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## **HISTORIC URBANSCAPES FOR TOMORROW, TWO ITALIAN CASES: GENOA AND BOLOGNA**

**Abstract:** After a rather long silence, in the last fifteen years, heritage has progressively returned to urban agendas, and not just in Europe.

The following pages reflect on the possible updated “structural” function of the historic parts of contemporary cities through the examples provided by two medium-sized Italian cities – Genoa and Bologna – characterized by the presence of an important urban heritage and specific urban policies and plans focused on renewing their possible role.

**Key words:** urban heritage, historic centres, historic city, historic urban landscape, urban planning, urban policies

### **1. INTRODUCTION: ITALIAN INNOVATION IN PRACTICE**

Facing the issues related to the ‘historic urban landscape’ (see Bandarin and van Oers, 2012), innovation in Italy does not reside in the institutional dimension, or in the legislative framework and its possible updating. Rather, it lies in practice. Thus, this paper selects two practical planning experiences – probably the most important ones in the last two decades (together with the last general plan of Rome) – that are particularly significant and relevant for both the concrete effects achieved, and the methods and tools used to pursue the planning targets.

The case of Genoa is representative of a strategic and operational approach to urban policies – *planning by actions* according to a strategic framework – against a mere regulative urban planning (Gabrielli and Bobbio, 2005), that is, from a plan setting out rules to a program of actions (Bonfantini, 2012, pp. 13–15). In fact, the recent regeneration of the historic centre of Genoa has been described as a successful example of ‘creative’ urban planning (Bobbio, 2008a), i.e., the result of a planning

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attitude able to catalyze innovation and change by breaking down the previous consolidated trend of decay and deterioration thus maximizing the opportunities offered by a historic and cultural heritage that were lying unproductive in the city (Bobbio, 2008a: 15). The interest in the case of Genoa (Kupka, 2012, pp. 171–227) is above all operative: that is, for the capability of its administration to combine a number of different funding sources, together with special and ordinary planning programs and tools, in an effective regeneration process of the waterfront and the ancient centre.

The case of Bologna is significant in reconsidering the famous historic centre planning tradition of such a city in relation to and in comparison with the last innovative phase opened up by the new municipal structural plan in the 2000s. In fact, regarding the Italian experience in planning historic centres, Bologna's experience of the 1960–1970s continues to be the best known and mentioned internationally in the scientific literature (Appleyard, 1979; Cantacuzino and Brandt, 1980; Tiesdell, Oc, Heath, 1996; Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012, 2015). However, just considering the last fifteen years of urban plans and policies of this city, it is possible to gain a clear vision of the updated approaches that renewed this tradition, with a remarkable change of perspective in the general meaning and methods of planning action on the 'inherited city'. This specific issue will be explored in detail in the fifth section of this article and in its conclusions.

It is also worthwhile to underscore how these recent Italian cases meet the contents of the UNESCO 2011 'Recommendation on the historic urban landscape.'

The Recommendation 'addresses the need to better integrate and frame urban heritage conservation strategies within the larger goals of overall sustainable development,' and 'suggests a landscape approach for identifying, conserving and managing historic areas within their broader urban contexts.' In fact, the historic urban landscape extends 'beyond the notion of "historic centre" or "ensemble" to include the broader urban context.' The definition of historic urban landscape 'provides the basis for a comprehensive and integrated approach for [its] identification, assessment, conservation and management ... within an overall sustainable development framework.' The historic urban landscape approach 'aims at preserving the quality of the human environment, enhancing the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces while recognizing their dynamic character, and promoting social and functional diversity.'

This little anthology of passages from the 'Introduction' and 'Definition' sections of the UNESCO Recommendation shapes a common ground with the planning experiences described in this paper, but the two cases here illustrate above all the shift 'from values to potentials' (Geurts and Corten, 2014, p. 45) in planning inherited urban spaces. So, the question becomes not their costly preservation for 'an inflexible reverence for a sacrosanct past' (Lynch, 1972, p. 64), but rather the capability of recognizing them as an opportunity for an efficient and effective improvement of the quality of urban life and habitability conditions of cities – an asset to manage urban change and development (Corten *et al.*, 2014).

## 2. BRIEF OUTLINE OF GENOA

Genoa has been described as a city periodically compelled to rethink its own economic basis and identity. So, for a real understanding of the most recent changes in the city it is necessary to look at its past, considering on the one hand the last thirty years on which that change is based, and on the other ‘the main phases of construction of the modern city’ (Bobbio, 2008b, p. 149).

The first turning point was at about the time of Italian unification, when Genoa, coming from the previous condition of ‘city-state financing the public debt of half of Europe’ re-invented itself as an industrial city grafted onto the harbor. That was the opening of a phase that lasted longer than a century, in which ‘Genoa grew uninterruptedly in size, population, trade and industrial production, proving to be one of the main Italian cities’ (Bobbio, 2008b, pp. 151, 153). These features characterized Genoa until the second half of the twentieth century, making it ‘the Italian capital of the “first capitalism” related to heavy industry, first transformation industry, oil industry, and above all (in these and other sectors), to state-financed industry’ (Aaster, 2006, p. 10).

In the 1980s the crisis of the harbor and of the public industry dramatically marked a turning point. According to census data, workers employed in the manufacturing sector decreased from 169.000 in 1981 to 99.000 ten years later. The resident population reached its maximum in 1965 with 848.000 inhabitants, while in 1981, the city had 763.000 inhabitants, 679.000 in 1991, then 610.000 in 2001, and finally about 600.000 today.

Looking at the districts traditionally considered as comprising the historic centre of Genoa – Prè, Molo, Maddalena and the area of the old harbor, 198 hectares all told – the population remained about the same from 1861 (55.500 inhabitants) to 1951 (about 52.000), then fell by half in the space of 40 years (to 22.300 inhabitants in 1991), but stabilized in the following two decades (23.500), revealing a counter-tendency in comparison to the general trend of the city.

This signalled a turning point for Genoa that found in the historic centre’s re-launch an opportunity to rethink a new economy and a new urban identity (see Bobbio, 2008b, p. 170).

## 3. GENOA HISTORIC CENTER: PROFILE OF A SUCCESSFUL CASE OF INNER CITY REGENERATION

The reasons for the initial abandonment of the historic city of Genoa have to be sought in the long-term dynamics of the transformation mentioned above. When, at the end of the nineteenth century, the industrial growth of the city produced its

expansion outside the historical core, its upper classes moved to the new districts on the hills. Starting from that period and passing through the destruction of the Second World War (from which it has nearly taken to today to recover) ‘the *old city* ... was left to physical, economic and social decay and reached renown in the 1980s for the marginalization of the *historical* inhabitants of the ancient districts combined with the new arrival of foreign immigrants’ (Briata, 2014, p. 37). It became for the Genovese, in their imagination too, a part of the city to be avoided (Gastaldi, 2009, p. 94).

The regeneration process of the historic centre that began in the early 1990s could be described as the result of the matched effects of a sequence of three mega-events: the 1992 Columbian celebrations, the G8 Summit in 2001, and Genoa as a European Capital of Culture in 2004. In this process, mega-events were undoubtedly condensers of energies and resources, but not the trigger.

Instead, the trigger can be recognized in the transformations developed in the 1980s, inside and at the borders of the historic centre: the rebuilding of the opera house, the restoration of the Palazzo Ducale as a cultural hub and exposition centre, and above all, the recovery of the ruins of San Salvatore Monastery as the new seat of the University of Genoa’s Faculty of Architecture (inaugurated in 1989 and in use since 1990). This was a decision rooted in the debates and options in the decades directly after the Second World War. The relevance of this intervention and its long-term incubation have to be underscored, because the injection of the university in the historic centre was probably the decisive factor – the ‘start up’ (Gastaldi, 2003) – that determined the new trend by the introduction of a new population (i.e., students) in the historic centre. This subsequently led to new practices and flows through the urban space, a new consequent boost for all related local retail outlets and refreshment activities, a vitalizing impulse for rentals that reactivated the market and solicited a new attitude of care for the suffering building stock, and a spontaneous reclamation of the building heritage, resulting, in the mid-1990s, in a ‘patchy’ re-qualification, which then gradually attracted other social groups.

The first mega-event, the Columbian celebrations – bringing the ancient harbor to the city again and re-linking it to the nearby historic centre – matched and strengthened these dynamics by attracting tourists, new services and leisure time facilities through the recovery and renewal of waterfront public spaces and structures.

Regarding this first phase, it is interesting to note that Bruno Gabrielli – the famous urbanist, president of ANCSA (National Association of Historic and Artistic Centres) from 1985 to 2005, and one of the main protagonists of that watershed planning period as alderman of Genoa responsible for urban planning and the historic center from 1997 and then for urban quality and cultural policies from 2001 to 2006 – commented critically on the ‘lost opportunity’ of the Columbian Expo, its uncertain legacy and failure to develop a forward-thinking perspective (Gabri-

elli, 1993). His criticism pointed to the incapability of a real ‘strategic’ approach in the realization of the event. Despite his full appreciation for the choice of the Expo site and the great qualities of the urban project designed by Renzo Piano, Gabrielli’s opinion is that ‘it would have been necessary to have a strategic project articulated in different parts of the city and strongly involving, at least, the whole historic center and historic harbor’ (Gabrielli, 1993, p. 112).

This tension towards an effective integration of a multiple set of actions according to a strategy able to orient and keep them together for the achievement of amplified results on the city was the main characteristic of the planning phase that was pursued by the administration of which Gabrielli was a part.

Looking explicitly at the lesson of Barcelona (Gabrielli, 2006), the so-called ‘Plan for the City’ drafted in the years around the turn of the century (Gastaldi, 2004) aimed to reframe the regeneration process and mega-events in a strategic perspective (Bobbio, 2008a, p. 23). The ‘Plan for the City’ does not substitute the general master plan. Rather, it is a pragmatic tool for implementation with clear targets, monitoring, and management. It was presented as ‘a strategic plan of an operational nature’ (Gabrielli and Bobbio, 2005) combining both urban design and socio-economic contents. The programme for the historic centre within the framework of the Plan for the City, where it constitutes the explicit core, has been set out in a specific document called the ‘Operational Plan for the Historic Centre’ (Comune di Genova, 2001).

The action for the historic centre was characterised by the ability to coordinate different funding channels, especially those relating to 1992, 2001 and 2004 mega-events and a considerable number of effectively coordinated ‘complex programmes’ (and among them the ‘Urban 2’ EU integrated program; see Gastaldi, 2001) through a public initiative led approach in the regeneration process that was able to secure the widespread involvement of private initiatives. The action on public space (road paving, utilities and lighting installations, enhancement of the urban landscape through the restoration of building facades, car-free zones, etc.) together with the recapturing of the seafront by the historic centre through the restoration of the ancient harbour also had indirect effects on the recovery and diffused micro-transformations of built heritage. From the standpoint of practices, the dynamics that attracted new inhabitants and new inflows of city users to the historic centres (students, tourists, evening leisure time users, etc.) played a key role. The historic centre became an attractive place to live and work in, as well as a favourite destination for entertainment and leisure pursuits (Gastaldi, 2009).

On a more general level what can be observed in the case of Genoa is a promotional and management capacity that is supplemented by a diversified plurality of actions and whose results are not merely cumulative, but have synergetic and multiplier effects (Gabrielli, 2010, p. 68). The regeneration of the historic centre of Genoa is reflected in a parallel increase in property values and real estate revaluation. While this may be viewed as a positive factor and an indicator of success

for the urban policies adopted (Gabrielli, 2010, p. 67), alternatively, it outlines the boundaries of a gentrification phenomenon (Gastaldi, 2013), which, albeit non-homogeneous, will inevitably usher in new problems such as social polarisation, conflicts in terms of time and space between temporary population groups and resident ‘gentrifiers’ of the historic centre. These issues represent a new challenge for future urban planning policies.

#### 4. BRIEF OUTLINE OF BOLOGNA

Both the initial part of the Illustrative Report of the 2008 Municipal Structural Plan (Comune di Bologna, 2008) and a following study for the Territorial Regional Plan of Emilia-Romagna (Gabellini *et al.*, 2011) provide a meaningful and effective profile of Bologna. They single out some elements deemed essential to describe Bologna and its current role: infrastructural node, major territorial gate and attractor of flows related to the presence of facilities and functions of excellence; important fair site (the second largest in Italy); leading centre in some specific productive sectors (e.g., precision mechanical industry and packaging); retail, leisure and cultural hub; logistic platform of national relevance; health and wellness hub with a leading hospital system and strong pharmaceutical and biomedical sectors; and a city where to study, with its university founded in 1088.

In a recent short demographic profile of the city, outlined by the director of the municipal statistics sector, Bologna is significantly described as follows: ‘Bologna has approx. 373.000 residents, but during the day its population increases to about 550.000 people with about one third of them concentrated in the historic centre’ (Bovini, 2008, p. 20).

Census data reveals that from 340.500 inhabitants in 1951, the resident population reached its peak in 1971 (490.500) then decreased in the next three decades (459.080 in 1981, 404.378 in 1991, 371.217 in 2001), finally stabilising in the first decade of the 2000s (371.337 in 2011).

Within this general trend of the municipal area, the resident population of the historic centre underwent a drastic reduction from 1951 to 1971 (down from 113.000 to 80.000 inhabitants), and then again from 1971 to 1991 (down to 56.000). Then it stabilised and remained virtually the same from 2003 through 2007 (53.000 people), with a renewed attractiveness – not least from the residential standpoint – of this part of the city, which is characterised by a greater demographic turnover.

Besides the residents, another component of the local population consists of 20.000 people who do not take up residence in the city (mostly, but not only, students from out of town). Every day, about 63.000 commuters (22.000 students



and 41.000 workers) enter the historic centre (data from 2001). To these three groups (adding up to a total of about 135.000 people), we must add occasional visitors to the city centre, estimated to be about 45.000 per day. Thus, 180.000 people, or even 200.000 at times, crowd this 4 sq. km city area, which suffers from the clash of different practices and utilisation modalities, especially where the diversification of people and behaviours is replaced by a stiffer polarisation and contraposition.

## 5. BOLOGNA HISTORIC CENTER: FROM THE LEGACY OF A PLANNING TRADITION TO INNOVATIONS IN THE LAST DECADE

The paradigmatic experience of the plan for the historic center of Bologna attracted national and international attention at the end of the 1960s when, at a time marked by the issue of conservative renewal, housing became a pressing matter too, so that the ‘conservation of the historic centres and the satisfaction of the housing demand appear as substantially compatible objectives’ (Mazzoleni, 1991, p. 15).

It was in Bologna between the 1960s and the 1970s (Bandarin, 1979) that a general policy of ‘active conservation, physical and social, of the historic centre’ was experienced (Cervellati, Scannavini, 1973, p. 37).

The plan for the historic centre was approved by the City Council only in 1969 ‘but its framework had been set since 1963. It aimed to allow every private owner to intervene directly on his own building and even single dwellings while safeguarding the integrity of the historic centre urban fabric. To do that, regulations were defined to address the ways of intervention, according to the survey of the typological features of the buildings’ (Campos Venuti, 2011, p. 64). In fact, what particularly distinguishes the plan is the operation, upon which it is itself constructed, that is, the ‘development of an objective methodology’ based on the ‘concept of *type*’ (Cervellati, Scannavini, 1973, p. iii). In short, the mechanism for discipline in urban planning prepared from the plan finds in the type of building the reference to be respected for the ways and forms of interventions on the historic centre.

This approach, up until recently, was heavily criticised by the culture of architectural restoration, which accused it of producing, in substance, ‘in-style false buildings’ (Dezzi Bardeschi, 1979). Regarding the tools and technical forms of the project to plan historic parts of settlements, I cannot go into depth here about the opportunities offered by alternative methods that, instead of typological, I could define more properly as *morphological* or *relational* (see Gasparini, 1994, pp. 164–183; Bonfantini, 2001, pp. 190–191; 2002, pp. 83–85; 2012, pp. 4–5). In any case, regarding the search for ‘the setting of scientific and clear

methodologies' of intervention, Bruno Gabrielli observed that 'in spite of the more or less harsh criticisms on the "Bolognese method", it is undoubtedly the most refined and tested' (Gabrielli, 1982, p. 3 and note 12).

As a result of the urban planning policies set and launched since the 1960s the historic center of Bologna is today substantially recovered and healthy in its own physical and material conditions. On the other hand, the original aims of social and functional safeguarding did not succeed as well. In fact, through the following decades, a process of partial functional substitution towards tertiary sector activities and a social change of the former local population have happened (Campos Venuti, 2010, pp. 127–128; 2011, pp. 65–66), as the data provided in the short profile of the city drafted in the pages above have shown.

Nevertheless, today, the historic center of Bologna continues to be an extremely dynamic part of the city, a vital urban space but for which many and different metropolitan populations compete in using it (among them university students), and stressed by a set of diverse activities.

So, in the 2000s, the age-old problem of the general (and student) population in the historic city centre (Legnani, 1998) is taken into account by the new city planning instruments by way of a broader program that addresses the overcrowding of this area by contemplating 'a selection, a reduction, a far-ranging cure'. In fact, the 2008 PSC (the Municipal Structure Plan) and the 2009 RUE (the Town Planning Building Regulations) proposed 'the strengthening of stable residency as a key protective measure (with consequences in terms of basic services and retail shops); collective and slow mobility as a priority; a balanced land use (programmed decentralisation); the protection and reinforcement of special settlement areas (maintenance and upgrade regulatory strategies); and a mix of interconnected actions and urban policies' (Gabellini, 2008, p. 98). In particular, besides the 'decentralisation of university and management functions', the 're-qualification of public space' and the 'dissemination of centrality throughout the city' were seen as strategic objectives to be pursued (Evangelisti, 2008, p. 111).

In these last urban planning tools of Bologna (Bonfantini and Evangelisti, 2009) – as in the new plan for Rome just before (Gasparrini, 2001) – it was decided to adopt the wider notion of 'historic city' – of which the historic center is only a part – as a concept with which to propose a sense and an urban role for the inherited city within the spatial organisation of the contemporary city.

Both in the general report to the PSC and the introductory texts of the RUE, there are ample passages that clarify what is intended in the new plan for the 'historic city' (about this concept see the conclusions of this paper, too). By re-the-matizing the *historic center*, the difference lies in the re-problematization and the redefinition of the two terms: *center* and *historic*.

The center of Bologna no longer coincides *tout court* with its 'historic centre', as it has been traditionally understood, according to the image powerfully given by the ring of its boulevards: new 'superplaces' (Agnoletto, Delpiano, Guerzoni, 2007)



redefine it from the inside, such as the Sala Borsa (the old stock market building, that now is the location of the municipal library, the urban center and several other services the public), and remodel its extension, such as the train station (with the project of its renewal for the transit of high-speed trains that transforms the infrastructural hub into a real bridge between the two sides of the city once separated by the rails) and the new municipal headquarters. On the other hand, the axis of the Via Emilia already is and proposes itself as a system of central places and asks to be recognised as such. All this describes a different geography of the centre of Bologna in its main layout.

In relation to the second term, as much as it is defined today as *historic*, it does not simply coincide with the city centre but is more likely configured as a nebula that reveals a diverse density of elements of historical value in the urban palimpsest. That nebula is the transversal image of the whole municipal territory produced by the map of individual buildings of historical-architectural and documental interest, flanked by more recent buildings of the ‘modern architectural heritage’.

Thus, the new plan for Bologna may be used as a testing ground, where different dimensions of the plan for the historic city – molecular, by parts, structural – are exemplified and find expression. *By elements, by parts, by structural territorial figures* are three different approaches that animate the new plan and give rise to a plural and complex view of the historic city *embedded in* and *cutting across* the contemporary city.

*By elements*, at the ‘molecular’ level, the plan is responsible for defining the profile of conservation, adjustments and transformation of the urban artifacts which make up the granular consistency of the historic city. To these ‘molecules’ identifying the individual elements making up the historic palimpsest, the urban plan associates the rules for governing the profiles of permanence and persistence specified for such single elements.

*Areal, by recognizable parts* is the criterion underlying the image that appears in the ‘Classification of the territory’ plate of the PSC (or the plate from the RUE, ‘The historic city. Domains and materials’). Here the historic city is identified and described as the combination of sixteen urban areas – ‘historic domains’ – making up the ‘totality of the urban fabrics of ancient origin, which have retained the recognisability of the settlement structures and the stratification of their formation processes’ (PSC, Regulatory framework, art. 27). A reading of the historic city by recognizable parts lays the foundation for a diversified management in the plan, since this subdivision suggests ‘pasts, and especially, presents and futures which cannot be homogenised, and require ad hoc plans’ (Gabellini, 2008, p. 95), according to specific regulatory profiles, laid out specifically for each domain.

Lastly, *structural* is the approach that reveals the compositional role – i.e., the role in the spatial urban composition – played by the historic city in the PSC project, its *vision*, and its overall organisational project shaped in seven strategic and

selective leading territorial figures named the ‘Seven Cities’ of Bologna (Railway, By-pass Road, Western and Eastern Via Emilia, Reno and Savena Rivers, Hills; see Gabellini, 2011). It is from the combination of the ‘images of the restructuring process’ relating to the Cities of Via Emilia (the Ponente and Levante sides) and the City of the Railway that we may gather the sense and the role of the historic city in a perspective of renovated urban configuration. A historic city that we are advised to read, on the one hand, in terms of its reorganisation around a ‘hinge factor’ consisting of the new train station, within the framework of an overall redefinition of the system of urban centralities, and, on the other hand, in terms of the ‘matrix’ road infrastructure designed to link together and organise the entire territorial settlement (that is to say, not through the enucleation and isolation of the historic centre).

In 2009 both the economic and political crises produced a significant shift in planning policies – not a discontinuity but a change of focus. The economic crisis illustrated clearly the difficulty of implementing a wide transformation program of large urban areas (for the new university sites, for example). So the decentralization process that the PSC tried to reshape, coordinate, manage and encourage – which was also the way to overcome the narrow exclusive obsession for the historic center traditionally and deeply rooted in the Bolognese imagination by projecting the city towards an updated metropolitan vision – had a rest. On the other hand, in Fall 2009 the newly elected mayor of the city was overwhelmed by a scandal and in January 2010 resigned.

The impasse of the big urban projects in the dissemination of centralities and some episodes of harsh conflicts in the use of places in the inner city, matched with a diffuse perception of degradation in central public spaces once again brought the historic center to the fore as an important protagonist.

The first move – during the period of temporary administration of the city by the central government commissioner – was to promote a ‘Programma di interventi prioritari per la riqualificazione del nucleo antico del centro di Bologna’ (Program of priority interventions for the re-qualification of the ancient core of the center of Bologna) having Bruno Gabrielli as a consultant of the operation.

Then, with the new municipal administration (after the elections in May 2011), a new coherent urban planning policy was shaped. In short, it could be defined as a new planning trend oriented to diffuse regeneration targets and the resilient qualities of the city (see Gabellini, 2014). The promoter of this renewed attitude is the new alderman for urban planning, the historic center, urban quality and the environment, the urbanist Patrizia Gabellini, who in the immediately previous phase had been the general consultant in designing the Urban Plan (PSC, RUE and first POC, Operative municipal plan) until its approval two years earlier (Ginocchini and Manaresi, 2008; Bonfantini, 2011).

In regard to the historic center, this last phase can be condensed and summarized into the program ‘Di nuovo in centro’, which started with a decision of

December 2011 (Evangelisti, 2012). We can literally translate the title of the program ‘into the city center again’, but also interpret it as ‘back to the city center’, i.e., a return to the historic center and its own firm, reassuring and powerful effectiveness and implicit potential in a time of crisis. It is a coordinated program of integrated actions, interventions and management measures that invest in a set of urban policies and issues organized as follows: accessibility; public transport, car sharing and electric vehicles; parking; redevelopment of public spaces; regulations for using public spaces; promotion; waste collection; public consultation and participation (Comune di Bologna, 2014). The key question is the quality of open public space and the management and regulation of the practices in the use of spaces to find new agreements such as a new progressive social pact able to promote the habitability of the historic center for the widest spectrum of users.

As the subtitle of the program reveals (‘a program for a pedestrian friendly Bologna city centre’), the on-foot way of using the urban space is targeted. It is a walkability approach oriented to expanding the use of spaces in all their potential according to a habitability perspective: ‘If the primary aim is to rediscover walking, seen as a natural condition, necessary for living well and moving around the city, the measures to achieve this are many’ (Comune di Bologna, 2014, p. 21). I can mention here just few main operations: the new rules for terraces (Regulations for the occupation of public land for open spaces attached to drink and food supply establishments); the Regulations of arcades, for the efficient maintenance and management of the 40 kilometers of arcade trails that make Bologna a unique city; and, above all, within the program of measures undertaken for a new ‘walkability’ of the center of Bologna, the so-called ‘T-Days’, that during the weekend (since May 2012) transform the main axis of the city center – the Ugo Bassi, Rizzoli and Indipendenza streets, in the shape of a ‘T’ – in a completely pedestrianized zone: ‘on weekends, the T is only open to pedestrians and cyclists, using the city centre for shopping and leisure time. Thanks to this configuration, during the weekend the heart of the city becomes an enormous space of over 20,000 square metres that is fully reserved for pedestrians and cyclists’ (Comune di Bologna, 2014, p. 23).

## **6. CONCLUSIONS: ‘HISTORIC CITY’ AND ‘HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE’ AS NEW FRAMEWORK CONCEPTS FOR HERITAGE-ORIENTED URBAN PLANS AND POLICIES**

As a first conclusive remark about the two cases discussed here, one should consider that the results of the plans and policies implemented in Genoa and Bologna are not definitive *solutions* of recognized problems. Rather, they are a dynamic evolution that explores the possibilities and potentials of the inherited city, and

also generate new planning issues to be faced by urban policies. In this sense, as highlighted in the final part of the third section of this paper, the case of Genoa is emblematic, with new conflicts and possible crisis factors to address, determined by new trends. The two cases are extremely different: the condition of the historic centre of Genoa before the recent regeneration process was critical, while the historic centre of Bologna has always been vital and strong – and somehow hyper-estimated by an affection for the inner city in the widespread imagination – but crossed by constant tensions among different urban populations and different functions and activities in a competitive struggle for its use.

However, both these planning experiences reveal their common aim not just in providing the inherited city with a cultural value to be preserved but a salient role in the overall planning strategy and organization of the city. In both these cases, the role reserved for the ‘inherited city’ within the city of today is not sectoral nor is it confined to a restricted urban area. On the contrary, it has an open and expansive potential for the whole city as a complex ‘urbanity infrastructure’ for a rich and full liveability (Bonfantini, 2013).

This planning attitude finds its methodological framework in the aforementioned concept of ‘historic city’ as achieved in the Italian planning debate of the 1990s and explicitly tested in the last general Plan of Rome (see Gasparrini, 2001), drafted in the second half of the 1990s and adopted by the Municipality in 2003 (‘From the Historic Centre to the Historic City’ is the programmatic title of one of its cartographic tables).

The expression ‘historic city’ in those debates and plans is not used according to its common and generic meaning as a city rooted and shaped more or less deeply in the past, characterized by historic features, and a palimpsest of a stratified material consistency, but rather in a technical and specific sense. In short, that concept was elaborated to overcome the limits of the former idea of ‘historic centre’, and of the urban plans shaped by this notion. While the historic centre is an urban ‘island’, the historic city is a more complex and articulated concept that selects a wider variety of objects that are worthy of attention, and that are quality depositories in the historic layering of settled territory. And it is clear that this selection comes about through a critical exercise that interrogates the value, the sense and the role of the pre-existing areas and elements of the contemporary city.

The historic city is configured, then, not as the perimeter of an urban part ‘ontologically’ different from the rest of the urban area, but as the result of a tentative and interpretative operation that identifies one of the main structuring elements of the city. ‘Moving from the historic centre to the historic city ... has meant overcoming a defensive and crystallizing concept in order to develop a greater and necessary attention to the development potential of a qualitative heritage that has only now been seen and appreciated not only in its systemic essence, and to be recognised in its territorial pervasiveness, but also to be selectively detected in the discontinuity and potential for integration’ (Manieri Elia, 2001, p. 114).

In this sense, as already underlined in the opening of this paper, it is possible to recognize a convergence between this Italian planning trajectory and the concept of historic city, and the recent UNESCO Recommendation of 2011 for the concept of ‘historic urban landscape’ towards ‘a much more flexible, open-ended and people-driven approach to conservation’ (Bandarin, 2015, p. 14).

If the Italian *historic city* framework encounters and matches the *historic urban landscape* concept, in their dynamic tension and attitude in ‘reconnecting the city’ (Bandarin and van Oers, 2015), in the new epiphany of urban heritage, the current risk with which to contend continues to be the enucleation and insulation of the historic city because ‘today, many historic places that have maintained their architectural appearance are turned into empty shells, tourist supermarkets and theme parks’ (Bandarin, 2015, p. 14).

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