude this possibility. The Tower of Babel story reminds us of how unfounded is the hope of total control of urban development through the design of a single author (Quaroni, 1967). But the hope of guaranteeing urban quality only through independent architectural projects

would also be futile. It is necessary to identify tools for orientation and formal control that can also operate in indirect, partial ways, without putting the vision and coherence of the whole at risk. Consequently, the form of the plan (as Samonà had also sensed) must be complex as well. Urban analysis offers important indications thanks to the distinction between *unique places* and *urban fabrics* that is, respectively, strategic transformation areas and consolidated urban fabrics. In the case of the latter, the most reasonable form of intervention should be the application of regulations and guidelines for preservation or modification. In the areas lacking clear formal and functional identity, it would be necessary to intervene with *urban projects* that can be operative or can offer just a few essential guidelines that will be defined in depth at the moment of implementation.

A “piano-idea” (in the words of Quaroni) will represent the salient morphological and functional features of the future city; development processes should respect these features over time. It will be accompanied by the more familiar “piano-norma” (i.e. a set of normative planning tools), the purpose of which is to discipline the functions of, and changes to, land uses. In this way Quaroni tried to interpret the problems of “control of urban form” in contexts, which were expressing the first post-modern phenomenology, by integrating *morphological* definition of the urban organism with the detailed *design* of local districts. His intuitions in the 1960s proved even more relevant and interesting in relation to the evolution of the contemporary city (Banham, 1971; Garreau, 1991; Ward, 1992; Benevolo, 1993; Scott & Soja, 1996; Corboz & Marot, 2001; Ingersoll, 2006). Moreover, today this approach is particularly interesting to us for two reasons. It establishes a hierarchy among different planning choices. The master plan is not a synoptic diagram that uniformly covers an entire municipal territory. Rather it selects a limited number of strategic areas of emerging interest as focal points for the future city, while the rest of the territory is managed through routine procedures. What’s more, Quaroni does not emphasise the distinction between the structural plan and action plan, as in the legislation of many European countries, but recognises the substantive ties between “piano-idea” and “piano norma”. The former expresses the main interpretative and design choices; the latter does not constitute the mere application of a pre-constituted programmatic framework but is the outcome of dialectic interaction between visioning, regulation and urban design.

The issues outlined above are among the most critical in contemporary urbanism. It is not surprising that, in the 1960s, they seemed like a bold, arduous and largely misunderstood anticipation. Quaroni’s experimental and reflexive style may actually have contributed to the controversial evaluation of his paradigmatic view and the subsequent planning outcomes. It was never dogmatic (far from Le Corbusier’s unquestionable certainties) but always modest, ironic and tenaciously experimental. It aimed not at celebrating the role of the expert, but at putting his experience to the test on issues and processes of great social complexity. While technocratic planners aspire to scientific control of the city, while honest practitioners pretend to believe in the efficiency of the normative instruments but really only believe in their profession, while market-oriented architects do not believe in the efficacy of urban planning but react to the client’s expectations, the *urban designer* (the new figure

under discussion) should contribute to the creation of urban forms that are more suitable to individual and collective life. This is a question not only of technical skill but of ethical responsibility. In Italy at the time, conditions were not favourable for the diffusion and success of such demanding positions. While other more traditional tendencies seemed to prevail, Quaroni decided to abandon urbanism as an academic activity (Di Biagi & Gabellini, 1992) even though his work in architecture and urban design continued to offer noteworthy contributions (Quaroni, 1981, 1996). We believe that these visions and experiences deserve attention, and not only on the Italian scene.

In the 1970s the Region, as a territorial governing authority, was established in Italy. This new institution would affect the course of urbanism. The Italian planning system was divided into three levels (national, regional and municipal) which, in theory, should have rendered the planning processes more functional and better rooted in its context, but, in actual fact, the immediate impacts were not positive. Various institutional and cultural deficiencies, as well as the criticalities of politics on the different institutional levels, favoured the bureaucratic and formalistic interpretation of urban planning practices, leading to poor results in terms of quality and efficacy. As a reaction, during the 1980s and until the mid-1990s, the planning debate directed its attention towards *city design*. However, we must note important differences from the preceding phase, since many conditions had changed.

Vittorio Gregotti, a world-famous architect, was one of the main figures of this movement. As early as the 1960s he had already shown a rare sensitivity to themes regarding the “territorio dell’architettura” – that is for the contextual conditions with which the urban project had to contend to find reason and meaning, and which require both *historical-geographical* and *morphological-environmental* perspectives (Gregotti, 1966). The study of the urban and regional context must reconstruct the succession of events and historic processes that, layered and settled in various ways, have left signs and forms in a place. Each place is defined not only by local contingencies, but by the network of spatial relations to which it belongs, which may affect its evolution over time (this was a far-sighted anticipation in the 1960s). The emerging “spatial morphology” depends on the relationships between numerous, interdependent places endowed with specific, differentiated identities. It may evolve over time following the choices and actions of the most important actors within the context. According to Gregotti, the project must interpret spatial form and *sense of place* in order to critically identify possibilities for change, to evaluate its meaning and value, and to select and carry out development hypotheses creating new and more meaningful relations between form and context.

Compared to the views of Quaroni and Samonà, the most obvious rhetorical distinction was the emphasis on criticism and change. If a person does not feel a sense of belonging to a place, he is unlikely to be able to understand it and contribute to its virtuous evolution, but this belonging must question the state of things – it must be *interpretative* and *critical*. On the other hand, the project for change cannot be arbitrary but must always be rooted in the context’s possible evolution. Gregotti’s view thus managed to reconcile the idea of belonging espoused by every organic theory with design-oriented tension typical of modernity. But he also takes the trouble

to discuss the feasibility of new development visions just as any critical pragmatist would. Brilliant rhetoric is clearly not enough, but there is no doubt that this position is conceptually interesting, even if it originated in the world of architecture causing the diffidence of some planning schools. Various innovative ideas deriving from this premise filtered down to the Italian culture of the 1960s. The survey is a critical dialogue between planner and context, tending towards temporary equilibrium by means of patient oscillation between, analyses and interpretation, critical questions and preliminary proposals, visioning and design. Knowledge is not a precondition but develops along with a project. Design also carries out a cognitive function insofar as it raises new questions, investigation and testing. This view is clearly coherent with the best pragmatic tradition. Its distinctive features are a strong critical spirit and emphasis on design synthesis that remains the specific domain of the architect.

In the 1980s, Gregotti used these conceptual tools in planning experiments in Turin, Arezzo, Livorno and other smaller towns (Cagnardi, 1995). The modest quality and efficacy of urban planning managed by the newborn Regional authorities fully justified the necessity for renovation, and the principles guiding Gregotti's approach seemed undoubtedly convincing. The technical form of the master plan needed renewing. Generic frameworks and guidelines were not sufficient nor, on the contrary, were the mosaics of particular regulations, defined in only functional terms and not justified by an overall physical design or integrated implementation projects. The complicated devices envisaged by the planning system were also insufficient, if a given plan refers to a variety of different, more or less indefinite tools, like a game of Chinese boxes. This condition often became an alibi as well as the cause for continuous delays in implementation. Instead what was needed were plans that could express concrete, responsible choices, to be implemented and tested within specified time frames, where the strength and coherence of the overall project could indicate priorities and the most suitable forms of public action. Astengo might have shared these general intentions, but the principal innovation proposed by Gregotti was that each regulation or intervention should represent the concrete interpretation, defined in time and space, of an urban vision, namely "a new project for the city". This proposal should be better defined than in the past in morphological and physical terms.

For this reason, urban representation became more complex as compared with the rationalist organism. Urban space was not divided into simple functional zones, but it was interpreted in terms of distinct urban forms: the historic city, the consolidated city, areas of urban development or environmental protection, the peri-urban areas. The fundamental elements of urban structure were not limited to the road system but included all of the open spaces requiring specific design. Basically Quaroni's distinction between urban fabrics and development areas was taken up again, each requiring different modes of intervention. The rules for managing the existing city had to find specific justification in a morphological interpretation of the context and its possible evolution. Projects for development areas had to explore the morphogenetic possibilities of place instead of limiting themselves to functional schematisation. A more elaborate approach to planning had to correspond to this complex image of the city. It seemed useful therefore to distinguish the

“piano-idea”, that is, an essential, highly communicative representation of the vision for urban form. It was a structural scheme devoid of statutory value, which did not include binding land use prescriptions, but interpreted the social and physical morphology of the city and guided its essential future transformation. Associated with this was the more familiar “piano-norma” which established normative conditions and operative procedures. Thus a structured set of problems and a hierarchy of choices emerged. This was not always clear in Astengo’s all-embracing models. The projects for development areas became crucial experiments for assessing the sense, quality and efficacy of the urban design scenario. Conceiving the generating core of planning process again as *city design* – that is a new vision and technical interpretation of urban form and structure – could become influential for the quality of effective interventions.

Significant results were not lacking, but it should also be acknowledged that the trend basically petered out over the next 10 years (Palermo, 2001b, 2006). Gregotti’s approach presumes a delicate balance between different necessities: listening to and interpreting the context, exploring the possible, proposing critical modification of existing conditions. If this last aspect prevails, we risk finding ourselves faced with a modernist attempt to control urban form through unitary design and dominant will. It is reasonable to expect difficulties, mediations and compromises. These experiences and similar ones carried out by Bernardo Secchi at the same time (Secchi, 1989, 2000) demonstrate how difficult it is to translate into practice the good intentions of societal listening and dialogue. Sometimes this is due to the local community’s lack of a voice, or, in other occasions, to excessive polyphony. But it also shows how the opportunities to explore with care the possible evolution of a given context are generally limited. The responsibility for the interpretative and design synthesis is mainly entrusted to the architect. This could recall some issues inherent in the modern project: the aim for changing the urban condition through physical projects and, at the same time, the need for reconciling new development with its context. This effort necessarily faces some difficulties. What is the *intention* that guides the project? How is it *legitimated* within any given context? Does the agent of critical change coincide with the architect, author of the project, who could interpret, through urban design, the authentic will emerging from the context? In this sense, each legitimation problem would be spontaneously overcome. In effect, Gregotti does not place much focus on participatory practices like listening to and dialogue with the local community. Like Astengo, though with different rationale, he tends to rely on the persuasive force of the wise and skilful design proposals that he is capable of generating. It is obvious that only congruence with an authority guaranteeing consensus can assure an empirical foundation for these hypotheses. While he enjoyed notable success, Gregotti himself did, on several occasions, succumb to adverse conditions that put the theoretical model at risk. Over time, however, he never gave up this view, although it was perhaps increasingly weakened (Gregotti, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2008) and contradicted by the fragmentation of the city and contemporary society. How can we imagine today that architecture can reconfigure the city as a great monument, formally recomposing the variety and dynamics of the interests and functions and finding stable harmony between

physical form and individual and collective behaviours? In effect, today a different idea of city design is in vogue. It is a flexible system that can adjust to dynamic connections between a plurality of interests, flows and places. Some sort of *enzymatic architecture* is supposed to fit into development processes thanks to light, reversible interventions that can adapt to variations in context, ever more fluid and inconstant (Branzi, 2006). It is an attractive conception, but a risky one, for it could easily become elusive, ephemeral, irrelevant and therefore conservative through excessive lack of commitment and criticism (Gregotti, 2008).

However, the indisputable value of these experiments, like those of Astengo, must be acknowledged. The authors have truly tried to interpret in practice a dense idea of the city and urban design. The apparently virtuous ideas of Quaroni and other forerunners were put to the test in real situations within the increasingly complex conditions of the last decades. It is not surprising that great difficulties emerged, and it is certainly possible to learn from this laboratory of experiences. Few international planners now limit themselves to stating positions regarding the quality of places without presenting proposals and effective practices for possible ways of achieving those goals (Healey, 2007).

Chapter 17

Reformist Mainstream

The positions described in the two previous chapters hinted at some crucial points outlining two possible founding paradigms. The first represents a more in-depth alternative to the methodological conception of the *decision-centred view* which, for a certain period, was successful in the United States and in Northern Europe. The second position faces, well in advance, the theme of the *sense* and *quality* of place, which, only at the end of the century, aroused new attention in Anglo-Saxon planning (but paradoxically physical transformation issues continued to be avoided) and which today is often dealt with in some instrumental way by the American new urbanism movement (Katz, 1994; Dutton, 2000). However far-sighted these anticipations might have been, they were not immediately developed in Italy due to the inadequacy of the cultural, institutional, administrative and technical context, but also because they were inspired by an out-of-date Enlightenment view. This was certainly the case of the paradigms formulated by Astengo and Gregotti with their modernist imprints, while Quaroni's curious, patient pragmatism never really became a disciplinary theory even though it influenced the actions of many architects and urban planners especially in central-southern Italy. Nevertheless, some important themes in this theoretical framework and innovative practices were integrated with planning experiments at the time, converging in a reformist mainstream that was quite sound, wise and effective. From the 1990s on, it represented the most consolidated and influential trend in Italian urbanism. It seemed to be able to join together vast ranks of intellectuals, practitioners and public officials. Its leading figure was Giuseppe Campos Venuti, renowned urban planner on the Italian scene and elsewhere, especially in Mediterranean contexts.

In the 1960s, Campos Venuti had already become an important figure in the laborious process of institutionalising planning practices in Italy. If Astengo focused on the theme of democratic rationality in decision-making, and Quaroni and Gregotti, with different approaches, concentrated their research on the role of design in physical transformations, Campos took credit for being the first to pay attention to the essential conditions for "planning management" (Campos Venuti, 1967). For the first time in Italy, urban planning was anchored to real institutional and organisational frameworks and to concrete administrative processes. This was an important innovation along with the equally courageous choice, in those years, of sustaining a policy of containing urban growth (an emerging issue in that period in the

Anglo-Saxon world, Hall et al., 1973) and placing structural problems of real estate market at centre stage. Surprisingly these issues had been underestimated by a large part of planning currents after the political economy approach. Innovative contributions followed over time, such as the integration of the environmental-ecological dimension, revision of implementation mechanisms and the reintroduction of the issue of planning reform (Campos Venuti, 1991). The planner's task is not limited to designing a general master plan. He cannot escape the responsibility for and attention to an effective implementation process (as Astengo had already sustained). According to this view, planning policy was fundamentally meant as the public management of implementation processes, entrusted to the various authorities' competence and organisation. This view was still compatible with the more orthodox conception of planning, understood as the exercise of a public function of regulation and control. The confrontation between public and private interests and the search for mediation and cooperation was clearly evident in Campos' view (as in general in the 1960s). Pragmatic orientation towards criticism and renewal of administrative actions do, however, seem worthy of note. The formal structure of the public administration as a model to study, apply or improve was not of interest. The crucial problem was the way in which planning choices can be made and managed, or rather the effective ways in which institutions and organisations take action. This institutionalist approach appears innovative in the Italian context. This pragmatic and critical orientation seems compatible with some international currents that subsequently became very influential (March & Olsen, 1990, 1995).

Campos' position, which was strongly critical of the vested interests seeking the dissipative use of urban and rural land, seemed more benevolent toward the often uncertain or controversial tendencies in Italian urbanism. Criticism within the discipline itself was rare and always very polite. Perhaps this can be attributed to professional deontology; it does not seem correct to publicly criticise professionals who could be rival competitors in gaining commissions. But it was more likely due to a desire to spread a positive, inclusive and united image of the planning discipline. This unitary representation seemed useful both for broadening the awareness of planning in Italy and for encouraging the application of the good principles suggested by theory. Perhaps similar sentiments can still explain the scarcity of critical spirit in the international literature today (Hillier & Healey, 2008a). In this sense, Campos proposed a reconstruction of the evolutionary course of the planning discipline in Italy, which, at different times in its history, did not distinguish alternative tendencies, although they were not lacking; Piccinato, Astengo, Quaroni, Gregotti and other great contemporary authors expressed different cultural and professional profiles. Over time, an evolutionary sequence of changes became apparent, representing a progressive trend according to the typical canons of positivist culture. Campos believed it was possible and useful to distinguish different "planning generations": the first experiences of post-war reconstruction, which unfortunately largely avoided public control; the planning policies of the 1960s regarding the containment and rationalisation of urban growth; the subsequent experiences of "reconstruction of the city within the city" when demand for renewing the existing fabric began to prevail over those of growth (tendencies that were already evident

between the 1970s and 1980s); in the 1970s, the relationships between planning and environmental-ecological policies and mobility (Campos Venuti, 1991). Step by step, the discipline seemed to be able to develop an integrated approach that was basically unitary because it was true, fair, shared and technically relevant thanks to the appropriate selection and combination of themes and experiences accumulated over time. This inclination towards a positive synthesis encouraged dispensing with a series of critical questions that concerned the discipline's very foundation and practice. Italian planners seem to have accepted a dual regime: on the one hand severely critical towards the ways in which society, economics and politics face urban and regional problems; on the other hand, with very few exceptions, a rather more benevolent attitude to their own category, its dominant paradigms and the ways in which disciplinary knowledge was used. Perhaps the same benevolence can be traced back to the over-simplified institutionalist or communicative paradigms in international planning.

In the early 1990s, these positions and experiments led to the reformulation of the discipline's framework, usually called "reformist urban planning", which still today constitutes the most influential reference for the majority of practitioners. Its core may be defined by three principal themes and goals: the need to reform and simplify the legislative framework; the need to renew planning tools by adopting new organisational, regulatory and design principles in relation to different parts of the city and the region; the need to modify implementation techniques passing from the use of eminent domain (expropriation) to negotiation and transfer of development rights. This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of this topic (Palermo, 2001a, 2004), but we are interested in pointing out some crucial questions, in relation both to the problems and the aspirations set out in the two previous chapters as well as to some general trends in international planning theory.

The first, and only, Italian national planning law dates to 1942. It was innovative then but has been considered obsolete for some time now. The law called for a complex hierarchy of plans from the regional to the local scales. The fundamental instrument, the municipal regulatory or zoning plan, presented a clear normative orientation with features that were *comprehensive and detailed* at the same time. It belonged to the *blueprint planning* tradition which, moreover, in the immediate post-war period, was also authoritative in other contexts including the Anglo-Saxon one. The intrinsic difficulties of this approach were aggravated by the basic incapacity of politics and public authorities to formulate and legitimate large-scale programmatic frameworks and effective operational projects which, at the beginning, were rigorously implemented by public initiative. At the beginning of the 1990s, *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica* (INU) developed interesting reform hypotheses, but, over the next 20 years, the government was incapable of legislating the national urban planning reform (Mantini & Lupi, 2005). On the contrary the same principles were partially applied in several regional reforms introducing the two levels of planning – the structure plan and local operative plan – that were more common elsewhere (but 20 years after other European countries). Implementation procedures were also redefined according to innovative principles, which envisage the coordination of the actors involved and transfer of development rights. Rome's

Comprehensive Plan, drafted between 1994 and 2000 by Campos Venuti, Federico Oliva and others (Campos Venuti, 2001), constitutes an exemplary document in this trend. The first step was dealing with the residual building rights left over from the previous plans. In the case in point it was a 1962 plan which, despite the elapsed time, had bequeathed over one hundred million cubic metres of development rights. A rigorous analysis of the various situations allowed the cancellation of prior forecasts that were incompatible with environmental preservation and landmark restrictions. This amounted to almost half the total available. The remaining development rights were to be concentrated within a limited number of strategic areas. The following step in the planning process was the construction of a programmatic vision for the future city based on the redesign of three large spatial systems: the set of areas of intensive urban growth, the network of the important infrastructural components and finally the set of environmental areas to be preserved and improved. These three systems converged to generate a strategic and programmatic vision that would guide concrete interventions. In contrast with the images used in urban marketing, this vision emphasizes important spatial, morphological and physical issues. Urban designs were to be regulated in different ways depending on the theme and goals at stake. Management of the consolidated city, which only requires good on-going maintenance, was entrusted to planning regulations, while areas of strategic development required the design of new urban projects. The administration was to define the essential requirements of the single project that would be coherent with the programmatic framework. Subsequently an architecture competition was to be held to select best proposal. The actions relating to a specific spatial and temporal horizon were to be organised through operative planning tools.

In principle, the model seems convincing. It is conceived as a pragmatic, but coherent, combination of a variety of good practices utilised both in Italy and abroad. These concern the analysis of urban structure, and innovation of the main planning instruments and techniques. Many suggestions and experiments discussed in the preceding chapters found simple, feasible and apparently suitable applications. The technical level was certainly mature. Both the final outcome and its overall process can be considered the highest point reached in Italy by the reformist movement in its ascendant phase (Palermo, 2001b). Nevertheless, after almost a decade, it must be acknowledged that the results have not lived up to the expectations. Many observers considered the capacity for implementing the plan to be inadequate. Various fundamental goals were contradicted by undeniable facts. The myth of Rome's "buongoverno" rapidly dissolved. In the 2008, election the Mayor's coalition was defeated by the centre-right who took over leadership of the city. It is difficult to imagine that the theory was wrong. The crucial point is probably that the formally approved plan did not become true action within a reasonable time frame. The critical question lies in *planning policy*.

This outcome leads us to reflect upon the important difficulties that also arose in the Regions that attempted reformist urban planning measures, such as Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Umbria and Basilicata. The increased number of institutional levels (region, province and municipality) creates a chain that is too long between general guidelines and local action, increasing the risks of inefficiency or

irrelevance. The multiplication of the number of planning acts becomes a bureaucratic impediment or expresses weak and vague contents which do not interfere with the real processes. The structural vision represents an ideal state of equilibrium, but real situations always entail notable disparity, so evolution is configured as a sequence of successive imbalances. Few Italian planners have had the lucidity to recognise that this is not an unusual and abnormal state but the ordinary condition for planning practice (Mazza, 1997, 2004a). Structure plans have been produced but the experiences of local operative plans are still rare and their timing is often faulty thus casting doubt upon the possibility of programmatic coherence between spatial visions and development projects. Recourse to development rights transfer techniques has spread in the implementation phase, but the capacity of the public administration to guide both property owners and developers according to pre-established programmatic criteria remains limited. Legitimation through the addition of interventions that are not envisioned in the plan continue to be widespread. In general, continuous tensions emerge between new projects, programmatic visions and regulation. These difficulties have been underestimated by the simplifying models of functional integration that in Italy, as in Europe, underpinned the reformist approach (Mazza, 2004b, 2004c).

It is possible to ignore these criticalities and confirm the virtue of the proposed principles, but it is also plausible to see some error in the approach, therefore justifying the search for new directions. An unusual experiment was carried out in Milan on the threshold of the millennium by a centre-right government with the contribution of a reformist planner, Luigi Mazza. With radical simplification that upset planning orthodoxy, the Lombardy planning system had been entrusted to two fundamental instruments according to a 1999 law: a spatial planning framework with strategic and structural aims, to be appropriately updated over time and the “integrated programme for intervention”, the operative instrument for local action, calling for coordination between different functions and modes of intervention. The logic was simple – public or private actors could propose development projects to be evaluated in relation to the strategic framework. They would be approved and implemented only in the case of positive evaluation by a technical commission (Mazza, 2001; Balducci, 2001; Healey, 2007). This basic model seems to be able to interpret many real processes. The critical point is whether it can ensure the institutional capacity to govern urban development. It is clear that everything depends on the rigorous exercise of public responsibility (concerning the strategic orientation and the evaluation of concrete projects), as well as on the capacity of the local society to generate effective projects. The results have been modest, due to the lack of the fundamental cultural and institutional conditions that can guarantee the experiment’s success. Discretionary use of public power was expected, as was the entrepreneurship of private interests and the transparent evaluation of alternative options in a real context that was quite far from the British tradition. The observation that appears most interesting to us is that this model did not seem satisfactory for the economic interests supporting the centre-right government, who evidently preferred more traditional methods of obtaining planning permissions to the complicated and uncertain procedures involving the production and evaluation of projects. The

traditional planning process was considered better as long as the choices were convenient for the interests involved (Oliva, 2002).

Thus, in 2005, the Lombardy Region approved a new planning act. For orthodox planners this was, however, an acceptable step towards the rehabilitation of “planning method”. In many aspects, the new act is debatable. The multiplication of planning instruments increased the risk of system inefficiency since specific plans are defined at each institutional level (region, province and municipality). Furthermore, a distinction between the general plan with structural-strategic functions, planning regulation for routine management of the consolidated urban areas and the plan for public service provision is introduced. In this framework, some of the more specific aspects seem disconcerting. The temporal horizon of the strategic framework is limited to 5 years, which seems to be an absurdly short period in a complex metropolitan area, perhaps only applicable to mere real estate development projects. Two observations can be made in relation to Milan’s new plan for the “governo del territorio” (Comune di Milano, 2009). To all appearances, the reformist language was largely assimilated notwithstanding the cultural differences with the current centre-right government. Of course, some emphases are peculiar, such as the ideological references to the individual and to the subsidiarity principle. But the main issues and goals of reformism (sustainability, cohesion, quality, cooperation, development and so on) appear to belong to rhetoric of common sense that does not involve only general principles but also analytical and communicative language.

Moreover, if the technical and normative contents are considered, it can be noted that the strategic framework is neither selective nor does it establish clear priorities for intervention. It includes, rather, a vast list of different kinds of actions, for most of which the resources, feasibility conditions, and operational horizons are not specified. This limit is particularly serious in a metropolis which, for decades, has been lacking a true development strategy and governance capacity and which has, as a result, accumulated a serious backlog of infrastructural and environmental problems. The fear is that lack of local finance and the widespread culture of individualist mobilisation might reinforce an earlier view that never obtained good results: the idea of merely founding future development on economic growth in the real estate sector. Actual facts to support this fear are not lacking. Urban quality should be a guiding principle for planning action, but, over the years, vast areas have been the object of important rehabilitation operations with the priority interventions increasing urban density rather than pursuing environmental quality, improving urban services or designing high-quality open space. This was carried out even while risking the creation of an excess of medium-to-high quality housing for which, at the moment, a reliable and effective demand does not exist. In an ambitious city like Milan, which seems geared towards pursuing a policy of mere quantitative growth, it is almost as though the difficulty of undertaking a more radical policy for quality, innovation and urban competitiveness were taken for granted (Palermo, 2002, 2007, 2009). The new plan does not open new perspectives. Hidden behind a partly renewed language, the underlying policy basically has not changed. It is difficult to understand why the mere fact of having produced a new planning

document – after almost 40 years – should be the only reason for its positive evaluation (Oliva, 2008).

Our conclusion is that reformist culture cannot be limited to celebrating “planning method”. As in a range of other contexts, also in Italy, enough situations confirm that the problem does not concern only law, method or formal plan generation, but indeed lies in the capacity for effective action in real conditions. It concerns “planning policy” in its broadest and most complex meaning.

Chapter 18

The Challenges for Policy Making

It has been clear for at least 20 years in Italy that policy making questions cannot be avoided, not only in practice but also in the planning debate. These references have, for a long time, been marginal in the more influential disciplinary traditions, but conditions have changed and even the planners who continue to favour *planning method* must face urban and regional policy questions. The approach proposed by Ludovico Quaroni in the 1960s no longer appears convincing for it created a clear-cut division between the substantive topics according to spatial scale. Responsibility for large-scale strategies for estimating, allocating and programming the main economic and social functions was entrusted to regional-scale planning and policies. Once the programmatic agenda was established for basic needs within a certain time frame, the work of the urban designer came into play to give spatial organisation and form to functional strategies and objectives. In an even later phase, the architect was called upon to define the physical and formal design of the single urban or architectural projects (Quaroni, 1967, 1969). In this sense, policy issues came to constitute a complementary theme, a sort of preliminary framework concerning disciplinary responsibilities. However, this apparently simple and clear view was fraught with important limitations insofar as it established an a priori hierarchy among socio-economic strategies and urban planning choices. The latter could be understood as the simple spatial projection of the former (the most widespread hypothesis in Italy up to the 1980s). However, the possibility is diminished for discussing the evolution of functions and form, for critically introducing the spatial dimension in the earliest phase of generating the programmatic scenarios. The most innovative disciplinary debate tends to question these simplifications. So to consider policy making in this sense is perhaps not the most fruitful.

It would also be a mistake, in our opinion, to understand policy issues as input that can come down to planning theory from that nearby disciplinary area defined as “public policy analysis”. Beginning in the early 1990s, thanks to some important figures, a rich dialogue developed in Italy between policy analysts and some schools of architecture, especially those in Milan and Venice. The discussion concerned an emerging branch of political science (Dente, 1990; Dente, Bobbio, Fareri, & Morisi, 1990; Capano & Giuliani, 1996) which, not without misunderstandings and contrasts with the academic establishment, renewed the Italian tradition of public administration studies. It shifted attention from the dominant legal-formal

framework, whose role was to verify legitimacy and compliance to rules, to investigate instead the concrete interaction networks within an organisational context. This concerned the following: the set of actors and interactions that arise around any given planning problem, the effective interpretations of the formal roles and regulations, the consequences regarding real processes and the extent to which the declared objectives are achieved, learning from the planning experience and possibilities for dynamic adaptation of strategies and behaviours. Traditionally, the definition of a problem was formally pre-determined on the basis of ideal models interpreting single roles, organisation, programming and coordination of collective action. In theory, a pertinent organisational and procedural model would be available for every problem. The solution was entrusted to the correct functioning of the model. Public policies were understood as functions of a pre-ordained institution, the State, with its various components. The study of the policy making process was limited to the analysis of the organisational and management structure of the dominant institution. The protagonists of the process were mainly public actors defined according to pre-determined roles and functions. As Bruno Dente has observed, there was a tendency to confuse the description of empirical reality with the prescription of a desired order.

From the point of view of policy analysis, on the other hand, the construction of the problem also became an open question. It was therefore necessary to understand the actors (politicians, bureaucrats, planning officials, private operators and social parties) who effectively participate in a concrete *policy process*, carrying out important actions for purposes of problem formulation or reformulation with specific rationales and interests. It involves evaluating their real behaviours and interactions, without expecting to deduce their rationality from assumptions about roles or the analysis of aggregate data, but by directly observing actions and processes. Or better yet, this is the perspective suggested by the policy approach inspired by the culture of critical pragmatism (see the “policy inquiry” approach envisioned by Wildavsky, 1979; Lindblom, 1990; Ostrom, 1992; Regonini, 2001). Other approaches follow more traditional bases for interpreting rationality principles and collective choices, such as “public choice” which defines collective decisions as an aggregation of rational individual choices (Mueller, 1989) or “policy analysis” meant as a methodology and technique for finding rational solutions to public problems, which John Friedmann took to be one of the founding planning paradigms (Friedmann, 1987). Perhaps Gloria Regonini portrayed the most complete synoptic picture of the topic in Italy, even if her review does not take any position among the alternative views presented (Regonini, 2001). In our opinion, the only innovation lies solely in the *policy inquiry approach*.

It seems perfectly clear to us that these debates can be considered absolutely applicable and relevant with regard to the understanding of many current problems of urban development and real processes of spatial planning. A *policy problem*, as Pierluigi Crosta (one of the most authoritative figures – not many in actual fact – of this cultural turn in Italian urbanism) reminds us, does not just provoke the traditional questions: Who decides what? How? And with what results? A policy problem must be reformulated in different terms: What outcomes can be explained

by the planning interactions? What is their nature? Among which actors (Crosta, 1990b)? It is important to explain the outcome of decision-making process on the basis of an interpretative reconstruction of the physical transformations. An emerging trend in policy analysis is thus added to traditional empirical analyses in planning. The *government's action* must be studied directly – and not only their official documents or their rhetoric – along with their underlying motivation and effects, as the mediated outcome of interaction processes among independent actors operating within a specific framework of rules and conditions.

As a consequence, the notion of *public policy* must change. It cannot be understood as the intentional action of an institutional actor representing a general interest. On the contrary, if a collective problem is considered of public interest in a given context, public policy becomes the not strictly pre-determined outcome of the actions and interactions undertaken by the multiple actors activated by the problem itself. A *policy* issue becomes a “public policy” when a problem that involves a plurality of actors is added to a political agenda and contributes to the formation of new “common sense” with respect to the themes under discussion. It is not necessary, or even likely, that all the important actors in the process be public ones, and that all the actions be directly aimed at resolving the problem. All actors and all decisions that can, in some way, affect the issue of collective interest at stake should be taken into consideration. The interpretation of roles depends on the context and the available opportunities and can rarely be attributed to preconceived models. The nature and limits of the problem must also be identified and verified during the course of the planning process. Each actor tends to redefine them over the course of time usually without being able to impose his point of view on the others. Possibilities for strategic cooperation can emerge as unexpected outcomes, not just as intentional products of individual strategies. A collective subject can be formed during the course of the experience. The outcome depends on the local combination of a set of contingent factors: actors, resources, forms of interaction, stakes, agreements and compensation mechanisms. Therefore, it is not always easily predictable. The outcome does not generally represent a final solution to a problem, but rather its reformulation in partially renewed terms after some difficulties have been overcome with the awareness that others may emerge. A policy that faces important issues can always generate new criticalities (Crosta, 1990a, 1998).

The passage from the “planning policy” tradition to the “policy inquiry” one could represent a radical turn in planning (Bianchetti, 1989; Bolocan Goldstein, Borelli, Moroni, & Pasqui, 1996; Bolocan Goldstein, 1997; Borelli, 2005, 2006; Pasqui, 2001, 2005, 2008). The crucial point here is the conception of the *governance process*. The idea must be abandoned that solving problems can always be managed directly by a public institution. In many cases, the need is recognised for “joint action” between public and private actors. The public role is thus reformulated and takes on the new function of mobilising actors and resources that can cooperate in resolving a problem, either through coordination or spontaneous interaction. For some time, as is well-noted, the notion of *governance* has been used to allude to the action of government that is exercised through joint forms of action that cannot be reduced to the intentionality of a single actor or strategy. This would be a radical turn

with respect to the paradigms proposed by Giovanni Astengo or Vittorio Gregotti. Compared to reformist positions, the relationship is more ambiguous. But some orientations might be congruent: new attention to implementation utilising negotiation techniques rather than authoritative ones; recourse to a variety of development projects based on public–private partnerships; the strategic relationship between broader-scale frameworks and local actions. There is no doubt, however, that it is not possible to accept the administrative conception of “planning policy” although it did mark an important turn in the 1960s as compared to the preceding traditions of “planning without politics”. We have acknowledged the innovative strength of such a theme as “managing urban planning” (Campos Venuti, 1967) in relation to the academic or bureaucratic plans that did not take the problems of feasibility and implementation into account. However, the context’s evolution and the new problems of governing physical transformations lead us to consider this conception of public guidance and control to be surpassed, notwithstanding its former merits.

Pier Luigi Crosta lucidly showed the limits of planning intentionality in any form: as a general plan or architecture for the city but also as a reformist programme (Crosta, 1984, 1990a, 1998). Coordination of individual actions and the cooperative agreements that constitute an essential requisite for any planning tool may be the outcome of an argumentative or negotiated process geared towards collective consensus-building. They may also *happen* as events in which a plurality of individuals finds themselves, non-intentionally, sharing the unexpected consequences of social interaction. The connections with that *culture of the possible* are clear, which, as we have argued in Chapter 13, we believe represents the most fertile prospect in this field of practices. To encourage these processes, it is not enough to activate *consensus-building* techniques and procedures (public surveys, participative design, impact evaluation). It may be more important to sustain, also in an indirect way, the social practices already underway that can contribute to the shared formation of views and actions due to a variety of secondary effects. It is reasonable to imagine specific projects that can enhance networks of interaction between important actors, thanks to the institutionalisation of a new system of rules and interdependencies, but these efforts might give rise to paradoxical outcomes. Often the results are more effective in situations in which ties are weak and redundant and the margins of indeterminacy and discretion are notable. Uncertainty can become an opportunity and, as Michel Crozier suggests, the responsibilities of interpretation and choice can promote learning and innovation (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Crozier, 1987). Technical and professional skill is not always effective if it is not geared towards dealing with the experiences and practices emerging from the context. Authoritative disciplinary approaches propose self-referential models (Astengo and Gregotti), but reformism also tends to reintroduce a pedagogical view as a guide or discipline for collective action. Without denying the good reasons underlying those attempts, there is no need to fall into the same misconception again. The quality of the processes depends above all on the capacity for *social self-organisation*, which can mature through successful experiences of collective action and interaction. We should ask planning, first and foremost, to encourage the positive potential already present in a given context, to work towards increasing the degree of social complexity and

possibilities for regenerating the concrete interaction systems, to facilitate social experimentation and the creation of new social capital, to take into account emerging forms of learning and innovation (Bricocoli, de Leonardis, & Tosi, 2008, 2009; Bricocoli & Savoldi, 2008).

A trend in research and practice prevalent above all in Florence attempted to develop this view with an approach that we might call *neo-organicist* (Magnaghi, 1990, 1998, 2000). The metaphor of the city as a *living organism* is an old idea that we find in Geddes, Mumford, Lavedan, Pöete and others, but has in recent years influenced the course of some research in Italy. An organic project must contend with the objective limits of the growth of each organism. It must therefore accept the existence of a unitary structure, equilibrium of the parts and relations, capacity for self-organisation, meaning the adaptation of the structure in relation to environmental factors according to a dynamic view (Mumford, 1938, 1961). As a living form, urbanised space must have a life cycle. It can be born and perish, but it can also be regenerated, depending on the evolving relations between society and the environment. Some modernisation processes gave rise to highly dissipative development forms, contributing to the destruction of the values that settled over time. Metropolitan development has created new artificial environments, devoid of tradition and overcoming its spatial limits. If the efficiency and competitiveness of economic systems are the prevalent principles, space risks being reduced to a technical support system for purely functional needs, the producer-consumer takes the place of the inhabitant, site substitutes place and the economic region replaces the historic settlement. Metropolitan hypertrophy is not an anomaly, but an inevitable consequence of the mechanisms that tend to destroy social ties, local identity and heritage.

According to Magnaghi, for some time now cities have no longer been constructed, but rather urban parts or fragments are organised, located on the territory according to purely technical and functional criteria with no shared design or sense. Space becomes an obstacle, a constriction or a resource. It is no longer the place where a local community settles and lives with forms that are sometimes unique and unrepeatable. If economic functions prevail, the idea of *public space* can dissolve. No longer a place of social communication, public space is a simple instrument for mobility; specific relationships with the historic and environmental context are weakened. Without heritage, public space and common goods the city disappears. And even the once rich and complex rural landscape – an articulate web of channels, pathways, settlement nuclei, natural environments and ecosystems – is simplified and impoverished in the name of economic rationality. The growing importance of virtual and long-distance relations seems to further reduce concern for the physical environment, while the deterioration of natural values grows, often associated with forms of social hardship due to growing polarisation between competitive or declining cities, wealthy or lower classes, new kinds of poverty and emerging risks tied to health, welfare and the quality of life.

Nevertheless, the *local dimension* is also re-emerging in the economic sphere with the formation or revitalisation of spatial systems like industrial districts or local development systems (Bagnasco, 1988; Barca, 1997). It is a matter of recovering

balanced and coherent relations with an urban and regional context and with general processes of globalisation. The demand for alternative projects and conceptions of local development is growing. This is the theme of *sustainable development*. It is not just a case of protecting the natural environment to ensure future generations an acceptable habitat. The theme is the regeneration and development of settlements – meaning the set of relationships between natural contexts and human processes according to the rules that a community adopts. More than adherence to exogenous and pre-ordained models, what counts is the local ability to autonomously guarantee development processes that are coherent with principles of sustainability, namely *self-sustainable*. These principles suggest some topics: attention to the long-term identity of a place; dialogue with the local knowledge guiding actions that are coherent with its goals of environmental preservation and enhancement; an idea of preservation that does not crystallise a given state but allows virtuous evolutions; the care for local systems devastated by uncontrolled modernisation processes; appeal to the inhabitants and local community as decisive actors for the reintroduction of virtuous *self-organisation processes*.

What seem necessary are more democracy, more participation, more solidarity and cohesion, and a greater capacity for self-government in order to sustain the impact of the dominant actors of globalisation. The theme of development is crucial, but attention must be paid to economic models that can produce (and not dissipate) new *territorial values* – activities coherent with context and tradition that can improve urban and environmental heritage, forms of local self-entrepreneurship rather than exogenous dependencies, preferences for complex, integrated systems rather than sectoral ones (Dematteis, 1995, 2001). At the same time, it seems correct to seek *eco-compatible* urban models that can ensure biodiversity, energy savings, endogenous waste management, moderate land consumption, non-hierarchical networks of relations, balanced and polycentric systems rather than scattered agglomerations and urban sprawl. The production of urban contexts with high environmental quality should become a fundamental indicator of sustainable development while purely quantitative measures of economic growth should not be considered significant.

These principles express an environmental and social sensibility that can be easily agreed upon. The reference to classical positions is clear (Geddes and Mumford, among the first) as well as to the difficulty of reconciling these aspirations with the dominant logic of economic globalisation. The generalised statement of principles of economic competitiveness on a global scale tends to multiply situations of *spatial indifference*. Activities and investments are delocalised without focusing attention on the specificity of place. They tend to accentuate spatial and social divisions, creating enclaves and increasing polarisation. The expected benefits for local contexts are often uncertain, belated and distributed in grossly unequal ways. Adhesion to virtuous principles of local sustainable development can become easy rhetoric, while real practices are dominated by concrete interests, sometimes in clear contradiction to the good intentions expressed. The very appeal to the local dimension may become a localism of closure and intolerance (Sennett, 1990, 1994). Moreover, the existence of *local communities* that are close-knit and respectful of inherited

values seems increasingly less evident (Bagnasco, 1999; Putnam, 2000). These risks clearly do not escape the attention of the group of scholars and practitioners who, today in Italy, especially in Florence and Milan, sustain these positions. But they also do not see any alternatives. Only the revival of bottom-up initiative and the constitution of new local networks rooted in their various contexts can generate a plausible alternative dialectic between local needs and the drive for competition and growth. It is not the possible efficiency of a market economy that is refuted here, but the reduction of all forms of contemporary society to pure market models. This is an ideal manifesto that can guide a research programme and a multiplicity of current practices (Paba, 1998, 2003). It could prove all the more interesting if it could increasingly influence daily processes. Judgement regarding the conditions necessary for more general diffusion of this approach seems less clear. The contribution could be rooted in traditions of “concrete utopias” of planning tradition, but it does not focus on the harsh problems of consensus-building and the management of a local self-sustainable development policy. Moreover, it could be observed that the complexity of the discussion seems to outweigh some simplifications found in the international planning literature regarding “social mobilisation” (Friedmann, 1987).

However, in Italy, interest in an approach that places greater attention on new forms of *urban and regional governance* seems more widespread and influential. Following the tracks of the most authoritative international literature (among others Rhodes, 1996, 1997; Le Galès, 1998, 2002; Pierre, 1999, 2000; Healey et al., 2000), this notion appears to open the way, in Italy, towards the possible foundation of new disciplinary knowledge and skills, rather than to the critical interpretation of real development processes. This risks becoming an ideological oversimplification because, in actual fact, governance represents *the problem and not the solution* to the difficulties faced by regional policies. We have already mentioned (Chapter 11) a series of critical points that concern both the interpretation of this idea as well as possible operative practices. The impression is that these criticalities, which are largely underestimated by the new disciplinary orthodoxy, are ever more clearly perceived. In Italy, unfortunately, the risks of a merely rhetorical use of the alleged innovation are great, just as there are grounds for concern about problems of democratic legitimacy, transparency and accountability that can be associated with the principle of governance. Concrete experiences seem to confirm the main limitations that have already been pointed out in Chapter 11. There is no doubt, however, that the influence of the topic has contributed to the development of new technical skills around the questions and problems raised by the policy approach.

A renewed repertory of heterogeneous tools is now available for these purposes: procedures for listening and participation, spaces for negotiation or agreement, experiences of participatory design, relational or simulation games, but also new forms of analytical skills for representation, evaluation and control. A new *technical figure* has emerged, perhaps original in terms of tools but not in terms of role. This figure should be able to contribute to decision-making, to the generation of scenarios and guidelines and the construction of political agreements, to the implementation of programmes and their evaluation. Moreover, it would be an error or an illusion to reduce the innovation, which concerns the setting of the problems and

possibilities of dealing with them, to a search for updated technical professionalism in relation to basically traditional roles. The problem is not to invent new experts in *governance, consensus-building or creative conflict management*, but to understand that these issues involve a different conception of professional practices and roles in public action. It is not possible to tacitly propose earlier *problem-solving* models, to reduce critical policy questions to problems of pure technique or method, to ignore a series of paradoxical outcomes. Collective design is aspired to as an intrinsic value, but a limitation on the practices of listening and participation could prove more determinant for the outcome. Forums and focus groups continue to multiply, but it is increasingly clear that these are not the places of real decision-making, but perhaps only of ratification of agreements made elsewhere, or of simply waiting for the process to find a more advanced synthesis. Investments in analytical knowledge are still considerable but can be thwarted by the variety of local situations and the *relational* nature of the issue, which acquires explicit sense and value only in specific contexts. Standard representations, which only concern general states, and not local systems of interaction, are thus not very useful. It is easy to observe that, at this point in time, widespread rhetoric has formed regarding governance, the functions of which risk becoming prevalently symbolic. The real development of the decision-making games usually follows other more discreet and determinant routes. Thinking about the policy dimensions of planning processes means not avoiding these difficulties, which seem to us, however, to be underestimated in large parts of the literature on governance (Healey et al., 2000; Albrechts, 2003; Salet et al., 2003).

Policy making therefore represents an obvious challenge for planning theory and practice. It is not a reference from outside the field, but an endogenous tendency within the disciplinary debate, which also appears necessary and irreversible. However, it does permit very different interpretations. On the one hand, a widespread tendency persists in Italy of absorbing innovation within the reformist tradition. The opportunity for adopting new tools, like policies and strategies, partnerships and projects, is acknowledged but these should become new ways of applying the main statutory instrument, the master plan. "Planning method" still represents the pillar of the government model, with the renewal of only some operative possibilities (Salzano, 1998). Policies and projects could be the effective means for achieving the planning vision from which they would draw the necessary legitimation. According to this logic, the drafting of a plan, while disputable, would represent progress as compared with the situation in which development is guided only by partial strategies and projects. Thus it happens that Federico Oliva, though criticising the obvious, severe limits of the new Milan plan, considers the current situation preferable to the earlier model which envisaged only a framework document and the evaluation of new projects (Oliva, 2002, 2008; Galuzzi & Vitillo, 2008). We do not agree with this opinion, but it represents a diffused disciplinary perspective and deserves further reflection.

Another two trends appear even more innovative: on the one hand, the emphasis on the *self-organisational capacity of the local society* and, on the other hand, new institutional engineering growing around models and procedures of *multilevel*

governance. According to some current rhetoric, these would be two important complementary dimensions of a common approach. In our opinion, the differences in principle are radical. On the one hand, a link is suggested with the utopian or regionalist traditions of international planning, which in the 1960s, had already exerted impressive influence on authors like Samonà, De Carlo, Quaroni, Olivetti and the *Comunità* movement (Lanzani, 1996). On the other, the *societal guidance* tradition is resumed in forms that are more suitable for the era of globalisation, but widely influenced by a somewhat extraneous managerial culture. A clear sign is the growing attention to themes of multilevel governance as the capacity to coordinate different sectoral policies on a spatial basis (Palermo, 2004). In Italy, this trend also sanctioned new interest in international spatial planning as compared with the urbanism tradition. However, literally, neither of the two tendencies seems convincing. They both exalt a single dimension of the problem leaving other crucial relations and issues in the shadow. On the other hand, “contamination” does not seem obvious with its largely indeterminate forms and effects. In this sense, the *policy approach* does not constitute a definitive paradigmatic turn but it is the indicator of a variety of planning problems and dilemmas. The most recent experiences in Italy (as we will see in Part IV) seem to be truly innovative in very small part. In many cases, it seems clear that a consolidated and rather inert system has succeeded in metabolising the alleged new instrumentation from the strategic plan to the integrated projects (Palermo, 2001a, 2004, 2006). The point is whether this evolving topic can make it possible to express some critical judgement and imagine new future perspectives.

Chapter 19

Reconsidering Policy Design

Our hypothesis is that the main route passes through dialogue and constructive interaction among some of the cultural traditions of architecture, urban planning and policy studies. This contamination, as we have already hinted, may bring noteworthy innovations to the two fields in both theoretical and practical terms.

In the political science literature, *policy design* is a specific category which still alludes to a rationalist interpretation of *policy making* (Dror, 1971; Linder & Peters, 1984, 1990, 1991; Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Regonini, 2001). It is a methodical and positive view, compatible in approach with the rational-comprehensive conception of planning as well as with the stereotype of the modernist project in that it presumes a rigorous cognitive base, objectives that are not too vague or ambiguous, a methodological capacity to construct the most suitable solutions to problems and so on. In these terms, it risks becoming a notion of little use. For Lindblom, this approach is simplifying, technically unreliable, pointlessly expensive, politically fragile and defers all problems to implementation (Lindblom, 1959, 1990). In this sense, the appeal to policy design cannot be considered particularly innovative and influential.

We also consider to be limited another current interpretation in which “designing public policies” means defining appropriate rules and procedures for the policy making process to accompany it towards positive outcomes. In this sense, the institutional role that planners assign themselves concerns procedural skills more than the substance of choices and interventions. It is no longer the scientific method that Astengo desired but participatory or evaluation processes, which, to all appearances, envision an important function for social interaction. A limitation remains, however, for any position that concentrates on procedural aspects instead of tackling substantive questions. Countless experiences of directed or even manipulated consensus-building practices, public discussions or impact evaluations that do not have the force to question decisions already made elsewhere all confirm that this role could result in irrelevant practice or could instrumentally provide ideological cover for absolutely traditional choices. Moreover, this approach confirms the separation of the two cultures. The planner is responsible for the methodological and procedural aspects of decision-making while the architect is entrusted with the responsibility for determining urban form and content. A real attempt at

theoretical and practical contamination is lacking. This in our opinion constitutes the most interesting challenge for both fields.

If we consider the question from the point of view of policy analysis, the limits and risks of the over-simplified application of the orthodox managerial culture are evident (Chandler, 1977; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). Urban marketing and strategic planning experiences have clearly shown the ambiguity and the weakness of “governing by symbolic policies”, meaning not just through regulation, plans and development projects, but essentially through visions, scenarios and programmatic simulations, regardless of their concrete effects. As Crozier has shown with great skill, “strategic reasoning” does not consist only in singling out goals and constraints. The crucial factor is the availability of the *resources* that will enable the stated goals to be pursued and the criticalities to be transformed into opportunities (Crozier, 1987; Bobbio, 1995, 1996). They are made up of a variety of factors concerning knowledge, systems of regulation, organisational models, spatial features, economic resources, social capital, degree of consensus and so on (Chapter 13). These factors take on *positional* characteristics, that is their quality, meaning and possibilities for use depend on reciprocal relations within a given context and on the related direct and indirect effects (Hirsch, 1976). The *policy inquiry* approach correctly recognises that social and spatial design must be conceived of as “collective inquiry” because a complex project is never a demiurgic creation but an emerging outcome of dialogue and transaction among plural actors expressing diverging interests and identities (Lanzara, 1985; Ostrom, 1992). The difficulty of the policy problems – the formulation of which is usually not given a priori but has to be shared during the course of the planning process – depends, above all else, on the different representations of the situation by the actors involved and the tensions that emerge from their strategic interactions. Possibility for success depends on the ability to construct a *shared framework* that can allow reasonable solutions, as well as to activate the cooperation necessary for their implementation. It is arbitrary to think that a collective actor can steer a process to a good end (Le Galès, 2002) or that a naturally collaborative spirit exist (Healey, 1997). On the contrary, individual actors, differences and conflicts play decisive roles in the formation of an idea for the common good and an acceptable degree of social cohesion (Hirschman, 1994, 1995). But it is also surprising that communicative processes are understood in most of the international planning literature as merely discursive and immaterial. The terms of the discussion are probably the interpretation and concrete representation of conditions, forms and opportunities for spatial development.

In this sense, the encounter with the polytechnic culture (as the saying goes, architecture is “the most polytechnic of the human arts”) could give rise to interesting developments. The approach is not analytical, but *morphological* and *interpretative*. In contexts in which external effects, common goods, positional goods (the nature and quality of which change with use) and composition effects are extremely frequent and important, it would be rash to adopt a traditional analytical methodology, founded on deconstructing urban systems and mechanically reassembling their elements, a method that is also not unusual in the policy analysis schools. The design of urban structures and forms and the capacity to follow

their evolution are indispensable. This passage should also allow each goal and programme to be rooted in terms of urban space, form and matter, avoiding traditional dichotomies between functional schemes formulated in purely logical terms and the real contexts into which they are introduced. It is never too soon to introduce real morphological conditions and materials into the design of an action plan. In any case, the goals are not only cognitive or methodological, but *project- and action-oriented*. Coherent with the policy inquiry tradition, the project is not reduced to the routine technical application or enforcement “from the top-down and from the outside” of an established model as the expression of some predefined will, but it is the reflexive outcome of a process of social interaction and critical interpretation, which accompanies and guides hypotheses for redesigning urban form and structure (De Carlo, 1992). Thus, the project is not merely the final act of a research programme that has reached completion, but a method of investigation and production of hypotheses that characterises each phase of the process. It is a tool of inquiry that can help forestall problems of feasibility, consensus and urban quality. This view represents a worthy interpretation of Michel Crozier’s “strategic reasoning” and in particular his emphasis on the issue of *resources*.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the approach discussed here is not basically *positivist* (as a large part of managerial culture), but *critical*. The benevolent pragmatism that inspired many organisational and political studies, especially in Anglo-Saxon and American culture, is reinterpreted and strengthened by critical thinking that tends to probe appearances through rigorous experience. In the Italian architecture schools, this critical spirit was influenced more than 30 years ago by the “culture of suspicion” (as is noted, the formula alludes to such personalities as Nietzsche, Marx and Freud who, for different reasons, and in different ways, encouraged looking beyond the veil of appearances). It then took a more secular, tolerant turn towards multiple thinking, refusing a single supreme rationale (while Piccinato’s architect behaved as “doctor and judge of the city”) and the constant appeal to critical reason, which presupposes responsibilities and choices, never solved once and for all. This is how a number of European schools of architecture and engineering suggest to think and act. After some experiments over the last 20 years, this culture has also spread to the public policy field, above all in the architecture schools in Venice, Milan, Florence and Naples. In our opinion, the tendency can offer new arguments and solid experimental support to the hypothesis that we have already formulated: *critical pragmatism* is the most fertile cultural framework for spatial planning practice. To deal with policy design for us means moving in this direction (Palermo, 2009).

The approach also appears innovative if observed from the point of view of architectural culture. The congruence of these positions with any expression in Italian architecture cannot be taken for granted. Basically incompatible formalistic and self-referential views are not lacking. This is the case of the traditional academy as well as the field of urban design that has only apparently been renewed (Krier, 1979, 1998; Lang, 1994; Madanipour, 1996; Rykwert, 2000; Duany et al., 2001; Jenks, 1984, 2007). Paul Valéry reminded us that Socrates found himself at a crossroads having to choose between architecture or philosophy (Valéry, 1921).

As we know, he chose the art of philosophical discussion and thus suffocated the architect that he might have become because excess of investigation and reflection could impair the architect's creativity (Rogers, 1958). The difficulty of many architects in public discussion is perhaps not a contingent fact, like the incapacity of organising space in terms of form by those who have a planner's education. The possibility for cooperation between these two, basically separate, viewpoints is not an obvious one.

The search for new professional schools that can integrate design and policy has always given partial, controversial outcomes, like at Berkeley and MIT (Wildavsky, 1979; Rodwin, 1981), or even unsuccessful ones like the case of Persons and Tugwell's Chicago school (Friedmann, 1987). The experiences in urban planning education within the Italian schools of architecture have not managed to achieve fully satisfactory results, even though we still do not agree upon a specialist approach to planning studies which is independent from architectural culture. On the other hand, the technical rationality of engineers, in the strict sense, is certainly extraneous to the requisites of policy design outlined here. Claude Lévi Strauss reminded us that, at one time, the rationality of engineers was understood as a model of evolved behaviour, while *bricolage* seemed a practice worthy only of a "good savage" (Lévi Strauss, 1962). Theoretical research regarding forms of rationality applicable to this field has shown us for some time that this opinion must be reversed. Technical rationality is only valid, at the most, for resolving routine problems. Any truly complex issue requires a capacity for experimental exploration, mediation, learning and innovation which, as James March has shown, is much closer to the attitude of the *bricoleur* appropriately understood (March, 1978, 1988). Therefore, only some research traditions seem willing to experiment conceptual contamination, if they know how to take their distance from too short-lived or arbitrary poetics or from excessively pretentious and over-simplified technical rationality.

However, it must be noted that when this route was explored by figures that could face the challenge, the results were notable. Giancarlo De Carlo, a brilliant architect with an outstanding international profile (surprisingly ignored in the orthodox planning literature), is a major figure within this approach. On the threshold of the 1960s, at the peak of the modernist ideology in Italy, Giancarlo De Carlo was a young, capable architect, known and appreciated in the most authoritative international circles of architecture and planning. Nevertheless, he felt the need to distance himself from the disciplinary *mainstream* to explore different paths. It is not surprising to find a true architect who voices objections, and expresses an alternative view, to the functionalist and prescriptive tendencies of planning at the time (De Carlo, 1964). More original, almost to the point of heresy, was his intuition regarding some potentially regressive strains of modern architecture, for example the poverty of scholasticism, the risks of new formalism and academism that later arose more clearly. With courageous choices in relation to the cultural authorities of the time, De Carlo undertook a course of research and experimentation of great interest (De Carlo, 1966a, 1966b, 1992). It eluded all superficial attempts at classification – by school, method or style – to the point of causing great problems for the most orthodox historiography.

De Carlo's work bears witness to the idea of architecture as social and civil commitment that must respond to the contextual challenges and whose quality can be probed only in practice. The urban designer must propose the new ideas he believes in, taking their risks and consequences upon himself without subordination or conformism, while avoiding new dogmatisms because *doubt* and *experimentation* are the keys to responsible, creative design. This requires an attitude that is always *open to debate* because architecture is too important to be left to the architects alone. It requires notable *reflexive* ability because public discussion of projects become opportunities for learning from each point of view without prejudices or constituted hierarchies. The claim to constructing a *theoretical system* is not of interest here because each innovator must know that his ideas will be developed by others in different ways taking new directions. The purpose of the architectural project is not to create monuments (the diatribe with Aldo Rossi was strong) but significant spatial events that can contribute to better life conditions. The purpose is not to determine behaviours in space, according to the Enlightenment illusion of the early modern movement, but to open new "spaces of freedom" as possibilities for self-determination. Projects must be understood and evaluated only as *lived spaces*, as potential that finds sense only through the society for which it has been conceived. Any form is incomplete if it is separated from life experience. Meaning cannot be autonomous, but neither is it determined only by context. It is born from the interaction between project and context, which should be understood above and beyond their morphological and physical sense.

In this view, any planning outcome is a political project realised through works of architecture. It is not possible to entrust urban and regional development, and the future of a community, to the mere aggregation of local projects expressing specific interests. A *strategic vision* – one only – is indispensable for being truly influential and able to guide single interventions according to structured urban space. Next a set of projects for urban architecture and spatial development is needed – *true projects*, well rooted in context – that can concretely implement the guiding vision: projects make the plan comprehensible which in turn clarifies the sense of the projects. But design work cannot be summary and impatient, because a spatial state may reveal itself only to those who explore it for years without respite (this would be an excessive commitment for many post-modern architects!). The result depends on the possibilities for collective agreement and self-organisation that the community is able to express. De Carlo's experiences show the profound differences between an architectural and planning practice founded on *regulation and diagrams* and one that is authentically *design-oriented*. Similar rhetoric is quite common today, but the differences appear clear when empirical investigations are undertaken. The creative and innovative contributions are notable and probably out-of-date compared with today's more widespread conformism (Palermo, 2009). Certainly De Carlo demonstrates, in an exemplary way, that fertile relationships between architecture, society and politics are possible. In our opinion, his view constitutes a convincing interpretation of urban design that looks simultaneously at architecture and at policy making as a collective experience, recognising the influential role of space and urban form in fulfilling this experience. With regret, it must be acknowledged that De Carlo,

like Quaroni, had to abandon planning in the late 1960s, while in Italy other more simplifying approaches prevailed (as shown in Di Biagi & Gabellini, 1992).

If we use the seminal figure of De Carlo as the symbol of a rich conception of *policy design*, we might not find other references of equal stature. We can recognise, however, that between alternative approaches (from the nostalgic recalling of the myths of modernity to unscrupulous abandonment to ephemeral post-modern interpretations) over the last 20 years interesting experiments on the edge of architecture and planning, which seem to express a similar view, were not lacking. We refer, for example, to Alberto Clementi's design-oriented interpretation of integrated territorial programmes and strategic frameworks (Clementi, 1996, 1999), Giovanni Maciocco's ethical and morphological conception of environmental planning and urban design (Maciocco, 1991, 1996), Patrizia Gabellini's reinvention of the structure plan as an interpretative and prospective framework that, at the same time, distinguishes and defines different urban landscapes and selects important design priorities (Gabellini, 2008; Comune di Bologna, 2009). We will take up some of these themes in Part IV, which will seek to outline the main emerging perspectives in relation to crucial issues in planning. A general observation can, however, be made at this point.

The field of architecture in Italy is faced with an interesting challenge which may recall other critical passages. Today architecture, as a general rule, no longer responds to the fundamental needs of modernity but tends to accept the identification with realms that were once considered inappropriate or even extraneous, like art, fashion and communication, thus becoming spectacle, icon of mass communication, installation, event or performance. It remains separated from the city, limiting itself to clear-cut interventions even in the absence of a design-oriented vision that is not only partial but sometimes short-sighted. The public domain and collective experiences have lost strength and clarity. This trend does not seem easily reversible, but it would be useless to adopt nostalgic attitudes or ones that are pointlessly aimed at restoring an ideal world (modern) that no longer exists, if it ever did. But this opens a dilemma. Should we adhere to this tendency with the hope of sharing the success that is in fashion? Or try to rework the approach to reinterpret it in less ephemeral, instrumental ways that are more coherent with the specific features of the more enduring Italian traditions (Purini, 2008)?

Let us recall what happened more than 40 years ago. Under the weight of Fascism, Italy belatedly discovered modern architectural culture. However, beyond any abstraction or dogmatism, it succeeded in proposing original interpretations of the principles and values of modernity, partly original and peculiar in some of its features like the links between architecture, city, landscapes and spatial contexts; the sense of proportion; the finished character of forms and volumes; their substantial articulation on the land; the shared meaning of collective space; the refusal of certain modernist provocations. It was the "Italian measure of architecture" that became a specific feature and whose originality consisted in this very capacity for reinvention. Today a similar problem is posed. Will Italian architects manage, despite the difficulties that partly depend on them, to propose a reinterpretation of today's trends that is neither short-lived nor instrumental without being limited to pure superficial

effects? This is the challenge. Past attempts to conceive founding theories have not led to good results. In fact they probably encouraged, as if in retaliation, the success of some of today's more ephemeral tendencies. The hypothesis formulated here is that more intense dialogue between architectural culture, urban planning and policy design could open up interesting opportunities. However uncertain the prospects, we consider that today there are no doubts about the need to challenge the ambiguities and contradictions underpinning the most traditional positions in each of these fields.

Part IV
Critical Issues and Perspectives

Chapter 20

Planning, Implementation and Policy Tools

A noteworthy distinction emerges from various experiences both in Italy and Europe and also from the other side of the Atlantic. There are planners, officers and politicians, who by conviction, habit or perhaps for rhetorical convenience, seem to confirm their formal faith in the *supremacy of planning* as the best method to organise urban development and steer sectoral policies in efficient ways that are advantageous for the community. Others, instead, in order to play the same roles and carry out similar practices, consider it necessary to renew ideas and instruments for managing physical transformation – meaning *planning policy* and *policy design* (Chapters 13 and 19). In fact, it can be noted in many contexts that the tools and practices have evolved considerably especially over the last 50 years. It is surprising that the discontinuities in this evolution were widely underestimated even though some ruptures had become evident and important. Generally, the earlier ideal of *comprehensive, detailed* planning that would simultaneously ensure a general but certain long-term framework and coherent operative guidance is now considered out-of-date. Whether a zoning regulation (as in the United States) or a morphological and physical design for the city (in Mediterranean Europe), the plan's *certainty* is almost always precarious due to the variety of adaptations or revisions that become necessary over time in relation to any given context. *Discretion* in interpretations and choices is a responsibility that cannot be avoided. The institutions charged with these tasks are different according to national contexts. As it is well known, it is prevalently the political and administrative system in Britain and the courts in the United States (Haar and Kayden, 1989; Booth, 1996, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones, 1996, 1999).

At later times (from the 1960s in France and Britain, but only in the 1990s in Italy), to find new balances between certainty and flexibility, many countries tested the formal distinction between *structural frameworks* and instruments for *regulation and local action*. The aim was to construct a shared medium-term vision that was not regulatory but could steer the progressive realisation of coherent projects for local development regulated by appropriate “operative plans” that formally define acceptable land uses and transformations. Nevertheless, experience has shown that, in many cases, real development takes place by deviating from the operative plan even if it is available. In the meanwhile, the structural frameworks often propose visions that are both too generic and abstract regarding the context and suggest

guidelines that are vague or difficult to interpret (Solesbury, 1974; Cross & Bristow, 1983). Subsequently, the important innovation lay in the reintroduction of *strategic planning*, which also spread to Europe over the last 20 years (Curti & Gibelli, 1996; Healey et al., 1997). Paradoxically, this trend was partly responsible for weakening the *structural* approach that was still being experimented. In effect, it was thought of as an alternative to the urban planning tradition and sought its inspiration in some principles and models of corporate strategy. In reality, the innovations were prevalently rhetorical and methodological without any real analysis of the implications on environmental and social contexts. Thus the formulation of generic scenarios for goals of growth and competitiveness is often settled for, rather than a critical interpretation of the context and its possible evolution along with the selection of the strategic priorities for intervention and a concrete analysis of the coalitions of actors and resources necessary for implementation (Crozier, 1987). We should distance ourselves from earlier models of *blueprint planning*, but we cannot disregard a critical evaluation of the meaning and efficacy of the alternative approaches. If this is the trend, is it still possible to believe in “planning method” as the solution to every problem?

The progressive weakening of urban planning tools clearly emerges from the main disciplinary traditions (Moroni, 2007). This is the case with the debatable *identification of planning with zoning*, which represents a perspective that is still widespread in the United States (Mancuso, 1978). What is only a regulatory pattern of zoning passes for comprehensive planning. The reasons are most likely rhetorical or tactical. The approval of a formal framework may become a point of strength in the event (which is not infrequent) that the courts must rule upon the controversies emerging between the interests involved. At the same time, the important degree of uncertainty – not just technical but also political – conditioning regulatory choices is underestimated (Cullingworth, 1993). Only apparently is zoning such a simple, clear tool that allows almost automatic implementation, usually entrusted to a relatively autonomous technical body. Rules and maps must define choices with such clarity and detail as to leave no room for doubt or discretionary decisions. The technical contents cannot be obscure or ambiguous. The verification of the constitutional principles brought into play by these processes must be easy and transparent – private property could not be used for functions of public interest without fair compensation; individual discrimination cannot be possible, whatever the motivation (Dworkin, 1977).

However, reality is different. The interpretation of the essential questions is not an obvious one. Some of these questions concern the following: what is meant by the notion of family and various types of housing; how should physical and spatial standards be defined relating to plots, volumes, densities and setbacks; how should problems of multifunctional and integrated urban development be faced (it is not sufficient only to regulate the development of low-density residential districts); where to locate special districts for public services, critical social functions (such as buildings for low-income families) or large development projects that defy well-defined forecasts; in what phase of planning must such locations be decided upon; how should the necessary resources for implementing the programmes be acquired

(through property taxes, development charges, impact fees or other similar instruments)? A largely discretionary picture emerges and in many ways, it inevitably implies bargaining processes. In fact, agreement between local authorities and the most influential actors involved is necessary for defining the specific contents of the planning choices. This agreement can be facilitated by the distribution of targeted advantages and incentives. Fragmentation does not always favour the coherence and continuity of the overall vision. If the stated goals concern the safety of a residential area, well-being of its inhabitants, its urban and environmental quality and the control of congestion, other substantive reasons, such as the protection of lifestyles and pre-existing property values and exclusion of unwelcome social categories or functions remain implicit but certainly influential. Thus, not only does the zoning technique represent, by its very definition, a limited interpretation of the ideals of comprehensive planning, but the resulting spatial organisation often proves to be schematic, ambiguous, conservative and discretionary. It risks generating a mosaic of local balances without a dynamic, comprehensive vision. Is this the *American dream*? Or should we consider the zoning method as a source of evocative, but unfulfilled, promises (Haar & Kayden, 1989)?

Important symptoms of disciplinary weakness and uncertainty also emerge from that approach. They are more common in Mediterranean Europe and, as we have seen, in Italy, a country where planning is often conceived of as a form of *city design*. As a rule in these cases, many of the limitations of the zoning technique are faced with some hope of providing better solutions. The production of planning norms should always be guided by a morphological and environmental vision of the future city – by an overall vision that interprets the essential features of the context and its physical transformations (Gregotti, 1986, 1993; Cagnardi, 1995). However, this ambitious goal raises a series of highly difficult problems. It should be based on the unity of urban design, especially in a phase in which it seems implausible to imagine the future of the city according to a single author's design. This is no longer the time of the city of a great patron but rather today's city is the one of the Tower of Babel (Quaroni, 1967). To suppose that star architects can vicariously carry out the role of the politician is an undue simplification, which usually ends up supporting some concrete interest. Rather more fragmentary is the current interpretation of *urban design* experiences. As Jon Lang explains well, these processes take on an *integral* character only in rare, well-defined cases such as projects for the development of limited areas (often with a high market value) which allow global, unitary management, usually promoted by powerful interests through efficient developers and with the consent of the public administration. In general instead, the complexity of both the area as well as the global project makes it necessary to divide management between different actors and processes, which may or may not satisfy requirements of coordination or prove to be occasional and fragmented (Cuthbert, 2003, 2006; Lang, 2005; Ingersoll, 2006; Madanipour, 2007).

The critical point, from a technical and operative point of view, is the way in which partial projects are steered towards a coherent overall vision. We can distinguish three families of approaches. A scheme setting out preliminary directions and criteria to be respected by each project could be sought according to a “structure

framework". A basic set of binding norms can be established to discipline detailed architectural design. The idea could be proposed that regulation and guidelines must always be legitimated through a design-oriented vision with explorative *master planning* experiments for the areas under discussion (Lang, 2005). It seems clear that this last approach is conceptually the most promising one even though it might be the most arduous and demanding. The fact remains that, in any case, the relationship between vision and project raises doubts and difficulties both in political and technical terms. These are then tied to consensus regarding the emerging choices and their operative management. The most critical point is to identify the right degree of norms and regulations.

As Quaroni has shown in an effective way, the risk lies in erring by falling short or by overshooting. If we limit ourselves to vague, often imitative suggestions, with no pertinent relations to context and with a selective, well-justified idea of urban development, it is probable that the projects will prove to be partial and fragmented, if not incoherent. If the intrusiveness and detail of the binding regulations become excessive, the risk is not just to hinder design creativity but to make the implementation of the project itself impracticable due to the unwillingness of stakeholders and developers to submit to the rules of the game (Quaroni, 1967, 1981). More than a few planning experiences in Italy during the 1990s ran aground in the face of these obstacles (as illustrated in Palermo, 2006). Quaroni encouraged mistrust of the rigidity and apparent precision of space allocation diagrams that normatively establish the spatial lay-out of functions, types and volumes. It is not possible to exclude negative effects if there is no real "control of form" – meaning an urban design study that can verify the relationships between elements, materials, forms, colours and lifestyles. A basic diagram might be enough, like a *design-idea* limited to singling out crucial parts, nodes and links according to Lynch's views (1960, 1981). Or a more advanced design exercise might become necessary to verify the morphological implications of the zoning hypotheses. Any intermediate solution could prove unsatisfactory. Urban design, according to Quaroni, should be entrusted to the same professional that developed the overall framework. It would not be reasonable for an urban designer to verify, from a morphological point of view, normative conditions that have been abstractedly foreseen by others. In this sense, the idea resurfaces for a *structure framework* that can anticipate the basic, functional and morphological features of future architectural projects, without trying, however, to preordain still immature formal and material choices. These considerations were far-sighted compared to the more widespread ideas of the 1960s. Today, they still maintain their meaningful topicality but we are also well aware of how fragile or disappointing many current interpretations are like those that instrumentally or only rhetorically apply these principles or intentionally falsify them in the name of the autonomy of the urban project in relation to contextual constraints (Koolhaas, 1978, 1996, 2000; Libeskind, 2004, see on the contrary Maciocco, 2007, 2008b; for a critical framework see Ponzini, 2009b).

The weak influencing power of today's urbanism is also confirmed by the structural or strategic programmatic conceptions which found notable success in Great Britain during the second half of the twentieth century. This trend offers exemplary interpretations of the idea of *societal guidance*. A relatively close-knit society,

which, during post-war revival, acknowledged a common tradition and nurtured faith in public institutions, gave itself a spatial planning system that always subjected partial interests to collective ones legitimately represented by political and administrative authorities at various levels. The Town and Country Act of 1947 attributed such strong supremacy to public interest as to arouse, over time, radical objections by vast sectors of society and politics. Subsequent revisions, like the introduction of “structural plans” in the 1960s, confirmed the public role of guidance and control. There is no doubt, however, that the strength of plan choices was reappraised. From a system of cogent norms, simultaneously comprehensive and detailed, there was a shift to programmatic frameworks limited to proposing diagnoses, directions and evaluation criteria for local development. The structure plan must clarify and justify the meaning and value of the broader development policies in local contexts, and in particular the goals and strategies of public intervention in organising space and determining land use. It must explore the links between social and economic dynamics and spatial configurations and offer a programmatic framework for local planning choices.

Concrete experiences have shown, however, that in most cases the method that was adopted still belonged to the “survey before plan” tradition (Cross & Bristow, 1983). Diligent and largely synoptic urban and regional studies produced analyses and forecasts suggesting goals relating to functions and sectoral activities distributed in space without bringing into play the morphological and physical dimension of the area under study. The vision was twofold. It was based on the possibility of studying the two problems separately before projecting the results of the socio-economic survey onto space, without even acknowledging the need for a mediating technical figure like Quaroni’s urban designer (Chapter 16). Usually the vision was neither selective nor strategic, meaning that it did not establish a hierarchy of critical problems and intervention priorities let alone their spatial definition. In this framework, directing and verifying functions of local land use policies can be generic and thus not very influential actions. This component of the planning system risks becoming an impressive, but not very effective, superstructure while local processes continue to be determined by biased views and vested interests. The Conservative government, in power for almost two decades from 1979 on, wanted to reappraise the public role in governing spatial change, but it would be fair to recognise that instruments of this kind should not be regarded with great nostalgia. They represent an approach in which planning becomes a new communicative rhetoric but loses its capacity to influence real spatial processes.

In effect, when New Labour took over leadership of the country again in 1997, they wanted to explore different directions. We have already noted that the “collaborative planning” approach (Healey, 1997) can be understood as an ideological response by some disciplinary schools to the hopes and expectations raised by the new political circumstances (Chapter 11). However, this new season also demonstrated some debatable tendencies. It is right to place *spatial planning* themes at the centre of attention as the need for the coordination of a variety of public policies and social practices converging within the same region (this set of themes in Italy is usually referred to as “governo del territorio”). Associating, or even equating, this family of problems with the emerging *strategic spatial planning* tools, as a

potentially definitive technique, is however an undue simplification. As we will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 22, these experiences are generally fraught with serious limitations, which partially derive from an a-critical application of managerial methods (management by objectives or strategic marketing) borrowed from corporate culture (Bryson, 1988; Curti & Gibelli, 1996), and partially from inadequate attention to morphological and physical dimensions. This is a paradoxical conclusion for an approach that would like to take care of the quality of place (Healey, 2007). For one reason or another, these planning experiments end up carrying out prevalent functions of *symbolic policy*, and therefore the ritual role of accompanying urban development processes that find other, more concrete resolutions (Edelman, 1971). This alleged new form of planning often appears ambiguous and weak, not only with regard to the ideals of the modern project, but also to the principles and criteria of a reasonable reformist culture.

So planning forms and techniques change and multiply, communicative functions become more important, but regulatory control and practical efficacy prove more uncertain. If this is the case, it seems difficult for us to understand and share those positions – which are widespread not only in Italy – that continue to exalt alleged *planning method*. Before being a set of tools, planning is a method (Salzano, 1998). At each level of government, it is necessary to define and verify the choices affecting the city in terms of their necessity and their overall coherence and effects, made transparent by the formation and implementation process, resorting to the only method conceived and experimented until now, at least elsewhere, that can guarantee these results: the city planning method (Salzano, 1998). This is still a widespread position in international planning as well. The institutional necessity for planning does not seem to be under discussion. Possible innovation would be limited to the selection of operative instruments to utilise in various situations (Albrechts et al., 2001, 2005). Instead, we consider this view to be basically unfounded. The conclusion seems obvious in the now outmoded case of *blueprint planning* but the hypothesis does not have real meaning even when ambiguously referring to the most recent experimentation in zoning, city design and structural or strategic planning. Current views and practices in planning raise important problems of sense and legitimacy that cannot be taken for granted. Any renewal of the disciplinary role cannot be made possible, in our opinion, if this critical issue is not faced. In our view, this has become a preliminary condition.

To adopt the perspective of *implementation* is a significant step but it is not completely sufficient. The direction is correct, insofar as it is not possible to understand planning as the mere generation of formal instruments without responsible testing of the effective capacity for action and its consequences, in line with the “ethics of responsibility”, which, in our opinion, is inseparable from the technical-professional profile. It is therefore necessary to study concrete implementation practices. In the past, *implementation studies* were understood as a particular branch of the discipline (Healey et al., 1982). This was a choice that seems odd to us because issues of implementation cannot be avoided in any planning paradigm. Well-known studies (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Barrett & Fudge, 1981) have shown, unquestionably, how the implementation phase is not a secondary appendix to the process but

indeed an intrinsic and determinant component of *planning policy* affecting strategies and behaviours of the stakeholders and therefore the entire decision-making process. As Mazza has argued very well, taking up Hirschman's approach in the urban planning field, this perspective excludes the most orthodox rationalist and functionalist views and requires attention to the subsequent imbalances and interactive games that determine the course of the processes (Hirschman, 1967; Mazza, 2004a).

The limitation of this point of view lies in the fact that we refer only to the formal features of a planning programme instead of discussing its implementation problems. The crucial passage is to reach a more consistent conception of the overall process of physical development. In our opinion, it is no longer possible to consider the master plan (whatever its technical interpretation) as the pillar of a governance process that must steer different sectoral policies. This perspective needs to be overturned. The master plan, too, is nothing more than one of the many *policy tools* with which complex societies attempt to face problems of economic and spatial development. There are many different tools for managing the field of action, the institutional framework, the actors involved, the resources mobilised and the temporal horizons. The possibility for unitary action is not taken for granted. The political dimension of planning grows from the need to find solutions of temporary coordination and shared synthesis. These are the same problems that lie at the roots of the European view of *spatial planning* as long as it is not reductively equated with that particular branch of strategic planning. The fundamental nature of these relationships did not escape some acute and innovative exponents of the discipline. In Italy, Bernardo Secchi, while confirming the technical specificity of the planner's role, lucidly highlighted the fundamental interrelations. The direct and indirect effects of planning action only partly concern – sometimes only a very small part – the physical development of a city and a region. Many other significant effects belong to other sectoral policies. Different planning tools can influence expectations, behaviours and the interaction of many social actors. Outcomes can be important in terms of income distribution or income support for the lower classes, controlling real estate development and its spatial distribution, the structuring and mobilisation of local political systems, rather than only the quality of built and living environments (Secchi, 1989). On the other hand, the strategies and interventions relating to multiple sectoral policies can significantly affect the demand for, and possibilities of, physical development, such as infrastructure and transportation policy, investment in public utilities and economic development, fiscal, environmental and social policies, and so on. To reconsider this complexity within their specific contexts seems an essential precondition for the progress of planning theory and practice.

This means recognising the important link with *policy studies* and the need to develop a *planning policy approach*. Over the past 20 years in many western countries, attempts to introduce the *public policy* point of view (Mayntz & Scharpf, 1975; Meny & Thoenig, 1989) into the field of spatial development have multiplied – although they are alternative experiments with respect to the attempts of founding the planning discipline as a social science, discussed in Part II. Nevertheless, the

results were modest when the contribution was basically *methodological* – that is when it concerned studying and formulating objectives and programmes, or when it concentrated on *policy making process* rather than content and effective results. These were innovative trends as compared to certain self-referential conceptions of city design or town planning, but it should be recognised that *methodological emphasis* and *process orientation* were probably two non-contingent limits of much policy analysis approaches, first in the United States, then in Europe and more recently in Italy.

The technical-operative dimension of the tools for intervention was underestimated, despite the fact that it was fundamental for a more concrete interpretation of *policy design* (Chapters 13 and 19). The social and political implications were neglected because an instrument of some importance is never only a technique that is useful for solving a collective problem, but contributes to the structuring of decision-making processes, the representation of interests and the strategies at stake, and the possibilities for legitimating interventions and consensus-building (Schneider & Ingram, 1990; Howlett, 1991, 2005; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2004, 2007; Peters, 2005). In other words, it contributes to a better understanding of society and the policies undertaken within a specific context, and perhaps to their evolution. To include the level of operative instruments is a good prerequisite for obtaining in-depth investigation (Linder & Peters, 1998; Peters & van Nispen, 1998; Peters & Hoornbeek, 2005) and cannot disregard a concrete analysis of the interests mobilised (Peters, 1996). It therefore drives us towards the *political realism* approach we have greatly hoped for. To resume studying and developing these issues, without falling into past myths of positivist or technocratic culture is, in our opinion, an interesting perspective to help overcome the limits of the formalistic conceptions of planning and the self-referential nature of several urban architecture experiences.

It is not a matter of seeking a third route between spatial planning and urban design, but of indicating how planning and design can be reinterpreted in order to aspire to more effective, innovative results (Ferraro, 1998). The facts show that, in the sphere of physical development, both the plan and the project are increasingly understood as a *programme*, which has a guiding and evaluating function, rather than a strictly binding one. Perhaps this view, which appropriately took the place of the modernist representations with their regulatory or directly operative tendencies, has now exhausted the innovative drive of the initial phases between the 1960s and 1990s. It seems legitimate to doubt this, if we consider the overly methodological nature of disciplinary knowledge regarding structure frameworks, integrated spatial programmes or urban development projects. They appear clearly inadequate to those who are aware that only the *capacity for action* can represent a significant measurement of the quality and efficacy of good territorial governance. The possibility of “governing by instruments” has been an emerging topic since the 1980s in political science and sociological research. This was founded on a basic principle: the need to shift attention *from programme to action*. Today, this question seems even more topical in the traditional sectors of urban planning and regional studies.

The need to put order to the field of *policy tools* emerged in the 1960s but became a priority two decades later in the face of the growing developments in practice

(Trebilcock, Hartle, Prichard, & Dewees, 1982; Doern & Phidd, 1983; Hood, 1983). It can be understood that politics asks the experts for a unitary framework that is coherent with the possibilities for intervention in order to rationally pick and choose from a series of tools relating to the problem and specific context. It is clear, however, that the solution cannot be a simple functional combination of different types of tools, problems and objectives. Each hypothesis depends on the specific characteristics of the single contexts – institutional, political and cultural – and on the interdependence with other policies and actions that are underway (Ponzini, 2008c). Thus, this perspective cannot lead towards simplifying conclusions.

Lester Salamon is the author of the most complete study of this theme (Salamon, 2002). His hypothesis is that the multiplication and growing differentiation of policy tools is a necessity for governments in the age of globalisation especially in relation to the emerging demand for governance at many levels and in many sectors. In this view, the capacity for governing cannot be founded only on *public authority*, let alone on the more traditional form of “command and control” instruments. *Regulatory functions* – like the production of laws, regulations, standards or authorisations – and *direct public intervention* for producing particular goods and services still play important roles. But the mobilisation of private actors towards goals of public interest and cooperative actions is also becoming a central theme (Salamon & Lund, 1989; Kettle, 1993; Peters, 1998). For this purpose, the governing authority can make use of tools like information and persuasion, which tend to enhance accountability and capacity for autonomous initiative by the individual actors. It may resort, in more powerful ways, to a vast repertory of possible interventions in the economic sphere: benefits, incentives, tax expenditure, contracts, grants. The application of these tools may require forms of organisational innovation in the public administration itself. Not only does the variety of the available instrumentation grow, but some specific features of government action end up being modified. The sphere broadens for indirect interventions, discretion of public powers and demand for partnership between public institutions or between public and private actors.

Planning regulation does not only take on traditional cogent forms, like the definition of legal requirements of general interest (Moroni, 1999), but also concerns forms of influencing expectations and projects undertaken by independent actors through incentives or penalties. The guiding instruments can take on the vaguer and also non-falsifiable forms of visioning techniques, scenario construction, strategic perspectives or defining of spatial systems. They tend to acquire more demanding technical specificity when the vision has the purpose of mobilising partnership initiatives on the part of public or private subjects. Public intervention can be direct and autonomous, thanks to the availability of resources and the technical possibility of bringing projects to completion, or it can require cooperation among different institutions and actors with the purpose of steering various partial interests towards collective goals. These situations present a different degree of complexity and legitimation and can count on more or less advanced experiences. Better defined and tested are the experiments with tools for general guidelines, immediately cogent regulatory techniques and policies of direct public intervention. On the other hand, more critical, uncertain or original are the families of instruments that can express

the government's goals and influence expectations and behaviours of specific categories of actors; that can mobilise independent actors towards aims of collective interest by creating adequate opportunities; or that can foster the generation of complex partnerships for carrying out integrated programmes (Eliadis, Hill, & Howlett, 2005; Ponzini, 2008c). Political responsibility grows in terms of the discretionary choice, among the multiple possible alternatives, of strategies and tools for action.

This is not just a matter of technical choices (Peters, 2005; Howlett, 2005; Hood, 2007). It is not a problem of technical-instrumental rationality, assuming that for each tool it could be possible to accurately define the meaning, purpose, best conditions of use, expected outcomes and positive effects within a context. These are, rather, complex issues, sometimes poorly determined, or at any rate destined to evolve over time due to the history of specific conditions and processes. Some research traditions might still favour the *problem-solving* approach typical of social engineering. In this sense, tool selection would be the key to solving a well-formulated problem. A repertory of ready-to-use instructions, codified by expert knowledge, would be made available to guide the choice of the tool technically most suited to the problem at hand. We do not exclude that this was the principal justification for many of the studies at the end the twentieth century on the theme of *policy tools*.

However, if we adopt the *policy inquiry* perspective, our discussion must take different directions. Standard applications are not given but are always *experiments*, the results of which cannot generally be predefined, but may be fruitful for numerous reasons: for their contribution to learning from experience, for deepening "knowledge in use", for *reframing* problems that are difficult to face. Like the urban architecture project, the *policy instrument* has also become a potential tool for *exploring* and *modifying* complex situations, thus taking on cognitive value as well as technical-operative value in the strictest sense. In some cases, the contribution clearly becomes *generative*. The experiment creates conditions for an innovative reinterpretation of the problems at hand and the most suitable ways for facing them. In this sense it takes on true *design-oriented* value. Moreover, the possible inertia of consolidated models and processes that can make innovation difficult should not be neglected (Pierson, 2000, 2004).

Different choices of tools can provide structure to *policy making* processes in alternative ways. The pre-selected options take on a constituent function from at least two viewpoints. They are the concrete interpretation of the *policy* orientation or programme, which risks remaining vague until the tools have been specified (Peters, 2000; Peters & Hoornbeek, 2005), and the generation of secondary effects – not always expected or desired – influencing the points of view of the many actors involved in the process. It is not just a matter of choosing the most suitable tool in its context. A crucial theme, though still little explored, is the analysis of the contextual impact and dynamic interdependencies of the variety of tools that normally need to be activated in complex situations (Howlett, 2005; Webb, 2005; Eliadis et al., 2005; Ponzini, 2008c). Basically, a more reliable *balance sheet* is needed regarding the direct, indirect and joint effects of a combination of tools relating to different types of problem and contexts (Lichfield, 1996), even though the disciplinary field

of evaluation has not yet provided significant results in this difficult sphere, while more commonplace exercises like *ex ante* or *in itinere* evaluations are increasing (Alexander, 2006).

In this light, the need re-emerges for a more convinced, shared classification of the topic. The taxonomies proposed in the literature are countless but they are also, to all appearances, almost always temporary (see, for example, the basic review by Howlett & Ramesh, 1995). Reasonable variations are plausible, but the flexibility of the framework does not favour the development of case studies and impact analyses, although they would also be necessary. The impression is that classification should not be merely technical but should focus on different principles of governance (Palermo, 2009). Some tools enable the principle of *accountability* to become effective through information, screening or certification. Other tools aim at increasing the possibilities of *learning from experience* through the adoption of standards and the dissemination of good practices. Yet others have as their principal goal the *enactment* of the different participants in their context, also through incentives or sanctions that can lead to the formation of partnerships. In other cases, instead, the prevalent aim is *redistributive*, for example through the vast repertory of tools available for economic or fiscal policies. Finally, the influential sector of direct *regulatory* interventions, which concern laws, provisions or procedures, must obviously not be forgotten.

The most recent experiences show that these different kinds of tools do not represent alternatives, but should be suitably combined depending on the problem and the context. The point is that they imply different interpretations of collective action. A long tradition of regulatory and redistributive policies may render the responsible mobilisation of the actors more difficult. Different conceptions of the public role come into play: as guardian of good rules on behalf of the general interest; as welfare state that must guarantee the necessary corrections of negative market effects thanks to regulatory or redistributive choices; as a maieutic actor capable of mobilising latent energies, steering them towards goals of collective interest; as an impartial, transparent director of social dialogue and relations that encourage listening and learning in the sense of *government by discussion*; as a benevolent, discreet educator, concerned with fostering social development and capacity for self-organisation; or finally as a mediator or involved party in plural negotiations that can produce shared agreements regarding collective decisions.

The contingent activation of different kinds of *policy tools* means intertwining different public roles. The ability to govern complex situations increasingly depends upon the rich composition of plural mechanisms of *social regulation*. Beyond the specific technicalities, the theme of “governing through instruments” emphasises two principles that we can consider fundamental today: the multiplicity of interdependent government mechanisms and the growing importance of the tools that presume “active and responsible” social actors. What counts is the way in which, in any given context, different principles of social organisation – hierarchical control, market exchange relations, solidarity based on identity-related values and shared norms, cooperation based on the convergence of interests – combine to assure the governability of society and its good spatial organisation and development

(Lange & Regini, 1987; Bagnasco, 1988). The master plan would become solely a partial element within this framework.

As Carlo Donolo has observed, the formal definition of the rules cannot be separated from the analysis of the real practices through which they are generated and put to use (Donolo, 2006, 2007). These practices are of different kinds. They concern the allocation of resources and also the coordination of the actions of a plurality of actors and the resolution of any emerging conflicts (Cella, 1997). These are fundamental dimensions of *planning policy*. Recently the most obvious innovations in public action in these fields have shown a clear shift. This is the challenge that planning practice should also accept instead of representing itself as the determinant setting for regulating and guiding social and spatial systems. The sense and efficacy of the forms of action – undoubtedly weaker and more indirect than the ones adopted by traditional urban planning (Donolo & Fichera, 1981) – cannot disregard the interpretation and concrete experimentation of the policy framework that effectively operates within a given context. Current views on zoning, urban design and strategic planning should be rooted in a perspective of *political realism* and *critical pragmatism*. To reconsider the disciplinary paradigms in this light seems to be a necessary step for urban planners who aspire to playing a public role that is important today.

Chapter 21

Urban Regulation: Critical Issues

Based on the conclusions of the preceding chapter, the notion of urban regulation is framed here within the tradition of Italian studies which refers not only to specific regulatory instruments but also to the set of mechanisms and practices of government that act upon any given region or city (Donolo, 1997). Therefore, the observations regarding some of the planning tools principally concern the actions, interactions and consequences that can be generated in any given context. It is clear that an analysis of this type should be correlated with the specific features of a spatial and social framework. It is possible, however, to identify some general families of issues that facilitate a preliminary critical discussion. We consider four types of problems of general interest.

Certainty and discretionary power. This has always been a crucial topic in urban planning. In contemporary society, there are many actors who aspire to cogent planning choices as factors of certainty that can facilitate not only bureaucratic operations but also the functioning of the real estate market and the fulfilment of social expectations. The idea of a prescriptive plan is accepted by the traditional left wing, who perceives it as an instrument protecting the weakest interests. But it is also accepted by the conservative right who considers this type of plan the most functional instrument if the planning choices are coherent with vested interests. It is welcomed by the political system which, once the planning prescriptions have been approved, can apparently avoid taking any further responsibility. It is accepted by the administration that has available a well-defined forecasting framework which should not cause any surprises, and by the market operators who are able to construct efficient medium-term strategies according to reliable real estate forecasts. This generalised success may explain the persistence of the *ideology of certainty* although concrete practices show a highly different reality from which various non-contingent criticalities emerge (Mazza, 2004c; Palermo, 2004).

Are we sure that it is still worth reaffirming traditional models of zoning, urban design or local planning as presumed factors of certainty? We have already hinted at the ambiguities or indeterminacy of the *zoning* method. It may be agreed that this method is always useful for regulating the maintenance or partial modification of the *consolidated urban fabric*. Many doubts regarding the use of zoning as a method for *designing new settlements* seem well-founded. Normative anticipation of specific land uses becomes increasingly rare. But the forecast of the functional uses

of the urban districts defined in a zoning map also generates growing perplexity. Increasingly often, functional mixes are utilised, envisaging intervals of variation that are acceptable for each function. Or the problem is avoided by not specifying anything but the fundamental planning parameters for fear that the functional forecasts could threaten the future feasibility of a development project. Basically, zoning still seems to be an adequate design technique only in the case of complex plans that require gradual completion, but which can count on solid, long-term political and technical commitment, whether of public or private initiative. It is, however, essential that active policies within a context make all the resources – regulatory, financial, technical and political – necessary available in a reasonable time frame (Bobbio, 1996). The context must favour an interpretation of development policy as a medium-long-term commitment. Otherwise planning choices are destined for revision. Similar considerations also hold for the so-called “progetto-norma” (the urban project entailing morphological prescriptions) produced within the city design approach (Secchi, 1989; Cagnardi, 1995). Careless overestimation of presumed factors of certainty has always led to casual, but inevitable and widespread, use of plan amendments (Palermo, 2006).

Similar doubts also seem justified by the theoretically more complex instrument of the *local plan*. The contents should be more varied and interesting as compared with a simple zoning regulation. Not only the functional features, but also the basic morphological and settlement characteristics of a development programme can be verified in a unitary way. An overall project-oriented view should guide the coherence and integration of precise operative choices. Are we sure, though, that these criteria are generally satisfied in concrete practice? In actual fact, many experiences prove to be more approximating, or the design or updating of the local plan has to be abandoned to settle for ad hoc interventions that will only be legitimated a posteriori through legal amendments. It is not intended here to deny the potential importance of the *local plan*, which can represent a more evolved interpretation of the issues of spatial development, regulation and guidance as compared with simple zoning diagrams. The critical point is that it is not possible to focus attention on this tool as though it were something autonomous. Its quality and efficacy depend on the overall governance model operating within a context, meaning the concrete possibilities for *planning policy*. The effects can be modest not only if the political and administrative system is unable to guarantee the resources necessary for implementation, but also if temporal coordination between different lines of action is not adequate. Suffice it to say that the ideal situation would be one in which the structural framework and local plan are drafted simultaneously (as Astengo suggested in Assisi 50 years ago). If, however, the time lapse between the two plans is great, coherence, and therefore integration, may become critical. A technically well-designed local plan may prove ineffective or require substantial revision.

The same problem appears in terms of *discretionary power*. Every society, according to its culture and tradition, entrusts this responsibility to different institutions. Historically in Europe, the United Kingdom case may be considered emblematic. Political authority, with the help of its experts, exercises discretionary power with respect to uncertainties or controversies pertaining to land use and

development of the region or city (Healey, 1983; Reade, 1987). It is obvious that each planning choice should be based on an evaluation of the instrument and the controversial issues in relation to the overall model of government in use. Post-modern politics, in the age of communications, might prefer faster, more simplifying routes (Dear, 1986; Beauregard, 1989, 1991; Jameson, 1991; Eagleton, 1996): separating the problems, leaving aside negative externalities or potentially critical connections, drawing attention only to goals or remedies that are limited and more easily attainable and which more readily permit success to be proclaimed. In these circumstances, many symbolic policies follow similar tendencies. This is currently the habitual style of government in Italy under the leadership of Prime Minister Berlusconi. Nevertheless, if we believe in the “ethics of responsibility”, this approach cannot be shared (Jonas, 1979; Nussbaum, 2006; Moroni, 1997; Maciocco et al., 2000). It is necessary to reconstruct adequate frameworks for actions and consequences with the awareness that earlier synoptic views are not acceptable. To express reasoned opinions on specific planning problems, it is generally necessary to think about the overall *planning policy* activated within a context as well as all the consequences, both direct and indirect.

Multiplicity and integration. Contemporary society presents clear pluralistic features, a high degree of fragmentation and uncertainty over time. This depends on the open interactions – meaning the not always pre-determinable outcomes – between several horizontal or vertical networks (Bauman, 2000; Sassen, 2006; Sennett, 2006; Beck, 2007). It is not surprising that from these conditions emerge strong demands for *integration*. The earlier master plan models, as well as the more up-to-date spatial planning tools, are nothing more than possible ways of dealing with fragmentation and uncertainty geared towards the integration of multiple conditions. We must, however, acknowledge that this is a rhetorical aspiration that is not always matched by the facts. The idea of integration is, by its very nature, paradoxical. It alludes to the will to synthesise functions, resources, projects or actions that are separate by statute or tradition and that are not always consistent. The public administration is organised into functional sectors, but transversal mechanisms or integrated structures are aspired to. Is this an exception, an extraordinary experiment or the anticipation of appropriate reform? Experiences show the inertia of the existing structures and the often temporary and precarious nature of experiments in integrated policy design (Cremaschi, 2001, 2003).

The many resources that are indispensable for executing an urban project are not available to a single dominant actor but are managed by separate authorities that can pursue diverging public goals and strategies. Integration as a by-product of a cooperative game is hoped for, underestimating the problem of consensus-building. Or a path towards a possible agreement is singled out thanks to some bargaining equilibrium that can form to the detriment of the interests that are not represented, transferring negative externalities onto other places or social parties. These are the common risks for the techniques and processes of *horizontal governance*, which has the purpose of creating effective partnerships among a plurality of public and private subjects. If, instead, we look at the *vertical relations* among different institutional levels, there is no doubt regarding the need for coordination, albeit no longer

hierarchical, between the programmatic frameworks and intervention policies that lie within the jurisdictions at the various levels. We therefore find ourselves faced with long chains of relations: between the transnational, national and regional scales, then the intermediate, sub-regional level of the counties, provinces or similar institutions, and finally the fundamental municipal level where, moreover, it has been standard procedure for some time to distinguish programmatic framework and operative plan.

Are we sure that this long chain is not redundant (at least in some points) and can guarantee effective integration, or, at the very least, good coordination? The experience seems to justify many doubts. The Dutch model appears quite articulate regarding the characteristics of the context and prides itself on a long-standing positive tradition that we have no reason to doubt (Faludi & van der Walk, 1994). Nevertheless, are we sure that it is not possible to identify redundant elements and useful simplifications? In the Italian case, it seems obvious to us that the role of the Regions and above all of the Provinces is redundant, overlapping and not very effective, while capacity for guidance and control of a given territory remains weak (Palermo, 2004, 2006). With regard to the aims of strategic and integrated planning, our opinion is that two levels are more than enough (probably not only in Italy) above the local one: a national–transnational level for long-term strategies, and a sub-regional one which must include structural programmes for urban and metropolitan areas. We believe considerable institutional simplification to be necessary. The assumption that the duplication of levels and instruments can make collective participation in choices more inclusive is often unfounded because Regions and Provinces in different contexts (for example, in Italy) are bureaucratic structures with uncertain social and spatial scope. Redundant instruments and intricate inter-institutional relationships increase transaction costs and delays, making the synthesis more difficult and the function of the various planning levels more formalised or routine (Williamson, 1996). The conclusion is that *multiplicity* cannot be eliminated, while *integration* is an ideal target and intrinsically implausible. It is useless to dream of tools that can solve these problems: they can only be managed through adequate planning policy (Barca, 2006).

Guidance or negotiation. Management of multiplicity implies continuous debate among interests that are not always congruent within decision-making games in conditions of uncertainty. Agreement-seeking negotiation is carried out between the parties involved. The role of the expert is no longer that of “doctor or judge” according to the modernist tradition but presupposes mediation abilities and process-facilitation skill. The approach naturally does not seem to encourage the simplifying desire for certainty and integration. If anything, it seems destined to rehabilitate the former incrementalist model, advocacy planning or “garbage can” decision-making (Cohen et al., 1972). Physical transformation of the city or region is not always the coherent outcome of a long decision chain that starts with principles and diagnoses and reaches implementation. Physical transformation emerges, rather, as the result of a series of contingent events depending on the opportunities the context offers for dominant actors’ strategies. It does not represent the faithful application of a well-pondered and legitimated operational tool, but often

represents a temporary balance between competing interests and emerging possibilities. Paradoxically, planning culture seems inclined, in practice, to accept this metamorphosis but not to question its traditional founding principles. Is everything all right as long as some project is completed, producing market value? The disciplinary rhetoric does not seem willing to accept this extreme conclusion. In practice, however, the idea that urban growth is in itself positive is still incredibly widespread. Another ideological discussion will not help clarify these ambiguities. What is needed indeed is a concrete analysis of planning policy process that is coherent with principles of *political realism* taking into account vested interests, distribution of costs and benefits – including indirect ones – and how the public authority can exercise an effective role of guidance and control (Lowi, 1964; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Campbell & Fainstein, 1996).

The critical situations are in front of everyone's eyes. Techniques for the *transfer of development rights* can be understood as the activation of exchange relationships between the principal stakeholders (owners, developers, constructors and public administrators) who tend towards temporary market equilibrium (Micelli, 2002). Or must they be guided by criteria of public rationality that can direct choices towards collectively acceptable outcomes? Fundamentally, do standard or guiding criteria have to be anticipated within a structural framework, or is it preferable to leave the game open to contingent opportunities and conditions (Micelli, 2004)? *Compensation of disadvantaged interests* is a principle that has aroused greater attention for some time, in order to facilitate consensus-building and feasibility of choices (Nelson, 1988; Porter & Marsh, 1989; Curti, 1999, 2006; Janssen-Jansen, Spaans, & van der Veen, 2008). The risks are obvious: increasing costs, granting advantages to vested interests, inducing windfall effects, favouring widespread urban densification. Should compensation techniques favour the search for feasibility of growth without imposing too many preliminary conditions that could hinder the process? Or is it correct and appropriate to outline some programmatic criteria and enforce them (to include in the structural plan) enabling the appraisal of fair compensations for certain types of action and controlling their use (for example, in favour of environmental quality)? The social guidance capacity cannot be evaluated a priori as an intrinsic property of some types of planning tools. It always depends on concrete mechanisms of action and interaction, which need to be investigated within any given context.

Separate institutionalisation or routine practice. The most up-to-date forms of governance attribute growing importance to some complementary techniques that had remained in the shadow in the modernist model. For example, *participation* and *evaluation* are two functions that have, today, captured specific, widespread attention. Any ideological emphasis would be unjustified, however, as we should never forget the political and technical difficulties in a significant interpretation. Participation is difficult because of the polyphony of the different voices that become involved while excluded social subjects and marginal urban places remain silent. It could become an instrumental tactic supporting a dominant interest. Evaluation cannot be understood as the modernist application of a rational technology that can automatically resolve decisional dilemmas. It is always a creative experiment, which

produces new ambiguities and uncertainties. But it is up to the game of interactions to draw concrete meanings and effects from within its context. Countless experiences have highlighted a paradox: if these functions are institutionalised in specific forms – the “*débat publique*” codified in France (Billé & Mermet, 2003) and similar procedures in other countries, or the generally widespread “environmental impact assessment” (Commission of the European Communities, 2001b) – the risk is that innovative potential can be weakened. Routine applications remain insofar as formal compliance cannot be avoided, but may prove to be ends in their own right.

Participation becomes a rite to be performed in the least problematic way – what really counts is the fact that the procedure has been conceived of and carried out – rather than as a true source of criticism and learning (Atger, 2000; Pipard & Maillard, 2003; Savoldi, 2006; de Leonardis, 2010). Evaluation becomes a routine and formally imperative methodological task but it is often technically indeterminate (many real questions involve enormous technical difficulties) and therefore destined to superficial interpretations (Mishan, 1972; Little & Mirrlees, 1974; Lichfield, Kettle, & Whitbread, 1975; Lichfield, 1996; Alexander, 2006). It is quite rare that an evaluation exercise can block a debatable project supported by a dominant coalition. On the other hand, if these functions are entrusted only to the spontaneous course of events without some sort of institutional restriction, it is impossible to exclude considerable disengagement by the responsible actors. A realistic and critical view of these problems becomes a necessary precondition for the success of reformist planning.

Certainty, integration, capacity for public guidance, collective consensus-building and transparent evaluation are all principles rooted in the modern tradition that have not lost meaning and value today but that require profoundly renewed interpretations and applications. The new perspectives are not yet entirely clear. If anything, they also present many features of uncertainty and ambiguity. The so-called planning discipline should try to face these challenges instead of remaining satisfied with simply confirming statements of principle or methodological instructions. We will now try to deepen our discussion of the two families of issues that we consider crucial: *spatial visioning* and *urban development projects*, meaning forms of effective development and attempts to direct or justify actions according to legitimate, shared and influential (even if not prescriptive) frameworks. These are two fundamental fields of theory and practice in which the exercise of critical reason and responsible orientation seems necessary along with the search for new reciprocal links which seem to be lacking today.

Chapter 22

Sense and Limits of Spatial Visioning

Whatever the model of social and urban regulation operating in a particular context, it cannot be denied that *visioning* activities carry out strategic functions. No complex reality can be developed through the simple aggregation of vested interests and programmes without running the risk of dissipating opportunities and diminishing planning effectiveness and environmental quality. Yet the non-prescriptive nature of current views (in contrast with modernist models) poses critical problems from a political, as well as a technical, standpoint. How should a strategic vision for development be conceived, constructed and managed in order to prove truly influential in practice? If we consider prescriptive planning tools, the problem apparently only concerns their consistent, effective application. If, on the other hand, we are referring to goals, recommendations or guidelines, what are the requisites of the political system and of the local context that can guarantee effective guidance? It is clear that many premises concern the political sphere and it is useless to create illusions if an authoritative, demanding political and administrative leadership is lacking. This leadership should be capable of expressing an innovative project and managing it with firmness on behalf of the community, in the face of any motivation, vision and strategy that is only partial. If these essential conditions are lacking, the rhetoric of visioning will be merely routine or sustain vested interests. If politics and the administration are really able to take on strategic responsibilities, instead of limiting themselves to day-to-day management and the pursuit of immediate consensus, how should the function of guidance and evaluation be technically defined? The meanings of the experiences undertaken until now are multiple, vast and confused. Not only does it seem normal to juxtapose radically different interpretations with indifference, but critical investigation of the solidity, adequacy and congruence of the different positions is rare. Our hypothesis is that it might be useful, technically, to distance ourselves from the more common traditions and try, instead, to explore a less conventional route. We will refer to four lines of research and one possible alternative.

The first observation is that there is no sense in reinterpreting visioning activities such as earlier forms of the “survey before plan” approach that inspired the 1970s generation of “structure plans” in Britain (Cross & Bristow, 1983; Healey, 1983; Reade, 1987). This approach does not arouse much attention today, but perhaps it would be helpful to rapidly underscore our critical distance. It is neither

justified nor useful to reintroduce a positivist conception of the relationship between knowledge and decision and a conciliatory vision of the possibilities for integration between guidelines and actions formulated at the different levels of the political and administrative system. It is not true that a multidisciplinary and basically thorough analysis can guarantee a solid foundation for diagnoses, evaluations and strategic choices according to a model of synoptic and instrumental rationality. Visioning is always an intrinsically *design-oriented* activity, which requires critical interpretation of the possibilities for innovative development that should be investigated in a selective, dialectic way, seeking the essential priorities for action and the conditions necessary for its achievement. The logic of these processes is abductive, as notable Italian urban designers have clearly shown since the 1960s (Part III). The recurring references to complicated information systems or sophisticated techniques for forecasting and evaluation cannot cast doubt on this well-established point. More important are the links with the creative, experimental method of architectural and urban design (Chapter 13).

The second observation is that a strategic spatial vision needs some *constituent principles*, but cannot be reduced to compiling a virtuous deontological framework. A good example is the European Spatial Development Perspective which obtained great notoriety during the 1990s (Faludi, 2001, 2003, 2005). This set of principles and recommendations should have usefully guided institutional planning in programmatic and operative terms in the European Union member states. Economic and social cohesion, sustainable development and balanced competition between EU cities and regions were the general objectives to be pursued through wise policies of polycentric urban organisation, infrastructure development, knowledge diffusion and careful and sustainable enhancement of historic and environmental heritage. It is a pity that the unlikely coherence between these different goals was underestimated (an implausible “squaring of the circle” according to Ralph Dahrendorf, 1995). It is a pity that the drafting of this framework was exceptionally long and laborious as though the goal were to agree upon a constitutional treatise. It is a pity that the method of drafting was of a deductive, generalising nature, beginning with the guiding principles before trying to establish significant relations with local problems. The experiment received academic attention that was, perhaps, superior to its real importance. Some time ago we pointed out some of its limitations (Palermo, 2001a).

Instead of spending so much energy on constructing an ideal treatise, it would have been better to tackle other crucial issues in a pragmatic way. This could have been a great opportunity, to work out a shared strategic vision for EU territory, which is still lacking from a physical and socially morphological point of view and would be useful as a symbolic image that could express the still barely perceived unity of the new common territory. It was also an opportunity to redesign the new essential features of a better-integrated infrastructure network for which it is urgent to invest considerable resources to improve critical connections and potentials for joint development and to assure the EU sector policies coherent spatial reference. EU territory is a mosaic of fragments that are different in their historic identities and evolutions. Within the framework of current global relations,

the impetus towards mutual competition and resulting imbalance seems destined to grow. Common policies are necessary in order to avoid putting overall cohesion at risk and to coordinate the great potentials of local systems. A greater capacity for “networking” could encourage important development processes, but this requires strategic abilities and effective political initiative, namely, new effective policies and actions for local contexts. Instead of facing these complex issues, the preference was to prolong a laborious debate. Ten years have now passed and the most recent developments seem to confirm the critical doubts rather than the positive expectations (Governa, Janin Rivolin, & Santangelo, 2009). The stable point, in our opinion, is that a strategic vision cannot only consist in stating principles, no matter how virtuous they are.

The third observation is that it is not particularly useful to confuse the sense of visioning with mere *symbolic policy*. The term alludes to public programmes and actions that are not intended to achieving a concrete effect but privilege the *communicative* dimension. The event becomes an instrument to praise an authority’s capacity for initiative, its desire to influence and its media image. Future outcomes, whether direct or indirect, are not excluded but the principal motivations that set the process in motion are of a different kind. A recent case, which obtained great resonance, was the call for strategic visions for the future development of “Grand Paris” promoted directly by President Nicholas Sarkozy (VVAA, 2009). The very fact that the initiative arose and was managed in ways that were largely independent from the urban policies and programmes underway – entrusted to competent institutions – highlights some of the limits of the experiment. Visioning activities should not be conceived of as extraordinary, impromptu events. On the contrary, the rooting of the experience in the active policies of any given administration constitutes a basic prerequisite for the effectiveness of urban visioning. Loose suggestions may contribute with original ideas, but risk becoming short-lived or creating only the premises for executing some specific urban projects. Since the 1970s, various French Presidents have been the initiators of great architectural projects for Paris (Collard, 2008). In the current case we deal only with more ephemeral icons. But “l’avenir de la métropole parisienne” is a different problem. Perhaps it is not by chance that the most of the participants invited to take part in the competition did not devote much attention to the possibilities for operative development of the scenario they invented. Bernardo Secchi was one of the few who tried to work in this direction, partially exploring programmatic scenarios and governance possibilities. This kind of experiment seems interesting but does not express the real sense of visioning.

The fourth observation is that corporate marketing traditions, unfortunately, in our opinion, still exert an overly pervasive influence on spatial visioning. From the first explorations until today, we have witnessed the worn-out repetition of a cursory methodology relating to what Community Visioning is, why it is useful or necessary, what the standard method is (Ames, 1993). What is surprising is that even renowned authors like Jordi Borja and Manuel Castells limited themselves to corporate-style communications to face these issues (Borja & Castells, 1997). It could be pointed out that this was the method adopted by undoubtedly successful experiences like

the Barcelona Olympics (Associació Pla Estratègic Barcelona, 1998). But this is a mistake we have already discussed (Chapter 20). It is not possible to overestimate the effectiveness of a method compared to the real contextual conditions and the planning policy that has enabled the development and implementation of innovative strategies. In effect, the method itself, applied slavishly in other contexts, has led to modest outcomes or even failure. This is the case in many Italian cities that have confusedly initiated original strategic planning exercises alongside, and in addition to, traditional spatial planning tools instead of attempting innovative hybridisation. The Turin experience produced some results, thanks to the impulse provided by the Winter Olympics (Torino Internazionale, 2000, 2006), but the outcomes elsewhere were either banal (Venice or Florence) or disastrous (Naples) (Comune di Firenze, 2001; Comune di Venezia, 2004). One of the reasons for this is the imitative application of a formal procedure regardless of contextual conditions and possibilities. Formally, the suggested methodology may prove commonplace or misleading. In fact, it often leads to the production of a “decision tree” with decreasing levels of generalities, which, in principle, raises at least two objections. It seems to presuppose a linear link between specific actions and goals. It produces segmentation of the public strategies into many partial actions despite the declared goal of integration. In many cases, the results cannot avoid being fragmented or counterintuitive. This conclusion is clearly confirmed when we observe the way in which the same rationale and method are artificially projected onto culturally different contexts undergoing dramatic development, such as the Persian Gulf area or China (see the analysis of the case of Abu Dhabi in Ponzini, 2009b; ADCED, 2008).

What do we propose instead? We consider it necessary to adopt a different conceptual perspective. Strategic urban planning is “a *voluntary* political and technical action aimed at the construction of a coalition around a shared strategic vision” (Mazza, 2004b, p. 127, translated by the authors). So it is an informal activity because the formation of a coalition cannot be decreed by law. It requires an overall vision that is interpretative, critical, long-term and shared; but it must also be selective, establishing strategic priorities and anticipating a set of critical projects. It has nothing to do with any *comprehensive planning model*. The expected result is not only the so-called strategic plan as a formal, more or less ordered framework of goals, programmes and lines of action. The purpose rather is to activate a process of investigation and evaluation that can represent important interests, strengthening the networks of interaction and cooperation that constitute the *policy community*, accompanying them to an effective synthesis. This *political* dimension is possible only if certain conditions relating to the context are valid. These concern society, the market and public administration in terms of cohesion, efficiency, equity, legitimacy, transparency, autonomy, learning and capacity for innovation. Here again, we find the constitutional principles of the European Union.

In the opposite case, meaning quite often, initiating a virtuous process may be attempted, but there are no possible short-cuts and regression is probable. The rhetoric seems apparently new but the behaviours are traditional. The demand from the local context for strategic orientation is not limited to the request for a new planning tool, to add to the innumerable existing ones, but rather expresses a need for

direction, and experimenting in the formation of new collaborative relationships. Perhaps it would be better to eliminate the word “plan” and speak only of strategic agendas or guidelines. Management by objectives deriving from corporate culture cannot offer good methodological solutions because the crucial problems concern resources, constraints and coalitions of interests in a given context (Crozier, 1987). A region or city is not governed, nor is a country, like a company. The uncertain outcomes of EU spatial or economic programming in different countries, in particular in Italy, depend on the limits of an approach that appeared too technocratic or abstractly managerial (Barca, 2006). A strategic planning experience that can generate innovative effects requires: a spatial and social vision of the real context as an essential “future image” of the territory and settled society, the selection of a concrete set of priority projects as crucial issues for change, the capacity for “networking” both within and outside of the specific context, a system of stakeholders available to cooperate, the ability to create synergies with other salient instruments of management and development, an organisational structure and procedural models that will enable these activities to continue over time (Clementi & Pavia, 1998; Clementi, 1999).

On the contrary, it is easier to encounter new, abstract experiments of visioning, which are added in a widely independent way to the traditional forms of urban and regional governance. Thus, the complication and redundancy of the planning system grows. Structural and strategic visions multiply and remain separate. There is a merging of different kinds of requirements: *technocratic* (to enhance rational choice), *participative* (to improve the possibilities of listening and collective dialogue regarding unresolved problems), *interactive* (to favour the formation of agreements between mobilised interests). The risk lies in creating new illusions – naive or instrumental – regarding the potential of some technical solutions to problems of governance and development. After the city planning and urban design experiments, it is now time for strategic visioning. It is as though past failures do not inspire greater theoretical criticism and practical caution. We find ourselves faced with a typical ideology of the post-modern age.

Part of disciplinary research is surprisingly benevolent regarding these tendencies. We have already commented critically on the edifying theories of the city as a “collective actor” (Bagnasco & Le Galès, 2000) or the representation of strategic spatial planning as a virtuous model of “communicative rationality” (Healey, 1997, 2007), which conceal the effective functioning of “urban regimes” under deliberative or communitarian appearances. However, the investigations into real processes cannot deny the evidence (Pinson, 2009). Dominant interest groups in important European cities (though the same conclusions may hold true elsewhere) present pluralist features if not elitist or oligarchic ones. The increasingly widespread governance experiences over the last 20 years have not improved the deliberative capacity in urban policy making. Political exchange between elitist groups controlling different types of essential resources has prevailed. The emerging strategies have mostly favoured urban growth and increased real estate values. Social and spatial polarisation risks growing while the role of the lower and middle class is becoming increasingly marginal. The distance is great from the ideal models of deliberative

democracy. It is not an inevitable destiny to which we will resign ourselves, but any reformist intention cannot disregard a critical, realistic interpretation of the situation and cannot, furthermore, settle for a mere statement of objectives or promises of action. The question is therefore a political one, but the technical sphere also demands, in our opinion, more rigorous and concrete commitment.

Over the last 10 years in Italy, at different scales, some interesting conceptions of strategic visioning have been tested. Similar approaches have appeared in other Mediterranean countries as well. Even if the results have been modest until now, some brief references may be useful to clarify the conceptual alternative to the positions that were previously criticised.

A few years ago the Italian Ministry for Infrastructure promoted the construction of a strategic scenario for the nation's territory and infrastructural system to 2020 (Ministero delle Infrastrutture, 2007). We participated in this experience along with the Italian Society of Urban Planners (SIU). The main hypothesis – probably not founded on real political conviction considering that the effects to the present have been insignificant – was that the State's large infrastructure investments should be concentrated on a limited number of strategic areas within which it would also be necessary to plan a cluster of sectoral policies having complementary functions. By coordinating large infrastructure projects and correlated sectoral interventions, it should have been possible to guarantee coherent, effective spatial organisation and greater possibilities for the integration of a variety of policies. In theory, this approach should have helped overcome two well-known criticalities: the severe fragmentation of public investments into a scattered multiplicity of marginal projects, which had distinguished the recent development policies including those of European initiative (Barca, 2006, 2009); the historic incapacity to render infrastructure policies coherent with their regional contexts and with other important spatial and functional policies (Lanzani & Longo, 2009). These ambitions are worthy of a strategic vision for they entail the accurate selection and ordering of choices, redesigning competitive potential, the essential networks and flows within spatial systems in Italy. Of course, they should represent an alternative, and not an additional, strategy to the traditional planning tools. Currently the great transformations of national or transnational importance are entrusted to European, national and regional policies. A clearer concentration of responsibility is desirable, with obvious respect for the rights to consultation and disapproval by the local authorities involved. But this seems to be too bold and demanding an operation for today's Italian political climate, which prefers to adapt the strategies to lobbyist pressures and contingencies instead of truly welcoming the European recommendations, which require a shared strategic vision, hierarchy and selectivity of investments, subsidiarity of responsibilities and commitments, and place-based integration of sectoral policies (Palermo, 2009).

On the regional scale, planning experiences have always been of little significance in Italy except for the management of an existing situation following prevalent criteria of continuity, that is as public expenditure hotspots rather than agents of investment and strategic innovation. Some 10 years ago, Alberto Clementi developed a planning framework in the Marche Region that seemed conceptually

interesting even though the effects were decidedly partial (Palermo, 2001a, 2006). The regional plan was intended as the instrument that could achieve two fundamental goals: shaping a *shared image* of the regional space and its possible evolution, but also reaching agreement on some *crucial development projects* relating to fields and functions of strategic interest. In the context, the emerging criticalities concerned issues that were not new: the cohesion of certain spatial systems, sustainable development of large infrastructure and facilities, enhancement of historic and natural environments, consolidation of fragile local systems, decongestion of highly trafficked areas and cross-border development. The innovation was manifested in the *strategic vision* which proposed not only selective regulation and accurate guidelines, but also spatial projects and targeted policies. This plan did not only define the normative and programmatic framework for the regional space but promoted a set of *localised intersectoral strategies* and *spatial projects* based on a medium/long-term planning vision. Thus it selected critical themes and possible actions, belonging to “an image for the future” devoid of normative cogency yet effective in guiding the behaviour of the key actors. This then became the framework upon which sectoral policies were to be based. At the same time, support would be provided for a series of explorative projects concerning strategic and shared interventions. It was, therefore, an attempt to hold together vision and interventions, in order to enhance their reciprocal synergies. Clearly this is an alternative view to the British experience. The meaning of a spatial project depends on its framework, which in turn finds clear specification only within a set of concrete projects. Obviously, if the agreements are not well-rooted, if the resources are inadequate and if the priorities are uncertain, this model is not a feasible one. But to explore sustainable development projects within the programmatic vision may be a strategically influential move (Regione Marche, 2000).

On the urban or metropolitan scales, the issue of the relationship between visioning and *structure plan* cannot be avoided if we do not wish to fall into the ephemeral rhetoric of urban marketing. In Italy, the structure plan is an instrument that has been tested for no more than 15 years. There have been many different interpretations and the disciplinary framework appears somewhat confused. Interpretations waver between a model that defines spatial systems where development is restricted in order to preserve existing conditions in fragile areas, and an alternative model that introduces development possibilities leaving some of the decisions to future planning activities. The most interesting case, in our opinion, is the one in which the programmatic vision also includes a certain number of strategic projects, which have reached an advanced stage of consensus. The aim is to probe the consistency of the projects with respect to the shared spatial vision. The structural plan for Bologna recently coordinated by Patrizia Gabellini is an excellent example documenting this approach, having affinities with the *urbanismo estratégico* experiences in Spain (Acebillo, 1996; Bohigas, 2002) and other interpretations of the *schéma de cohérence territoriale* in France (Ascher, 2001; Montpellier, 2006). If Gabellini had limited herself to enforcing the current regional planning act through a structural framework, the result would have been a spatial representation that was still synoptic and in which specific goals and regulations were associated with well-defined

environmental, infrastructure or public facility systems, but nothing more. The interpretative and design contributions would have been limited and mostly deferred to later planning phases and operations.

Instead, she decided to explore a *strategic vision for the metropolitan area* (Gabellini, 2008). Several original contributions were added to the routine planning maps. They had a dual function: not only did they underpin the choices relating to spatial systems and land use, but they also showed the fertility of a different conception of the “structural framework” enriched with interpretative and visionary contributions and design explorations. The vision was based on the “city of cities” image, meant in a strategic and project-oriented sense and not in a nostalgic way referring to villages, neighbourhoods or enclaves contained within the metropolitan area. Each “city” represents a theme of definite strategic importance interpreted both spatially and morphologically. Different *landscapes* can be distinguished in terms of their urban, environmental and infrastructure features. Each area was investigated not just from a morphological and functional standpoint but according to the main possible developments. The study of the processes underway and explorative projects permitted greater understanding and investigation of the sense of the programmatic vision. The proposal was an innovative one but it is also too soon to be able to evaluate its empirical results.

A common thread links these experiments on different scales. The strategic vision must be founded on a critical interpretation of the resources offered by the context to innovative design. Separation between spatial structure and local actions arose many decades ago as a critical reaction to the limits of blueprint planning but other reasons for dissatisfaction quickly emerged. The hypothesis of reconsidering the relationships between *spatial visions* and *urban projects* – obviously no longer in traditional terms – seems reasonable and interesting. We have referred to some possibilities from the point of view of visioning. It is also worth reconsidering the same theme from the point of view of the urban project.

Chapter 23

Urban Development Projects in a Strategic Framework

Great spatial development has always taken place “through urban projects” with only moderate coordination by planning tools or regional or sectoral policies. Relative autonomy is an intrinsic feature of this kind of “area-based project”. It cannot be annulled by the cogency of norms or by the need for consensus. It can only be *managed by the political system* which has to find a synthesis between the different interests involved, avoiding, if possible, a too sharp and unexpected discontinuity between regulations, political programmes and their implementation (Portas, 1998; Palermo, 1998, 2009). Politics and technical culture should accompany the development process with good practices: a future vision of the spatial context, a framework for coherence between needs and possibilities, a selection of the priorities for intervention, some guiding criteria for specific design. These requisites are appropriate and potentially influential, but the strength of the promoting interests and the concrete feasibility of the development process remain crucial factors.

The crisis in modern planning and architecture has brought these problems back to centre stage. It is no longer sufficient to make reference to general visions or models. Only the ability to bring about effective transformation can measure the quality and efficacy of spatial planning. Urban projects, and concrete spatial interventions, represent the main forms of *integrated action*. A critical point is that institutional models are generally organised according to sectoral criteria, while the demand increases for horizontal cooperation between multiple organisations and actors. We have already explored these problems while discussing the notion of governance. It has been noted that the enthusiastic search for *integration* may paradoxically lead to concrete forms of intervention that are still fragmented or sectoral due to insurmountable divisions between interests, functions and the resources available to the single parties. Governance procedures may become a rhetorical smokescreen while waiting for the consensus among the prevalent interests to be reached. Urban development projects and interventions constitute some of the most important experiences in the new forms of *strategic action and interaction* that are now becoming established in a field that was traditionally founded on principles of command and control and on models of technical and instrumental rationality. We have examined some critical factors within this approach, discussing the sense and limits of strategic visioning. It was noted that *strategic orientation* has become eclectic and elusive, compared to the model of comprehensive planning. Consequently, it risks

carrying out principally rhetorical functions instead of producing capacity for effective action.

However, these are not the only possibilities for innovation. An important question concerns *architecture* and *urban form* in relation to some technical and operative limitations of rationalist and functionalist planning. This, too, is a controversial field. If the *morphological* interpretation of the urban project was born with some nostalgia for traditional models of the European city, the most recent experiences show an irresistible tendency towards the a-topical, eccentric forms of post-modernity or are reduced to the over-simplified, conformist choices of “new urbanism”. The cultural meaning of this point of view still remains ambiguous. It could seemingly be a return to pre-modern models of the construction of the city and regional development (Krier, 1979) or perhaps a reinterpretation of modernity that is trying to adapt to present times (Nicolin, 1999). In any case, a plurality of influential points of view should be observed. Perhaps it could be possible and useful to distinguish at least four broad lines of research.

The first is set in Europe and appeared over half a century ago, thanks to the initial contributions of Italian schools (Muratori, 1967; Caniggia & Maffei, 1979). In France, it was systematically developed between the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the urban morphology studies that became generators of a design-oriented approach (Huet, 1984; Mangin & Panerai, 1999; Panerai et al., 1997, 1999). It then underwent a clear metamorphosis, well documented in the Spanish *urbanismo estratégico* experiences and similar trends (already partly illustrated in Chapter 22) that arose in France and Italy during the last decades of the twentieth century (Masbouni, 2002; Novarina, 2003; Marinoni, 2005). Thus *urban design* became, once again, a key theme at the centre of attention for purposes of interpreting and managing city and regional development. We have already referred to Italian traditions, such as Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonino’s morphological–typological analysis (Rossi, 1966; Aymonino, 1965, 1975), Ludovico Quaroni’s design-oriented conception of urban planning and the idea of the project as a critical modification of the context as explored by Vittorio Gregotti. These positions exerted significant influence both in criticising and in introducing, a potential alternative to the strict definition of modernist town planning.

The urban models prefigured in modernist handbooks put at risk the more familiar *forma urbis* of the European city as a compact settlement, coherent with tradition, where figure and ground are defined according to a unitary morphology and architecture makes up a harmonious composition in their physical and environmental context (Roncayolo, 1985; Benevolo, 1993; Secchi, 2005). It is a point of view that could become nostalgic and conservative, but it could also be motivated by the critical observation of some subsequent trends that became widespread: the *ville éclatée* (Merlin & Choay, 1988), *urban sprawl* (Garreau, 1991; Ingersoll, 2006), *collage city* (Rowe & Koetter, 1978), the falsification of settlement principles and indifference to the context of new settlements, bureaucratic and normative degeneration of urban design, the growing difficulty of conceiving and constructing a new “architecture of the city” with uncooperative and partial interests, and, finally, overly fanciful or restricting programmatic frameworks. A theoretical and professional trend followed, which sought to return the guiding role in the management of the

large urban processes to the architects, who have always been debating with other professional figures, such as planners or public policy and administration experts – with alternating results.

It would be a mistake to understand the tendency as the mere reintroduction of the ambitious perspectives of *grand city design*. Bernard Huet clarified this point well. The history of cities cannot be identified with the utopias or dreams of architects, but consists in a continuous sequence and partial overlapping of local projects and interventions (Huet, 1984). Urban design cannot be reduced to mere formal inventions (let alone by a single author), while the pretence of producing complete, definitive master plans that do not allow future changes would be catastrophic.

The long-term view requires great capacity for the strategic management of uncertainty. Complex problems arise regarding the integration of separate urban fragments, the cooperation between numerous institutional levels, and new articulation of urban plans and architecture projects and their mutual relationships. But the solution cannot consist in producing formal, finished models of physical order or of process. A *realistic and critical* interpretation of the existing situation becomes fundamental, along with the analysis and selection of some development possibilities which concern both *urbs* and *civitas*, meaning the transformation of the physical city together with the improvement of social and urban conditions. It is a matter of evaluating possible and appropriate development, beginning with inherited traces, to try to morphologically recompose fragments and interstices and confer meaning and quality (also formal) upon new urban projects in relation to the existing city (Ponzini, 2008a, b, 2009a, forthcoming). The cultural background is therefore the reformist one we favoured in Chapter 13 (*Designing the Possible*).

The results vary greatly. In an initial phase, first in Italy and then in France, the trend was expressed in ways that were perhaps nostalgic or conservative, seeking to establish the coherence and compactness of some pre-modern urban models according to a design method that might have been mimetic, insofar as it was strongly conditioned by its analytical premises (Mangin & Panerai, 1999). The context was basically identified with the *forma urbis*, which became the guide and legitimating framework for the design of the different parts. Regulation and design guidelines were drawn from the historic city in terms of land and plot divisions, street lay-out, alignments or monuments with the purpose of reconstructing a unitary, coherent urban order (Huet, 1984) or at least creating coherent enclaves with high symbolic value within the growing disorder of current urban forms (Rossi, 1966). This tendency gave life to a series of handbooks worthy of the town planning tradition of the early twentieth century (see: Unwin, 1909 and his precursors). But they were probably still too rigid for a number of reasons: the design of urban form was determined by the rules of land sub-division and street lay-out, the project for public space strictly was conditioned by the form of the urban fabric, and the building types had to be coherent with the morphological model. The approach therefore consisted first and foremost in recomposing and rehabilitating a traditional idea of the physical city.

Very soon thereafter, a different trend emerged – our second framework. This one questioned the more rigid and formalistic interpretations of these principles. A more *strategic, critical* vision of possible change accompanied the more autonomous,

creative reinterpretations of physical form. In Spain, this turn clearly appeared in the early 1980s according to the *urbanismo estratégico* approach (Busquets, 1992; de Solà Morales, 1996; Bohigas, 1998, 2002). All illusions crumbled regarding both the possibility of easily returning systematic coherence to the complex city of our times and planning's ability to forecast and control morphological evolution. This process normally comes about in a piecemeal way through specific urban projects, which, moreover, must be understood and evaluated in relation to an overall vision, contributing to the modification of the general structure of the city. Oriol Bohigas demonstrated how to redesign public space and specific urbanised areas in targeted ways to stimulate significant secondary effects, catalysing processes of improvement and redevelopment. Joan Busquets demonstrated that large infrastructure projects can carry out conceptually similar functions with even greater direct and indirect effects. The Barcelona *Villa Olímpica* experience was exemplary in the early 1990s. Manuel de Solà Morales highlighted that the *urban design method* was not extraneous to the modern movement but, if anything, constituted a latent trend, albeit alternative to some official positions set forth in the Athens Charter. The existing city must not be considered an obstacle to be eliminated in order to restore certain presumed ideal conditions, but rather it is a space of action in which it becomes possible to intervene in places and with strategic projects to produce urban quality and innovation.

We have already pointed out the important contributions of De Carlo and Quaroni, who moved in this direction in Italy at the end of the 1960s. Between the 1980s and 1990s, the master plans produced by Vittorio Gregotti and Bernardo Secchi reverted to the same questions with an approach that was perhaps still too rigid and prescriptive (Palermo, 2006). At the same time in France, a *reflective, strategic and design-oriented* conception of urban planning was developed (Devillers, 1996; Ascher, 1995, 2001, 2007; Choay, 2006). The purpose of planning was not to anticipate a pre-determined future, but to offer more suitable tools for managing uncertainty as a radical, insurmountable condition of contemporary society and to conceive effective projects compatible with emerging dynamics. These projects will not express an autonomous, complete urban utopia, but will render biased viewpoints and modes of action, respecting certain values and strategic goals, like the previously cited European constitutional principles. In today's conditions of strategic uncertainty and lack of public resources, it cannot be imagined that politics and the administration can sustain the game alone (Pinson, 2009). Cooperation with the interests and strategies of numerous public or private actors becomes indispensable and for this reason, the emphasis on development projects must be accompanied by a more realistic vision of *planning policy*. Interpretation of the context and the spatial perspective within which the single development project is framed become more complex than in preceding approaches. The revision of urban planning tools that has taken place in France over the last 20 years has tried to respond to these emerging needs. The new *Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale* (SCOT) has become a framework to integrate, or at least coordinate, structural and strategic visions, local urban plans, mobility plans and local housing programmes. That is, it must render explicit the medium-term urban strategy in order to stabilise the expectations

and actions of a variety of actors. But it leaves space for modification, if necessary, according to strategic management methods (see, for example Montpellier, 2006). From this point of view, the sense of visioning converges with that of European *spatial planning* and cannot exclude thinking about, and testing, some crucial *local development projects*. This rich set of experiences and reflections on the urban project tends to converge towards the design-oriented interpretations of visioning that we anticipated in the preceding chapter with particular reference to Italy in more recent years.

Can we suppose that by now a robust reformist trend has been well identified, which, in different contexts, can adequately represent the *new planning culture* of our times? The answer is not so simple, both because vast disciplinary currents still exist which confirm substantial separation from these issues, favouring a communicative conception of planning (we have seen important examples in the Part II, above all in the Anglo-Saxon world), but also because the approach outlined here seems clearly *suspended* between deviations and risks of various kinds. So at least two other emerging trends deserve attention.

Since the 1990s, first and foremost in the United States, a considerably successful movement emerged usually referred to as *new urbanism* (Calthorpe, 1993; Katz, 1994; Dutton, 2000). With respect to the French morphological school, to a great extent the context proves to be different. The problems of disintegration of the historic city are not so much in the forefront as the morphological and social control of new urban expansion. This is accompanied by the need to return form and quality to the indistinct agglomerations of suburban areas, along with a greater capacity for control of their numerous negative effects: excessive land consumption, transportation and energy costs, environmental and social problems, poor housing and quality of life, and the crisis in community ties. The way in which design culture can react to the full-blown crisis of modernist planning is at stake (Ellin, 1996). This movement favours a reassuring, conformist method, which again proposes today's media models of symbolic and populist politics. It is useless to yearn for ideal models. To be more precise, according to new urbanists, it is better to focus on the present, placing attention on concrete, feasible projects, rather than ambitious, reformist perspectives, concentrating on common sense and appearances (which it is not possible to neglect) as well as the needs of the upper and middle class which stimulates the more substantial quota of housing demand. Today clear and positive messages should be transmitted to the political system after half a century of ambiguity, useless sophistication or paralysing uncertainty.

Urban design should respond to the needs of the community, respecting the natural environment and its context, contributing to creating sustainable urban forms, that are fair, aesthetically adequate and culturally dense (Dutton, 2000; Duany et al., 2001). The aim is also to *regenerate communities* at different scales and in different spatial contexts (Katz, 1994). Those who observe the architectural and urban proposals put forth by this movement might remain bewildered at the models that are often commonplace or artificial, or in any case repetitive, almost simulacra of a composed, pacified life that is timeless and without change (Grant, 2006). They are conceived for a society without divisions that shares a common culture

and lifestyle. This sort of hyper-reality should become a general model instead of only representing a partial social and urban component like the traditional homogeneous neighbourhoods, which would now be extended on a broader scale. This over-simplified approach has obtained indubitable success, mobilising a large group of anonymous supporters. It has also driven the guiding figures to express a new charter of values and intents – “The Charter of the New Urbanism” (Dutton, 2000) that has even been compared to the Athens Charter as a renewed expression of the modern movement’s aspirations. It is useless to say that there is no longer any trace of the critical, visionary tension that animated Le Corbusier and his colleagues; just as there is no trace of the strategic tension towards change that inspired the best Spanish, Italian and French experiences that had taken shape around the idea of the urban development project.

From the vast, but often superficial and repetitive, literature, a few lucidly critical contributions stand out. They reflect upon the relationships between new urbanism and urban planning (Harvey, 1997; Beauregard, 2002). Their objections are important. Rhetorically there is over-indulgence in the concepts of human nature and public interest. Problems of cohesion, equity and urban differences are masked behind apparent formalism. The idea that urban growth is a value in and of itself is accepted, as long as certain prerequisites for “good form” are respected. Thus market interests and principles of collective welfare merge while the public function of planning is reduced to the facilitation of real estate development processes. Spatial development is largely determined by market forces while a certain environmental determinism resurfaces. It is as though an accurate, composed spatial order could control the tensions and changes that affect today’s *civitas*. These critical concerns, however, have remained substantially isolated.

On a completely different front, the *reflective, strategic and reformist* conception of the urban project encounters other striking distortions. It is not difficult to identify a fourth trend in the behaviours of some famous architects who, today, are often at centre stage. In this case, we are not dealing with a widespread, fully anonymous movement but the media success of *star architects*, which, for a certain period of time, was an effective instrument for policy legitimisation. We are not sure that this conception of architecture, so devoid of real sense and measure, can last over time beyond the age of opulence and dissipation. In this view, context does not count and a spatial vision is not necessary. The urban design project comes about as a largely autonomous event with symbolic value in function of the author’s fame and recognisable style. The operation is absolutely concrete but there is no trace of true critical tension (Landry, 2006; Jenks, 2007). It is more a case of adaptive pragmatism bordering on cynicism if not the ephemeral. In this sense, Rem Koolhaas, as originator of an idea of architecture based on unfalsifiable rhetoric, is a true master. There is nothing to be discussed, no objection that has not been anticipated, no room for any call to intentional change (Koolhaas & Mau, 1995; Koolhaas, 2000). The architect acknowledges existing conditions, be it the “generic city” or the great architectural event that is indifferent to its context. He expresses himself in a radically arbitrary or self-referential way to respond principally to questions of symbolic policy. He does not claim to change the world. If anything, he accompanies its emerging potential

according to a performative logic, which eludes value judgements. If the “generic city” is devoid of history, identity and a public sphere, at least it is more inclined towards urban expansion, which could find an obstacle in traditional identity. In the generic city, it is possible to live quietly, but on the verge of social instability. Having abandoned the critical claims of modernity, the architect can find a professional role supporting the spontaneous evolution of these processes (Ponzini, 2009b). He can deploy de-contextualised icons as great signs that, nevertheless, do not become elements of innovation.

Not much different is the sense of the work of other famous authors who, in contrast to Koolhaas, avoid any form of rhetorical justification, like Frank Gehry, who, after Bilbao, risks repeating himself wearily; or Zaha Hadid, who seems to interpret architecture as artistic activity extended to the urban scale. These positions are very far from an “Italian measure of architecture” (Purini, 2008) and it is not surprising that the theoretical reflections and practices regarding the urban project in Italy follow antithetical orientations to a great extent (Gregotti, 2006, 2008; Maciocco, 2007, 2008b). Our hypothesis is that these positions are correlated to well-defined political and economic circumstances. They are fit for a society of spectacle and consumerism, and for the self-representation of the dominant interests. They have little to do with true sustainability, attention to place, and the patient and plural construction of possible reforms. Any critical reappraisal of this tendency in the near future might be understood as a hoped-for sign of renewed civic sense.

These are, in our opinion, the principal competing points of view of the *urban development project*. One perspective appears to be confirmed despite the variety of viewpoints. These issues, like those related to visioning, find themselves at a *cross-roads* where different traditions, cultures and professional practices converge and interact – not without dilemmas and tensions. This is the hypothesis we formulated at the beginning of this volume. But it is confirmed by the best practices in *urban design*, which contend with issues and experiences relating to planning, architecture, landscape, civil and environmental engineering. We can also note that the main tendencies in *new urbanism* or *landscape urbanism* basically interact with the same issues. One difference remains substantial however. In all of these cases, a different professional component tends to become the legitimate, effective synthesis of the intrinsic complexity of these crossroads. Urban design would be the superordinate discipline for the different cultures to converge (Lang, 2005). One can see similar ambitions in other emerging movements, such as new urbanism or landscape urbanism, albeit in mutual competition (Dutton, 2000; Mostafavi & Najle, 2003). We consider, instead, that the tension between plural claims is radical and can only find contingent solutions thanks to a *reflective, critical* and *design-oriented praxis*. It is not possible to reconstruct a new hierarchy of knowledge and practices (Cuthbert, 2003, 2006). It would be better to aim for fruitful and open contamination, capable of learning. Let us consider two particularly topical and meaningful examples.

There is no doubt that for some time growing attention has been focused on landscape issues. The *landscape urbanism* movement represents an attempt, perhaps hurried and not particularly convincing, to institutionalise the approach. The radical ambiguity of the idea of landscape in relation to architecture and urban

planning practices does not seem to have been resolved (Jackson, 1984; Berque, 1995; Rogers, 1997). Earlier hypotheses resurface. These maintain that specificity depends on some features of the topic or the style, as when the *art of garden design* alludes to problems of arranging high-value naturalistic areas, depending on a client's will or an author's stylistic inclination (Maniglio Calcagno, 1983). *Landscape ecology* and *environmental planning* deal with the analysis and control of areas with a low degree of human intervention according to science-based methodologies (Odum & Moore, 1938; McHarg, 1969; Steiner, 2000). *Landscape design* again proposes an ephemeral style for the creative generation of artificial landscapes within today's urban context (Branzi, 2006). We believe, instead, that a *cultural* interpretation of the landscape is essential (Palermo, 2008a; Maciocco, 2008a; Legner & Ponzini, 2009; Ponzini, 2009b) not only as a visible form but as a living environment in which the plural and dynamic relations of contemporary collective life intertwine. In this sense, the entire inhabited territory is landscape (Lanzani, 2000; Clementi, 2002) and the crucial theme is the coexistence and contamination between different visions within a common framework (Clément, 2004a, 2004b). In this way, the classic notion of landscape as a sphere of belonging and experience, which leads to exalting close-knit local communities even where they might not exist, is not sufficient (Augé, 1992; Norberg Schultz, 1979). But neither is the modern idea of landscape as a critical vision which is distanced from an individual subject (romantic or post-modern), because a plurality of points of view, their coherence and possible convergence always come into play. The landscape becomes the *field of interaction* that each gaze and each project become part of, contributing to modifying inherited forms and visions. It implies a non-formalistic idea of the project as a selective and experimental exploration of the possible evolution inscribed within a context that cannot disregard the *life experiences* of the inhabitants – as Giancarlo De Carlo has admirably shown. If the urban project is meant – always – as a *landscape project*, it becomes difficult to justify some current formalistic and de-contextualised design exercises (Nicolin & Repishti, 2003).

Architecture today must face a radical dilemma which is not a new one. It cannot avoid contending with the *sense of habitat*, though knowing that it will always be a case of contingent meanings and practices, probably destined to evolve over time. But the flight towards the ephemeral or the arbitrary, to which post-modern architecture often resorted, is rarely a good solution. Nor is the invention of presumed new disciplinary fields like landscape design or landscape urbanism. The problem lies in reconsidering the meaning of the urban architecture project not as an expression of a finished order, but as an experiment to explore and interpret the potential for development of an inhabited and plural context (Palermo, 2008a).

Another important theme concerns the relationship between the urban project and its *spatial framework*. We have already recalled that an urban design experience may properly require preliminary *master planning* (Lang, 2005). It would be an error, however, to consider this preliminary task a traditional design exercise aimed at defining the essential forms and rules of the project that will be faithfully applied during the implementation phase – like the older conception of the “*plan masse*”. Its formulation may be interesting as a critical experiment in a

project-oriented investigation, which tends to test the concrete possibilities for an area's development from a physical and morphological point of view, but also in terms of land use, urban practices and feasibility (Gregotti, 1966; Quaroni, 1996). Its function is therefore heuristic rather than regulatory. It is not a matter of anticipating an ideal formal model but *exploring* the physical features and practical effects of possible urban development, in order to select the most convincing solution. A pre-established hierarchy or clear division between master plan and urban design cannot be accepted. The two phases are closely interwoven following a unitary view of the *urban design method* (Gregotti, 1966; Quaroni, 1996), which is coherent with the principles of *pragmatic inquiry*: an experimental, creative course of successive definitions passing through such stages as abduction, interaction, testing and learning. Just as the distinction appears necessary between the idea of visioning based on some design experiments of great strategic relevance and the idea of the urban development project that can interact with a future vision of the spatial framework (Clementi, 2002). From this point of view as well, it is not urban design that is the key to the future solution of the problem; rather it is the capacity for the simultaneous reinterpretation of spatial visioning and urban development as a decisive step in the construction of shared syntheses and the creation of new opportunities in relation to a plural and dynamic context that must be understood not only in terms of its morphology and physical characteristics. This means stressing that architecture does not consist only in the design of apparent form (let alone arbitrary) but also in the organisation of human space that creates new fields of interaction and life possibilities (De Carlo, 1964).

These observations lead, following different routes, towards a nucleus of common conclusions. It is not just generic praise of contingency or any effective pragmatic attitude, but the confirmation, based on different experiments and arguments, of a set of principles of interpretation and action – *realism, criticism, interaction, contextualism, reflectiveness, visioning and orientation towards the project* – which could be understood as the constituent features of an emerging paradigm. If *planning* avoids isolating itself in a merely discursive and procedural world and wishes to face more topical *urban design* experiences, perhaps it would not be difficult to share a more fruitful perspective than the many academic exercises carried out in the recent past. It seems to us that, today, a clear, unfulfilled demand exists for paradigmatic orientation, deserving care and attention.

Part V
Rethinking Spatial Planning and Urban
Development

Chapter 24

Choosing the Paradigm

“Planning is a messy, contentious field” (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996, p. 4) with no stable, convincing order according to well-defined disciplinary canons. Its boundaries are not clear and there is not even agreement on its central focus. It consists in a variety of practices in which the planner can play multiple roles connected to functions and skills that are not exclusive, because other institutional or social actors could legitimately intrude upon the same fields of action. It is therefore not surprising that a unitary, shared paradigmatic framework does not exist, assuming that the notion of paradigm can usefully be extended to such a heterogeneous group of activities. This is a consequence of the plurality of interests and problems involved and also of the widespread *eclecticism* of approaches and experiences. Do we have to accept the fragmented, confused picture described in Part II? This is not the opinion of Campbell and Fainstein but, in general, the critical voices that request disciplinary redirection are few. The prevalent positions, as we have tried to describe, do not place much importance on these problems. Eclecticism seems to be an obvious consequence of today’s issues, views, roles and practices. It is difficult to single out principles and criteria of disciplinary identity in the so-called planning field for more than one reason.

Planning includes not only concrete processes of urban development but also more general issues of social guidance. It brings into play substantive bodies of knowledge regarding the city and society or skills that are only procedural and managerial. It can express a normative desire to guide change or it can confine itself to describing a situation and supporting its tendencies. It can express critical orientation towards the existing order and the social and spatial dynamics underway, or it can aspire to collaborative and inclusive forms of collective agreement. There are good reasons to face each of these aspects. It is the whole that is disorienting – like any heterotopy. Confusion could grow if we observe the lack of attention placed on site analysis and design of physical space, which were, however, the primary objects of the field. As different studies recall, in 1967 the American Institute of Planners passed a resolution that statutory tasks be extended to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of urban and regional development (Ellin, 1996). This may be considered the symbolic threshold of a divergence that subsequently became increasingly clearer having significant effects on European planning as well.

Thus the “planning field” took shape, paradoxically, as a highly eclectic field which had lost contact with its original focus.

The variety of interests and references has become a critical element also due to some other concomitant factors. The complexity of the issues, the need to cross and articulate many different fields of ideas and experiences and the originality of some intellectual explorations have contributed to rendering the discussion that sustain the interpretations or proposals perfunctory and sometimes frankly just weak. The testimonials are countless. To quote just one influential source, the paradigmatic frameworks outlined by John Friedmann (1987) appear to some extent disconcerting. Anarchical, Marxist or utopian roots are attributed with apparent indifference to the “social mobilisation” current. Charles Lindblom is numbered among the exponents of the “societal guidance” approach although his incremental model of mutual partisan adjustment is clearly an alternative to any form of synoptic or merely instrumental rationality. Perhaps Friedmann wanted to emphasise that, in Lindblom’s view, individuals still adhere to the canons of instrumental rationality, but it is the idea of collective rationality that must justify the classification. Some fathers of sociological research like Durkheim and Weber, who inspired incommensurable research traditions, are pointed out together as precursors of the idea of a planning society, whereas any reference to the subsequent developments of sociological research, which could have been able to offer more articulate and meaningful references, is lacking (among others: Bernstein, 1976; Saunders, 1981; Boudon, 1984, 1995; Crozier, 1987; Coleman, 1990). The social learning approach associates Frederick Taylor (the father of scientific management), Dewey and Mao Tse Tung. It is not necessary to continue with these examples at this point. Unfortunately, the extra-disciplinary explorations in much planning literature prove to be hurried, approximate and sometimes almost ingenuous. This also applies to some other references to outstanding personalities of contemporary philosophical investigation like Foucault, Habermas or Deleuze. It is unclear why the attempt was made to establish direct dialogue with these great authors while ignoring closer sources in the field of political or social analysis, which were already inspired by similar approaches.

Another critical factor is the *development* of the “planning field”, which to all appearances can be described as *accumulative*. Eclectic positions and perspectives accumulate over time, with no conceptual revision or attempt at contamination which would nevertheless be justified. There are numerous sources that represent the discipline according to the so-called Sitar model (Hudson, 1979), whose acronym recalls five planning paradigms: synoptic, incremental, transactive, advocacy and radical. Even when revision is intelligent and accurate (the best is perhaps the one proposed by Leonie Sandercock, 1998a), the weakness of the critical-historical background is striking. The contingent, dated character of the classification does not justify theoretical coding. In fact these references have demonstrated modest empirical importance over time and, moreover, prove to be mutually incongruous. Some time ago, keen observers unveiled the deceptive and scarcely fertile nature of a series of earlier perspectives (see, for example *the illusions of urban planners* in Rodwin, 1981). It seems, on the other hand, that disciplinary orthodoxy does not want to discard or re-examine any finding from the past. A critical revision is

not attempted, nor is it even an original *bricolage*. All traces of the past are safeguarded to give substance to the disciplinary field. The tendency is accompanied by widespread *conformism*, which seems to exclude the opportunity for true critical discussion. On the occasion of Aldo Rossi's premature passing, Giancarlo De Carlo felt the need to emphatically state, "I hated your architecture, but now who am I going to argue with?" An emphasis out of place? Or authentic intellectual homage, departing from the rigorous recognition of cultural differences or incompatibility? Almost always "politically correct", the debate within the planning field can be polite, but insignificant. We have already pointed out the emblematic case of the last Healey and Hillier *Reader*. Not only does its conceptual organisation appear debatable, but fundamentally a critical opinion regarding the various trends and their mutual relations is lacking; this means that responsibility for a cultural orientation is missing (Hillier & Healey, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

It is difficult to imagine a future for the planning discipline if these widespread attitudes are not questioned. *Distinguish* and *choose* in a way that is as well-argued as possible. This, in our opinion, is the inescapable responsibility of planning theorists. A paradigm consists in a specific nucleus of founding ideas and hypotheses, a relevant technical language and a set of exemplary experiences in which concepts and theory have been put to the test (Kuhn, 1962). It is difficult to consider the countless trends and approaches recorded in the planning literature as paradigms – such as the traditional Sitar components. Often the constituent core is vague and ambiguous, the technical language is non-specific and not very rich and the experiences available are rare and not always coherent. What is lacking is disciplinary reflection that identifies the fundamental paradigmatic frameworks – more than one probably, but clearly distinguished and not innumerable – with respect to which it would be possible to express well-argued choices as always occurs in any tested disciplinary field.

We expressed our view, which the reader can find summarised in Chapters 13 and 19. *Political realism, reformist culture of the possible, critical pragmatism* and *urban and spatial design* are the fundamental perspectives. The "interpretative, critical and interactive" conception of inquiry and design derives from specific traditions of socio-political, architectural and urban planning research, which we consider mutually consistent (Palermo, 1992). Here are the crossroads between different disciplinary approaches; their interplay is indispensable. We do not believe a planning discipline exists that can summarise the points of view of policy analysis and architectural projects, but we do believe that their experimental interaction is necessary. This is not a generic appeal to interdisciplinarity. Dialogue is clearly impossible among several branches of the architectural culture, urban planning and political science. In each realm, research paradigms with compatible characteristics need to be singled out. Our selection of topics and scholars in the different spheres tries to respond to this need. The issues and perspectives emerging in Part IV outline an introductory repertory of meaningful experiences, which permit the evaluation and well-argued verification of the potential of our approach. Obviously, these hypotheses do not necessarily have to be agreed upon and we welcome debate with alternative positions.

We are convinced, however, that it should be possible to ascertain broad consensus regarding some founding principles. It is not possible to avoid the issues of *morphological analysis and urban design*. The separation of planning theory from urban design has left both fields impoverished. It is correct to try to overcome this gap as various Mediterranean schools have attempted for some time. Neither is it possible to neglect the *political* and *institutional* dimensions of the problems if we do not want to make planning action and thought shallow (Lauria & Whelan, 1995). The interests and economic strategies mobilised by physical development processes, emerging conflicts and cooperation, the economic and political effects of regulation and the ensuing social costs and benefits are critical issues that planning cannot avoid. But neither is it enough to cage this messy field in some positive theory of governance or in some other ideology of participation or consensual dispute resolution.

It is impossible to reduce the meaning of planning to merely *procedural* functions as though it were just a method or style. The planner's competence cannot be reduced to skill in communication or mediation, however important these functions are in contemporary society. A more demanding hypothesis should perhaps be put forward: the planner's mission is not expended in the *formal* production of plans or similar tools (Fainstein, 1995). The quality and efficacy of planning action must be substantive. Capacity for action does not depend only on diligent application of "planning method" but on the concrete possibility for collective choice and intervention relating to a given problem and its spatial context. For this purpose, the availability of and capacity for project-oriented mobilisation of necessary resources (legislative, cognitive, financial, organisational, consensus) is more important than the rhetoric of growth, well-being and other conventional goals (Crozier, 1987). The expert does not exercise *academic supremacy* but contributes to a group of collective practices of great complexity, with respect to which he cannot operate "from above and from the outside". The planner should become aware of the limits imposed by the context on planning action. The aspirations of some planners to play a vicarious political role are nothing short of ridiculous. This does not exclude, however, that the planner be required to participate as much as possible in the process expressing design-oriented intentionality based on knowledge and experience as his specific contribution to the interaction and inevitable mediation and integration. This must be done without forgetting that planning has never been, and cannot become, a science, as it belongs to the sphere of *practical reason*. Thus every choice and every act entails responsibilities, meaning an *ethical* dimension that need not be interpreted according to purely utilitarian criteria or only on the basis of pre-determined convictions. It should, however, take into account (and not short-sightedly) the social consequences of planning action (Rawls, 1971; Walzer, 1980, 1983; Sen, 1992; Nussbaum, 2006). It is thus an "ethics of responsibility" rather than one that is utilitarian or value-oriented, with the awareness that in the contemporary age every responsible individual continuously is faced with ethical dilemmas for which shared solutions do not exist (Jonas, 1979; Bauman, 1993). These, too, are unavoidable topics for disciplinary investigation (Palermo, 2004).

The technical roles are clearly numerous. There are the experts in regulation, land use planning, urban design, decision-making, process management, policy design (in the sense specified in Chapters 13 and 19) and so on. Each profile requires specific characteristics, targeted competences and expertise. There is no longer a clear hierarchy of institutional responsibilities, problems and instruments. The traditional dominance of some conceptions of planning is not confirmed. A variety of *policy tools* are available to different authorities who must find legitimate forms of effective coordination. This does not mean a plurality of specialties must be organised. The need for a common framework is evident. It seems important that education and experience grant the planner integrated knowledge regarding the mutual relations between different functions and skills. Many good practices have demonstrated how important it is that each topic be interpreted and developed by actors who are aware of the plurality of the technical roles and their interrelations as well as of the important links *between the making of regulations and projects*, if we share Gregotti's idea that each norm must be founded on an architectural idea of city and a development project (Gregotti, 1986). Finally, the planner should also be aware of the links between *designing* and *visioning* because, as we have seen in Part IV, a truly influential vision is based on a certain number of strategic area projects, while large development projects may draw significant benefits from designing a master plan. Just as important are the reciprocal implications between planning and design. One should properly connect socio-economic trends and morphological characteristics, between urban forms and landscapes and their actual uses. In the 1960s, to clarify the role of the planner as compared with the variety of disciplinary and professional bodies of knowledge with which he was forced to interact, it was said that the planner's profile was as "generalist with a speciality" (Perloff, 1957).

Today this picture could be reversed. The clear fact is the separation of some fundamental technical roles as the outcome of a long process of fragmentation. It is a matter of rediscovering connections and synergies starting from a common cultural background, which probably does exist. For those who share this premise, it should not be difficult to agree upon a common paradigmatic framework. Otherwise, different directions should be explored as long as a disciplinary condition that seems to be too inert and confused is abandoned in order to clarify intentions and responsibilities.

Chapter 25

The Quality in Spatial Development

These disciplinary and professional trends correspond to some substantial changes in planning topics. The link between *regulation*, *design* and *development* is undoubtedly at the centre of attention. If the modern urbanism tradition was formed as an attempt to control – according to goals of collective interest – spontaneous processes of intense industrial development, it has been clear for some time that the conditions have changed. The emerging problems concern the management of the urban crisis, revitalisation of declining regional systems, attraction of exogenous resources that can sustain new development, but at the same time the attenuation of the negative impacts of these processes on local contexts. The evolution of the planning discourse is also important. For some time, there has been less and less talk of town planning or city design in traditional terms, whereas urban planning issues are reformulated in the “governo del territorio” framework (Chapter 18). This polysemic notion alludes to the need for guidance and coordination of a set of policies (urban, regional, infrastructure, environmental, social, economic) that act on the same space. In the last 20 years, the ideas of *spatial planning* and *governance* have indeed enjoyed rapid success in connection with this tendency. It is not a nominal innovation. The very quality of the problems imposes considerable discontinuity compared with an earlier “planning method”, as we have tried to demonstrate. Not only does the repertory of policy tools increase, but there is a change in planners’ roles and technical expertise.

To all appearances, interesting perspectives should open up as the spatial dimension takes on important strategic value. Many convincing analyses have demonstrated that scenarios of globalisation embracing the mobility of resources and strategic actors simultaneously provoke a growing demand for places that can attract competitive development, while the role of the national state weakens (Sassen, 1991, 1994, 1995; Massey, 2007). The emerging networks of dynamic, large-scale flows need to rest upon appropriate spatial foundations. They prefer quality places that are attractive, functional and endowed with high development potential. They can contribute to their improvement, but can also enter into tension with local interests, achieving uncertain results. Beyond certain critical thresholds, the solution is *exit*: dominant actors, capital and functions shift in a quest for new, more hospitable places, following temporary relations, which can be intense but not

particularly inclined to long-term commitment. This temporary, contingent relationship with space can cause a crisis in the modern project's desire for order and stability.

In this light, different disciplinary currents have tried to construct new professional profiles, which include, on the one hand, experts in governance, strategic planning, project management or consensus-building and on the other hand, they attribute a role of great importance and substantial autonomy to architectural design especially if it is star architecture. We can notice that the forms of legitimation of large-scale urban development have changed. The technical foundation of the discussion has basically become irrelevant. For some time, *scientific reason* has no longer been considered an influential principle in determining the legitimacy of a view or a policy. Its rhetorical and instrumental use remains, but it has become something different, always founded on power aiming at exerting its authority. At the same time, interest grows in the possibility of building consensus through debate between autonomous, well-informed actors, following the principles of *communicative reason* that inspire the *deliberative democracy* ideology. An analysis of the various experiences shows that these cases are also often quite routine. The point is that the effective influence of every *Enlightenment-inspired* conception of planning, both in the traditional version (from Astengo to Faludi) and the "communicative" variant appear marginal at this point in time.

The more current mechanisms of legitimation are something different (Palermo, 2009). More and more frequently, public administrations seem to entrust complex planning problems to a famous architect, who theoretically guarantees quality and consensus even if large urban projects are never the product of a single author. The appeal to the star architect is usually accompanied by the contingent search (not always transparent) for bargaining among the most active interests within their context. This convergence almost always proves to be decisive for the outcomes of the development. We therefore share the positions of the planners (rare voices, in actual fact) who consider it indispensable to investigate these topics (Lauria & Whelan, 1995; Fainstein, 1995).

In Part IV we tried to point out the weakness of some emerging trends. Not only is the separation, which has been underway for many decades, of management from design functions confirmed, but greatly reductive interpretations of the respective roles have also been accepted. On the one hand, urban design seems to become increasingly self-referential and less responsible towards the collectivity. Rem Koolhaas' cynical pragmatism is perhaps the most evident testimony (Koolhaas, 1996, 2000). On the other hand, an attempt has been made to reinvent new technical roles for the planner – as manager, facilitator, mediator, expert in conflicts resolution or similar profiles (Roweis, 1979; Susskind et al., 1999; Forester, 1999, 2009), which paradoxically reintroduce some modernist features: apparent faith in technique and expertise, and a still positivist and instrumental view of the relationship between knowledge, policy and action. The lack of critical thinking is surprising. There are some contemporary figures in the architectural community who still insist on the values of the modern project (we have pointed out a number of outstanding figures in Italy). A few voices in the planning field mostly revert to

the *policy inquiry* or *critical pragmatism* tradition. Some neo-Marxist positions in political and economic geography propose a structuralist view again without facing pressing urban problems (see Chapter 9).

For the prevailing orthodoxy, the most obvious risk is to accept a misleading conception of *urban development*. The strength of the dominant interests, the chronic difficulties with local public investments and the uncertainty of any strategy that is more complex and innovative still favour the tendency to identify development with *quantitative growth* in the real estate market and economic activities, and therefore with an ability to attract exogenous investment. The pure logic of market economics seems to be applied to urban reality. Obviously the sustainability of financial policies is an important factor, but this view is restrictive and risky. Merely quantitative models regarding the production of wealth do not always guarantee environmental and social sustainability. Indeed they could be the source of negative effects after some short-term benefits. In a logic of continuous emergency, it does not seem possible to do anything but adopt the former two-phase policy: first growth, then redistribution of the generated wealth, awaiting positive spillover – even if this phase seems to be continuously postponed. This limit appears clear for planning policies in Italy under the Berlusconi government. For a style of policy making that does not tackle the country's radical criticalities (enormous public debt, low competitiveness and innovation, deficit of common goods), favouring the immediate pursuit of consensus and of symbolic policies, it is normal to sustain an ideology of quantitative growth without concern for eroding the country's environmental, historic and cultural heritage. Yet, the quality of the environment and living conditions, care for the urban landscape (also when new settlements or infrastructure are constructed), the degree of social and territorial cohesion and the capacity for undertaking innovative policies – attracting rare, highly qualified functions without creating new imbalances – are all factors that could render the economic growth and competitive ability of cities long-lasting. These fundamentals are coherent with an idea of development that is not banal, as a process rooted in context, integrated and sustainable, aiming at improving the quality of common goods and the capability of local actors. Development should be founded on a sound base of shared values (such as the constitutional principles of the European Union: autonomy, responsibility, rights, merit, transparency, competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability), but also on caring for environmental and cultural heritage and human and social capital as competitive potential available to local societies. These targets cannot be entrusted only to market mechanisms but require abilities of “buongoverno” (regulations, strategies and integrated actions) and practices of *social self-organisation*. Obviously, this is a more ambitious, demanding view, which requires a strategic horizon and a more complex political and social commitment, less conditioned by the search for immediate economic advantages (by the way, largely destined to favour vested interests). Unfortunately the difficulties in achieving this goal seem destined to grow in today's social and economic circumstances.

Amartya Sen highlighted the decisive issue. His thesis is that development should not be identified with material growth, which will always and only be instrumental to other goods and values, but with the *freedom it enables* in the political as well as

economic sphere. Development is a process of expanding the real freedoms enjoyed by human beings (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999). This possibility becomes the primary goal, with intrinsic value, independent from any instrumental use – a decisive resource for the quality of development. For each individual, the lack of this potential is a more serious limitation than low income. This is even truer if the *public sphere* in which individual belief and action can find meaning and support is continually weakening (Ruffolo, 1985; Donolo, 2007; Bianchetti, 2008). In these conditions it is difficult to rediscover the *modern individual*, a subject capable of expressing a project of emancipation and developing it in an intentional way with a cooperative spirit (Touraine, 1988, 2004). Zygmunt Bauman reminds us that these are no longer the times of the pilgrim accustomed to deciding upon a destination and pursuing it with patience and tenacity until arrival. Other figures are more contemporary: individuals who are not rooted in any place (like the *flâneur*, tourist or vagabond) and who, by choice or necessity, tend to leave their options open and not commit to any future. Increasingly rarely, the decisions at play become an occasion to construct a collective, long-term strategy. What remains are mostly singular and circumscribed experiences – ends into themselves. For the post-modern consumer, there is the prospect of partial, independent choices, with no long-term commitment. The game of contemporary life does not leave us time to think and design complex, long-term plans. If the problem of modernity was to build a solid, stable identity, now it seems more rational to leave possibilities open (Bauman, 1991, 2000, 2007).

The modern project sought to emancipate the individual, even though it then entangled him in a network of ties and constraints that have provoked understandable reactions. Now the tendencies towards the individualisation of the forms of life in contemporary society (Beck, 1992) arouse discomfort and fear. The individual is asked to take his life back into his own hands, while institutional references and traditional certainties are weakening. Social or community ties have slackened and the new artificial communities – founded on a contingent interest or the sharing of anxiety over, and defence from, an external world perceived as threatening – are no substitutes (Sennett, 1998). Formal autonomy and the weight of individual responsibilities are growing, but so are the risks of social anomy. Spatial harmony among economic, political and social interests was a founding trait of the modern age, but it is not visible anymore. Today's local societies are fragmented. The global elites are largely independent from the political and cultural powers tied to any given region. Businesses claim freedom of action with substantial irresponsibility regarding the local community, but the consequences of their choices continue to weigh on them. For the weakest, on the other hand, place becomes a cage from which escape is not possible, yet it is no longer welcoming and does not ensure identity. Local government should carry out functions of protection and control, but its sovereignty is limited. Many traditional experiences of collective action, once entrenched in their physical contexts, are dissolving. The individual feels alone, at risk, and oppressed by a responsibility that is greater than his own strength. It is in this light that we should reconsider the problems not only of “governo del territorio” but also of spatial development.

According to Ulrich Beck, the key solution lies in *development*, which (if properly intended) is able to assure greater *political freedom* (namely, more wide-ranging citizenship rights, effective autonomy proportionate to responsibilities, capacity for collective commitment, respect for diversity) and a renewed *public sphere* as a place of possible shared experiences. To this end, the need for public policies and social practices seems clear for generating and caring for *common goods*, which to a large extent concern the city and the environment. The point is this: what are the most suitable strategies and actions to move towards these results? This is the radical challenge for spatial planning and urban development if they must face the issue of “quality in development”.

After the considerations developed until now, we think we might reach the conclusion that various strategic visions have emerged leading to different lines of action. On the one hand, some currents tend to encourage the ability of *self-organisation* of the local society. If one of the crucial problems is the development of *common goods*, there is no doubt that this is a potentially interesting perspective (Ostrom, 1990) in terms of both efficacy and possible legitimation. Thus, any form of social mobilisation that is coherent with good principles of collective rationality should be encouraged: enhancement of identity-related characteristics, bottom-up participation and design, experiences of consensus-building and inclusive decision-making. Local development and participatory or deliberative planning offer the most relevant references. As a rule, this hypothesis does not elicit objections. Experience teaches us, however, that paradoxical or negative effects are always possible. These limits must be taken into account. This vision cannot become an uplifting manifesto always waiting for promised results or the smokescreen behind which concrete interests continue to be pursued.

Other currents are concerned above all with renewing the political and administrative management of urban processes. The theme of *multilevel governance* represents this tendency quite well (Rhodes, 1997). A different idea of planning policy is at stake here – as confrontation between institutions and public and private interests seeking an equilibrium in relation to certain political and administrative requisites (e.g. the European constitutional principles). In this sense, the progressive construction of views, rules and actions shared among the social parties inhabiting the same region would be less important (despite what is suggested by Magnaghi, 2000). Instead, the effective performance of the political system becomes the overriding goal. This must take on non-orthodox forms as compared with the models of modernity. This is a field of intense experimentation of new technical profiles, which concern management abilities first of all but also design skills. From here the new themes of regulation, visioning and development originate through the urban projects that we discussed in Part III. Collaborative and strategic conceptions of planning attempted *virtuous contamination* at the end of the twentieth century, trying to integrate the values of institutional governance with those of social self-organisation. This was probably the most important attempt at re-founding the discipline on the threshold of the new millennium. We have attempted to substantiate the reasons for our criticism.

In summary, in our opinion, the principal limits of this view are three. We have already widely discussed two issues: underestimating the physical and environmental dimensions of place, inadequacy of a critical investigation of the real interests at stake and the non-contingent difficulties of cooperative agreement. The third point concerns an institutional aspect that we consider crucial.

We are convinced that what is fundamental today is the exercise of influential *public responsibility* for guiding urban processes towards a shared synthesis. It is not a matter of rehabilitating an implausible authoritarian role, according to the canons of an earlier modernist tradition. Which institution can steer collective action towards the generation of common goods essential for development if it is not the political one that has been democratically legitimated through its technical and administrative instruments? Which institution can sustain, with selective and priority investments, the improvement of the economy beyond the crisis, and guarantee fair distribution of the consequent benefits? Waiting for spontaneous processes of self-organisation is not enough, nor is an efficient management policy, which are, however, to be hoped for in any case. A long-term strategy is necessary for the policies of the city, the environment and the region, and for public support of a qualitative conception of spatial development. Planning culture cannot be limited to the sphere of local micro-processes if it is true that spatial dimensions are strategically important on the global scene. A strong demand for the reinterpretation of the meaning and functions of space and urban form emerges in relation to a series of important public policies. It is not just urban planning, but environmental and social policies, or the ones pertaining to infrastructure and economic development in a not merely quantitative sense. We do not have any nostalgia for old, outdated comprehensive visions or for the traditional hierarchy between socio-economic choices and spatial projections. Rather we suggest a selective, strategic and critical approach that can explore the crucial links between spatial visioning and urban development projects (Chapters 23 and 24). We consider this theme essential also because in Italy it was anticipated by important theoretical precursors but has rarely found effective interpretations in concrete policies (Palermo, 2009). In other countries, where the institutional and cultural conditions are probably more favourable, perhaps it is correct to await more audacious and interesting disciplinary developments, rather than strategic or collaborative planning and new urbanism. The possibility of launching anew the planning discipline passes, in our opinion, through the recovery of institutional responsibility and courageous contamination among cultural traditions that have been undeservedly separated.

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Name Index

A

Albrechts, L., 4–5, 65, 82, 87, 107, 150, 168
Alexander, E. R., 4, 9–10, 33, 68, 105, 173,
180
Altschuler, A., 46
Amin, A., 97
Ascher, F., 14, 187, 192
Astengo, G., 26, 112–114, 117, 120–125

B

Bagnasco, A., 79, 88, 94, 147, 149, 174, 185
Banfield, E. C., 21, 42, 44–46, 52
Barca, F., 20, 147, 178, 185–186
Bateson, G., 91
Bauman, Z., 61, 177, 204, 210
Beauregard, R. A., 10, 39, 105, 177, 194
Beck, U., 61, 177, 210–211
Benevolo, L., 114, 129, 190
Bohigas, O., 14, 187, 192
Bolan, R. S., 9, 33, 46
Boudon, R., 9, 80, 85, 202
Brenner, N., 61
Bryson, J., 4, 20, 78, 102, 168
Busquets, J., 14, 192

C

Calthorpe, P., 102–103, 105, 193
Campos Venuti, G., 26, 114, 135–138, 146
Castells, M., 9, 24, 56–62, 68, 84, 88, 183
Choay, F., 14, 59, 190, 192
Christensen, K., 9, 41
Clément, G., 196
Clementi, A., 26, 116, 127, 158, 185–186,
196–197
Crosta, P. L., 24–26, 115, 144–146
Crozier, M., 25, 50, 68, 78, 80, 107–108, 146,
154, 164, 185, 202, 204
Cullingworth, J. B., 164
Curti, F., 164, 168, 179

D

Dahl, R. A., 38, 67, 80
Dahrendorf, R., 67, 182
Davidoff, P., 32, 42, 44–47, 52
De Carlo, G., 26, 38, 95, 114–115, 126, 128,
151, 155–158, 192, 196–197, 203
Deleuze, G., 95–97, 101, 202
Dematteis, G., 127, 148
Dente, B., 115, 143–144
de Solà Morales, I., 14, 192
Dewey, J., 67–68, 73, 202
Doglio, C., 114, 126
Donolo, C., 106, 108, 174, 175, 210
Donzelot, J., 89
Duany, A., 102, 155, 193
Dutton, J. A., 39, 102, 135, 193–195

E

Elster, J., 75–85
Etzioni, A., 43, 46, 52

F

Fainstein, S., 5, 9–10, 23, 39, 49, 54–56, 80,
87, 103, 179, 201, 204, 208
Faludi, A., 3–4, 7–8, 13, 15–16, 19, 24, 31–32,
35, 38, 42–45, 47–48, 51–52, 65, 87, 105,
111–112, 123–124, 178, 208
Ferraro G., 170
Flyvbjerg, B., 33, 80, 93
Forester, J., 7–9, 24, 33–34, 38, 55, 62, 66–67,
72–76, 81, 100, 208
Friedmann, J., 9–10, 23–24, 31–34, 46, 49–51,
53, 55, 61–63, 68–69, 71–72, 76, 84, 86,
101, 107, 144, 149, 156, 202
Friend, J., 43, 49

G

Gabellini, P., 116, 118, 130, 158, 187–188
Gaudin, J. P., 14, 81, 85, 89

Giddens, A., 78–80, 89
 Grant, J., 8, 39, 102–103, 105, 193
 Gregotti, V., 26, 38, 95, 114, 125, 130–133,
 135–136, 146, 165, 190, 192, 195, 197, 205

H

Habermas, J., 34, 72–73, 75–76, 79–81, 91, 93,
 202
 Hall, P., 5, 15, 31, 37, 44, 59, 114, 123, 136
 Harvey, D., 9, 24, 34, 39, 51, 55, 58–61, 63,
 88, 94, 105, 194
 Healey, P., 4–5, 8–10, 13–14, 16, 19–21,
 23–24, 27, 32–35, 38, 40, 47–49, 53–55,
 65–68, 71, 77–79, 81, 87–89, 91–92, 94,
 97, 99, 103, 105, 111, 133, 136, 139,
 149–150, 154, 164, 167–168, 177, 181,
 185, 203
 Hillier, J., 10, 13, 24, 32–34, 48–49, 54–55,
 91–92, 95–97, 100, 136, 203
 Hirschman, A. O., 17, 25, 52, 56, 62, 70, 75,
 84, 95, 102, 105–108, 115, 154, 169
 Hoch, C., 9, 33–34
 Hood, C. C., 26, 171–172
 Howlett, M., 21, 50, 170, 172–173
 Huet, B., 190–191

I

Ingersoll, R., 4, 128–129, 190
 Innes, J., 9, 34, 74

J

Jonas, H., 55, 87, 177, 204
 Jullien, F., 69, 101

K

Katz, P., 39, 102, 105, 135, 193
 Koolhaas, R., 166, 194–195, 208
 Krueckeberg, D. A., 5, 7
 Krumholz, N., 55
 Kuhn, T., 203

L

Lang Jon, 102, 155, 165–166, 195–196
 Lanzani, A., 4, 114, 125, 151, 196
 Lanzara, G. F., 26, 154
 Lauria, M., 21, 80, 87, 102–103, 204, 208
 Le Corbusier, 37, 113, 194
 Lefebvre, H., 9, 24, 59
 Le Galès, P., 26, 81, 88, 93, 114, 149, 154, 170,
 185
 Lévi Strauss, C., 156
 Libeskind, D., 166
 Lichfield, N., 172, 180

Lindblom, C. E., 9, 21, 24–25, 44–45, 52,
 67–68, 70–71, 79, 85, 104–105, 115, 144,
 153, 202
 Luhmann, N., 79
 Lynch, K., 103, 105, 115, 126

M

Maciocco, G., 26, 116, 158, 166, 177, 195–196
 Magnaghi, A., 63, 115, 147, 211
 Mandelbaum, S., 5, 23, 65
 March, J., 66, 70, 136, 156
 Mazza, L., 5, 26, 115, 139, 169, 175, 184
 McLoughlin, B. J., 49–51
 Melucci, A., 83, 86, 91
 Merlin, P., 14, 190
 Meyerson, M., 42, 44, 46, 89, 104
 Micelli, E., 179
 Molotch, H., 55, 80, 89, 103, 179
 Morin, E., 91
 Moroni, S., 145, 164, 171, 177
 Mumford, L., 115, 119, 147–148

N

Newman, P., 3, 13
 Nicolini, P., 190
 Nussbaum, M. C., 177, 204, 210

O

Oliva, F., 26, 114, 138, 140–141, 150
 Olson, M., 85
 Ostrom, E., 72, 94, 108, 144, 154, 211

P

Paba, G., 86, 115, 149
 Panerai, P., 39, 190–191
 Perloff, H. S., 7, 31–32, 50–51, 112, 205
 Perulli, P., 5, 102
 Peters, B. G., 82, 153, 170–172
 Piccinato, L., 26, 114, 118–120, 127–128, 136
 Pierre, J., 81–82, 149
 Popper, K. R., 43–44

Q

Quaroni, L., 26, 38, 112–116, 125–130, 133,
 135–136, 143, 151, 158, 165–166, 192, 197

R

Rawls, J., 204
 Reade, E., 4–5, 14, 33, 39, 103, 177, 181
 Regonini, G., 21, 50, 75, 115, 144, 153
 Reiner, T. A., 42, 44–45, 52, 89
 Rhodes, R., 81, 149, 211
 Rodwin, L., 4, 7, 25, 38–39, 102–103, 115,
 156, 202

Rorty, R., 66, 93, 96, 99
Rossi, A., 26, 126–127, 157, 190–191

S

Salamon, L. M., 26, 171
Sandercock, L., 24, 53, 63, 84, 86, 202
Sassen, S., 91, 94, 97, 177, 207
Saunders, P., 24, 54, 58
Schön, D., 7, 25, 39, 75, 93–94, 96, 100, 102–103, 105, 108, 115
Scott, A. J., 4–5, 7–9, 55–56, 129
Secchi, B., 26, 132, 169, 176, 190, 192
Sen, A., 99–100, 108, 204, 209–210
Sennett, R., 79, 91, 148, 177, 210
Simon, H. A., 7, 32, 42, 45, 49, 70
Smith, N., 61
Soja, E. W., 4, 96, 129
Stoker, G., 10, 55, 80, 82
Stone, C. N., 55, 103
Stone, D. A., 96
Susskind, L., 74–75, 77, 86, 105, 208
Swyngedouw, E., 61

T

Talen, E., 20, 102–104
Taylor, N., 4, 14, 38, 202
Tewdwr-Jones, M., 4–5, 34, 163
Thornley, A., 3–4, 13–14
Thrift, N. J., 96
Throgmorton, J. A., 7–8
Touraine, A., 10, 80, 83, 210

U

Unwin, R., 20, 31, 119, 191

V

Verna, N., 9, 33

W

Waldheim, C., 102
Walzer, M., 204
Ward, S., 39
Watzlawick, P., 91
Webber, M. M., 7, 46, 48, 52
Wildavsky, A., 9, 21, 25, 33, 41, 47–48, 52, 67–68, 70–71, 96, 102, 156, 168

Subject Index

A

Advocacy planning, 31–32, 47–48, 73–74, 178
Argumentative turn, 66

B

Blueprint planning, 19, 37, 45, 106, 124, 137,
164, 168, 188

C

City design, 125–133, 165, 168, 170, 176, 191,
207
Collaborative planning, 9, 34, 77–78, 88–89,
114, 167, 212
Common good, 72, 75, 82, 85, 106, 108, 147,
154, 209, 211–212
Communicative theory, 80, 91, 93
Complexity theory, 92–93
Concrete utopia, 89, 104, 149
Consensus building, 7, 34, 45, 61, 74, 76, 79,
81, 86, 126, 146, 149–150, 153, 170,
177, 179, 208, 211
Contingency planning, 9
Creative leap, 38, 119, 123, 128
Critical pragmatism, 9–10, 34–35, 144, 155,
174, 203, 209
Critical realism, 5, 21, 25, 27, 87–88, 99

D

Debat publique, 180
Decision
 methods, 7, 32, 42, 47, 49, 56, 68, 74, 97,
 123, 150, 184
 theory, 7, 32, 38, 43, 46, 52, 56, 68, 78, 92,
 135, 150
Deliberative democracy, 75–77, 83, 185–186,
208
Development project, 19, 26, 85–86, 104, 113,
116, 127, 139–140, 146, 154, 164, 170,
176, 180, 187, 189–197, 205, 212
Development right transfer, 139

E

Ethics of responsibility, 101, 168, 177, 204
European Spatial Development Perspective,
16, 97, 182
Evaluation, 8–9, 14–16, 23, 32–33, 43, 48, 50,
70–71, 76, 78–79, 97, 103, 112, 122,
139, 149, 150, 167, 173, 177, 180, 182

G

Governance, 3–4, 14, 16, 27, 55, 77–83, 116,
123, 145, 149–151, 170–171, 176, 185,
189, 208, 211
Growth machine, 87

I

Implementation studies, 32–33, 47, 49, 168
Incremental planning, 56
Institutional design, 4, 14, 39, 80, 91, 112, 130,
138, 146, 182, 205
Integrated programme, 139, 172
Interaction
 game, 60, 180
 system, 147
Interactive knowledge, 85, 96

L

Landscape, 26, 102, 158, 188, 195–196, 209
 urbanism, 102, 195–196
Learning society, 61, 69, 71
Local
 development, 63, 147–148, 163, 167, 193,
 211
 plan, 176
 system, 94, 148, 150, 183, 187

M

Master plan, 5, 14, 37, 52, 118, 122–124, 126,
129, 131, 166, 169, 174, 177, 196–197,
205

Modernist Architecture, 102
Morphological studies, 127

N

New urbanism, 39, 102–105, 190, 193–195, 212

P

Planning

method, 140–141, 143, 150, 164, 168, 204, 207

policy, 4, 33, 54, 66–67, 114–116, 124, 136, 138, 141, 145–146, 163, 169, 174, 177, 192, 211

process, 8–9, 20, 24, 33–34, 37, 45, 48, 65, 69, 71, 78–79, 88, 100, 114, 130, 140, 150

systems, 4, 13–15, 21, 43, 50, 52, 111, 130–131, 167, 185

Policy

analysis, 26, 38, 49–50, 107, 115–116, 143–145, 154, 170, 203

design, 26, 47, 99, 108, 153–159, 163, 170, 177, 205

inquiry, 25–27, 144–145, 154–155, 172, 209

making, 25, 52, 87, 92, 104, 143–151, 153, 157, 170, 172, 185, 209

tool, 26, 163–174, 205, 207

Political economy, 9, 32, 34, 48, 54–56, 58, 66, 78–79, 103, 107, 136

Possibilism, 25

Post-modern architecture, 196

Post-modern ethics, 77

Post-structuralism, 10, 92, 95–96, 100

Pragmatism, 9–10, 21, 27, 33–35, 51, 99–101, 135, 144, 155, 174, 194, 203, 208–209

Problem solving, 7–9, 43, 150, 172

Project urban, 39

Public

choice, 70–71, 144

dispute resolution, 73, 77

good, 72

participation, 52, 73–75, 79, 107, 127, 179, 211

R

Rational planning, 42, 45, 47–49, 51, 53–54, 61

Regulation theory, 27, 42, 45, 52, 66, 87, 136, 204

Risk society, 19, 52, 58, 60, 82, 85, 92, 116, 132, 149, 157, 185, 195

S

Scientific method, 9, 32, 42–44, 118, 122–124, 153

Self organisation, 33, 53, 62, 72, 86, 94, 107, 115–116, 127, 146–148, 150, 157, 173, 209, 211–212

Social

conflict, 55

mobilisation, 61–62, 88, 149, 202, 211

movement, 24, 58, 60–62, 83–84

rootedness, 53–63, 65

(spatial) change, 100, 105, 167

Societal guidance, 49–51, 61, 69, 151, 166, 202

Strategic change, 3, 24, 56, 78, 88, 102, 140, 154, 167, 185, 191, 194

Strategic choice, 41, 43, 45–46, 49, 74, 76, 182

Strategic planning, 5, 76, 78, 88–89, 97, 102, 107, 116, 151, 154, 164, 168–169, 174, 184–185, 208

Strategic visioning, 26, 83, 157, 181–189, 192, 211

Structuration theory, 78

Structure Plan, 137, 139, 158, 167, 181, 187

Systems Approach, 49–51, 97

T

Town planning, 20, 31, 39, 66, 80, 107, 113, 117, 119–120, 170, 190–191, 207

Transactive Planning, 33–34, 68, 79

U

Urban design, 4, 16, 20–21, 23, 26, 37–52, 94, 102–104, 113–116, 118, 120–121, 125–130, 132–133, 138, 143, 155, 157–158, 165–167, 170, 174–175, 182, 193–197, 204–205, 208

Urban form, 4, 54, 65, 80, 103, 105, 113, 117, 120, 122, 125–132, 153, 155, 157, 190, 193, 205, 212

Urbanismo estratègic, 14, 187, 190, 192

Urban regime, 80, 87–88, 102, 185

Urban structure, 52, 57, 118–120, 123, 128, 131, 138, 154

Z

Zoning, 124, 137, 163–166, 168, 174–176