



CITY MAKING

*Strategies, challenges & competences
for urban regeneration*

KCity's Manifesto

30th October, 2013, Frigoriferi milanesi

Our company was created to meet a **cultural**, rather than entrepreneurial **challenge: introducing different urban planning logics in Italy**, as it has been happening in other countries for some time. We place an emphasis on process design and management, on social quality and functional innovation, on building public-private synergies, and on integrated policies. This multifaceted approach implies drawing on **competence profiles that are different and more articulated in respect to the ones traditionally ingrained in the urban sector.**

NEW CHALLENGES

We believe that the attention **shift from the requalification perspective to the "urban regeneration" one** (connoting the present discussions about the city) represents a **change in the scenery** and contributes to situate the **new constraint and opportunity system** that confronts any city planning and transformation activity, starting from the following facts:

- The vital objectives of GROUND CONSUMPTION containment necessitate giving maximum priority to REUSE OF ABANDONED INFRASTRUCTURES, thus activating new perspectives and new functional models;
- PUBLIC FUNDING, destined for territorial development, is growing ever more SCARCE and therefore it is becoming necessary to promote forms of INVOLVEMENT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT PROVIDERS;
- New SOCIAL NEEDS AND NEW LIFESTYLES claim their space in the city and help stimulate INNOVATION IN POLICIES AND IN SERVICES, on which urban quality and its competitive capacity both depend.

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

Working in view of « urban regeneration » therefore signifies having to be confronted with these complexities in the attempt to design **articulate and multidimensional intervention systems** that are capable of responding to multiple objectives and are closely tied to the needs and opportunities expressed in the city.

This is not an issue, which can be tackled merely on a formal and urban design level.

From this point of view, more than has been the case in the past, the efficacy and the success of a project are nowadays closely linked to its capacity for **dialogue with the context**, into which it is inserted. On the one hand, this is accomplished by endorsing (and trying to deal with) local concerns, and, on the other, by recognising that the urban areas concerned have the potential to activate initiatives for the city as a whole.

OTHER COMPETENCES

All things considered, a project of urban regeneration is first and foremost a project of **linkage of the various constitutive elements** of the urban landscape, and in particular between those elements that may be considered to be the **hardware** (*physical, material, environmental, infrastructural elements...*), and the **software** (*social factors, informal networks, economic and cultural dynamics...*).

As such, a project of urban regeneration is to be seen as an action programme that operates on different levels, pursuing several objectives and activating diversified strategies. It has to be understood in the strictest sense of **"city making"**, as deliberately opposed to "city building" (which almost exclusively emphasises the material construction of the city).

Hence, the focus of attention is not placed any more on the *ex novo* construction of city parts, nor on the replacement of certain components of the existing urban fabric. The problem is more complex since the goal is to **recreate the manifold, inherent characteristics of the "urban" environment by reinventing them**, catalysing resources and attempting to make the challenge « interesting » (in literal terms), for various players.

The awareness of these conditions (apart from the acknowledgment of limits shown in conventional planning, especially concerning feasibility), seems to make ever more necessary the **task of designing visions and making them concrete and operational**, as well as **working to strategically combine different resources, problems and opportunities, all of which present themselves in the city**.

The development of this approach and the use of such competences in city planning has for some time been spreading in certain European contexts that have been more advanced in relation to model innovation and action strategies for territorial development. Integrated professional studies, organisational models of intersectoral relationships, competences dedicated to the elaboration of strategic visions, capable of guiding the actions of different players have all been growing.

NEW AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE PROJECT

It is also in the light of the above examples that, in recent years, KCity deployed its course of action within the northern Italian context. As a result, we could intercept a multifaceted range of instances and situations, and gain experience, which we now wish to make available for other actualities and for aware and interested partners, through a broader and open reflection.

As a starting point for discussion, we have tried **to reorganise some problem areas and issues, we have often been called to deal with**, as follows.

THE DESIGN OF THE FUNCTIONAL AND MANAGERIAL MIX WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO REUSE PROJECTS

In today's reasoning about the contemporary city, design processing for abandoned properties is gaining the same importance as the acknowledgment of criticalities, occurred

when “planned services have never seen the light of day.” The objective of promoting initiatives, which are truly able of introducing a social and functional mix, in order to revitalise neighbourhoods and produce certain forms of “urbanity”, has a number of implications on the organisation of competences for “reuse projects”. They include competences connected to the functional setting of urban spaces, policy analysis, service and “public city” planning, as well as technical and economic-financial appraisals for their management, in agreement with both the public and private sectors.

THE TREATMENT OF QUALITY ASPECTS (NOT ONLY FORMAL) IN THE ACTIONS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Today, more so than in the past, “quality” (in its diverse meanings that cannot be confined to formal aspects only) has become a prerequisite, apart from a factor of success, for competing in the sector. The concept of quality is especially understood as “functional standard” of compartments that either involve *ex novo* building developments (even in scarcely attractive contexts), or actions that aim to reactivate old structures within pre-existing urban fabrics. In both cases an issue is being raised, on which it was less necessary to focus in the past (under different housing market conditions). Namely, housing actions should also aim to intercept requests, propose new life styles, foresee tendencies, and create opportunities for synergies between different “economies”.

THE QUEST FOR BALANCE BETWEEN ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL UTILITY IN URBAN SPACE ACTIONS

“Under which conditions can projects and initiatives, that aim to develop objectives of common interest and satisfy demands of the needy, combine with actions that are more conducive to those of the market sphere?” In today’s world, the subjects empowered to follow public objectives do not have the means to move forward autonomously in areas that are new and other than ordinary, whereas private sector players, in order to compete, have to diversify their field of action, as well as their products. Hence, it is of particular strategic value to build mechanisms that are able to hold these dimensions in balance. In the face of constraints that experimental pilot initiatives have encountered during these years, now that the challenges have become even more urgent, the contest between the public and private sectors requires that more efforts be put into identifying those mechanisms able to further diminish the gap between them.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELFARE MECHANISMS AND POTENTIAL FORMS OF URBAN INNOVATION

The *logic behind urban regeneration* may serve as a vehicle of “social innovation” to the extent that it contributes to the construction of a city model that aims to reduce distances, mix populations and place value on the city resources, in order to give new solutions to the problems of social and physical disadvantage and activate integrated policies (as an alternative to the piecemeal treatment of living on the margin). Such an approach has huge implications both on the demand building side (*reconfiguration of networks, valorisation of local potentials, territorial placement of services, sustainability issues*), and on supply (services which contribute to the enhancement of contexts, revitalisation of marginal urban areas, subsidiary approaches, service provision standards, and agreement frameworks).

THE EXPERIMENTATION OF INTERSECTORIAL WORK FORMS WITHIN ADMINISTRATIONS

The critical issues behind the functioning of the administrative machine (complicated procedures, sectoral fragmentation, resistance to change, etc.) end up by weighing heavily on the real possibilities of producing innovation in the city. If one takes into account the ever more complex nature of demands on the public and the ever more intricate framework of problems that emerge in urban areas, it becomes all the more decisive to augment the available resources and know-how, through inter-sectoral work forms and through processes whose aim is to develop greater integration between internal and external expertise.

