This book aims at understanding if recent transformations in our cities are creating new typologies of urban regeneration or transformation processes. New emphasis on downtown areas, extending the daily life of many central places, new ideas for the retrofitting the suburbs, some new attempts in regional planning and consolidated experiences in transportation networks are bringing to our attention a new way of interpreting the relations between cities and regions and some new geographies in the organization of urban regions.

The research published in this book investigates on the last 15 years of attention on cities, asking if it has produced new typologies of urban environments, linked to regeneration and transformation of some parts of the city. Can we say that downtowns or suburbs retrofitting are creating new typologies of urbanity so recognizable to become a specific chance for all consolidated cities?

It tries to understand if this process of thinking some parts of the cities gives in a new way of seeing an urban or suburban area and if it is different from the past or if it is the same but in a new way of looking at transformations as structurally a way to be able to consider activity can move from the center to some less dense regions?

The book answers to these questions proposing a manifesto for better planning urban regeneration processes for those transformations that are more related to urbanLook Transformations and the urbanization of the metropolis of the metropolis than urbanization processes. Transformations may not only start from urban culture and practice in dense areas but urban transformation planning may improve some of the most well-known principles and ideas, the horizontal relationships among different types of urbanity building a new way of considering "urbanity" as a value for all the transformations diarrhea specific.
FROM CITY TO REGION
Transformations and the urbanization of the metropolis

Marco Facchinetti

FROM CITY TO REGION
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This publication represents the first account of an open research project: on several fronts and with various people, an ongoing work of research, study and active participation is underway into a number of urban transformation processes that lead us to believe that some of the underlying conditions of Western cities have changed and that this has led to a transformation in structures, connections, relationships, conditions and behaviours.

The research was carried out making use of an Italian national research programme, funded as a PRIN between 2012 and 2015. It concerned the way in which the dynamics present in Western cities have triggered a different metabolism in the behaviour of cities themselves, open to different regional and different metropolitan dimensions, driven by stronger dynamics that are capable of producing episodes of urbanity, concentration and densification in contexts and places where such things would have seemed surprising until a few years ago. The research which has not long ended, in collaboration with other researchers, supported by other Italian universities and contributions from abroad, raises new questions and suggests new lines of research, precisely in relation to the way in which these more “urbanising” dynamics for territories that are already urbanised, but with the typical forms of sprawl, have changed or are changing Italian landscapes first of all and, in general, those of the mature cities of the Western world. The research group coordinated by this writer sought to understand a particular aspect of the urban metabolism: the focus was on the way in which plans, projects and policies have led to a particular method of affecting a scenario; including how their different times and means, which vary depending on era, circumstances and political support, have impacted on the forms and transformation times of cities. Analysing and studying this particular aspect, the research team discovered how in Italy with the end of the “domain” of the Regulatory Plan governed by National Law no. 1150 of 1942 and subsequent changes, the beginning of the season of the Complex Programmes marked, for the first time, the introduction of different dynamics, faster perhaps, but undoubtedly better able to identify particular projects for particular areas, although
1. Urban metabolism in the region around Milan. Different urban planning processes speeds and boosters creates different trends and tendencies. The corridors are faster but some other parts speed up processes of transformations due to other reasons. The south, once only agricultural, shows a certain speed in the production of planning tools and in the processes of urbanization.
at the expense of the construction of a general framework. These projects were able, in a short time, albeit not everywhere, to trigger dynamics of transformation based on the production of an urban project, capable of regulating the rules for the implementation of the project itself and affecting the transformation of the urban environment. A small revolution, if, as we will see, we think that it was the Plan itself, when it fell into the hands of a particular generation of architects/not-architects, ended up abdicating its function of “shaping” in favour of the small dimensions of the “implementation plans” which were certainly too poor to do so. The research reveals again how the season of the Complex Programmes left a gene in Italian town planning practice, an echo of episodes and goings-on elsewhere: and it is this gene of the transformation and regeneration of existing parts of cities, parts that are not consolidated or are designed for other uses and functions, or are found in obsolete and abandoned areas in terms of current use, which remains in urban-planning practices and those of the government and management of cities; and that same gene begins producing episodes of re-urbanisation of external areas, distant, but within the larger urban region which, in the meantime, was consolidating itself. This account is a partial description of the results the research team arrived at and opens up to possible future developments of the research itself with the aim of analysing precisely the forms of transformation that are affecting our territory and discovering how it is precisely those dynamics of the urbanisation of the exterior and wider spaces of the cities that are transforming the metropolises in which most of us now live.

In other areas the research made use of various North American research paths, and in particular of two quite different contexts. This writer was asked to participate in the creation of a strategic plan capable of shaping the large district of company HQs, offices, research and development centres with their related functions, of some of the biggest oil companies in the world, to the extent that it forms a separate district in the city of Houston, Texas. The Energy Corridor took shape rapidly thanks in part to the thrust of the development which, until a few years ago at least, the oil companies had enjoyed thanks to new extraction techniques, and the need to concentrate headquarters and offices in a single area, a stretch of urban development of the Houston metropolitan region, along Interstate 10 in the western sector of the densest part of the metropolitan area. Participation in this programme consisted in an attempt to create a strategic plan coordinated by the Energy Corridor in a place where there is certainly no great tradition of either planning and coordination. The research this writer was involved in sought to understand the reasons for the need to give urban form to a process which, in other times and places, would have resulted in the construction of a new edge city, i.e. of a new centre for offices outside the more
established urban centre and supported by a infrastructural-road system, but which now has an urgent need to assume an urban form, to open up to the functional mix, to think of concentration and density as essential preconditions along with accessibility and circulation thanks to public transport. Research and active collaboration with other professionals and researchers produced a masterplan, without obligations or constraints, which the owners and individual developers agreed to follow, in rethinking their building development for the area. When it is completed, the Energy Corridor project will configure itself as a high-density areas of constructions, urban relationships and content capable of providing a different way of thinking about metropolitan geography: a new hot spot, able to draw out urban values and forms from the sea of sprawl.

At the same time, and still in the area of research applied to practice, this writer was invited to take part in another important urbanisation project of contexts that were the result of the sprawl and by-now-outdated building practices. In West Vancouver, on the north shore of the bay overlooked by Vancouver in Western Canada, the largest developer in the area, and owner of the largest area suitable for building, British Pacific Properties⁵, following years of construction typical of a culture of diffusion and serial repetition of single-family homes, intends to build a new urban centre, destined to the luxury market (because of the particular form of the land, in the hills, that climbs from sea level to over a thousand metres, exposed to the south and the sun, isolated from the densest part of the city but directly accessible and able to enjoy the view), capable of aggregating the urban sprawl that has been produced over time, to provide an identity to the place and transform it into a new urban area, high density and with a wide mix of uses. The project unfolds in several phases, the first of which takes the form of educational research for the area’s inhabitants, developers and administrators, precisely in relation to how to transform this product of the sprawl, from low density with extensive ground use, into an urban node, connected to the network of dense urban places, capable of re-aggregating uses, functions and density around a centre. The research was thus intended to give shape to a new place, describing the way in which West Vancouver itself could be transformed into an environment capable of expressing urban forms and relationships. The research and collaboration are still ongoing at the time of writing this report, and demonstrate the ever-increasing attention paid to episodes of major urbanity, not only by academics and researchers but also by the market that feeds off urban development. The need for British Pacific Properties was precisely this, i.e. having understand how even only commercially diffusion, the repetition of low density and separate developments no longer works; the market and the inhabitants of such places themselves have begun to express the need to live in more urban relationships.
2. Houston. The Energy Corridor Masterplan proposal. Analysis of the layout of the properties and distribution of land uses. Developed by Marco Facchinetti
3. Houston, The Energy Corridor Masterplan proposal. Methodology. Creating connections to give structure and shape to a new urban system. Developed by Marco Facchinetti
4. Houston. The Energy Corridor Masterplan proposal. A new urban centrality, filling the gaps and recentering the Corridor on urban places. Developed by Marco Facchinetti
5. The British Properties development at West Vancouver. Proposal for the new town center. The development of a new town center will help communities already living on the property to find a new center, with the shape, the characteristics and the image of a compact alpine village. Walkable and short distance locations should help users and citizens recognize themselves as belonging to a specific new urban place, expressing their needs as consumers and inhabitants in a more compact and urban new hot spot. Will this attempt be able to reorganize the whole built up hill or will it be just a new real estate development? It will depend on the connections that the developers will be able to create between the new center and the existing sprawled development.
Participating in these experiences brought together the material for this account, and a practical and working environment unfolded that was completely different to what had gone before. With the passage of time, an awareness grew of dealing with issues that until a few years previously had been addressed differently. Diffusion, the sprawl, growth by parts were the result of the study with a particular outlook: they were the enemy, the threat, the bad practice that urban planners, architects and researchers continued to consider negatively, but that were part of the city, its growth and, above all, the history of its development. Now the outlook seems to have changed, or at least this writer’s has, and this is in relation to the experiences that this open book describes. The part of the city that constitutes the metropolis is the subject of work, it is the new field that has opened from the growth not of more urbanisation but a new urbanity. In this setting, the effort that this publication describes is that of selecting the emerging parts on the basis of their nature, location and potential in relation to higher systems, capable of outlining a geometry of relationships and connections which is wholly urban, on a large scale, but strong both in terms of physical relationship (because linked by new public transport systems) and in terms of formal relationship (because all equally are capable of giving form to the urban contexts in which they are located). This new geography gives new purpose to the urban areas produced by the sprawl: with the profound conviction that we must not touch, now or in the future, even one square centimetre of vacant land, the new vacant land is the one occupied by the sprawled urbanisation, and the huge opportunity lies precisely in working to re-mesh the existing relationships, strengthening, connecting, uniting and increasing them.

With this in mind, the research led to new exchanges and relationships: an attempt was made to understand the effort that other research institutions are making in contexts that are similarly lively from the point of view of relationships that can be activated; interest was shown in the different modes and approaches to decline these concepts and, above all, these practices; and the creation began of a register of practices and themes that seem to emerge. Perhaps this is the most open part of this work and undoubtedly a part for the future. The creation of a register of themes stems from an attempt to understand whether this new approach to transformation is already consolidated enough to identify recurrences and a method. In this paper, therefore, an attempt has been made to collect a list of focuses of attention more than practices, of themes more than methods, all of which recur in ongoing urban transformation dynamics, and which are in part different to the past. Density, mix of uses, infrastructural connection, the consideration of walkability as a central element in the compositions of the areas of transformation, the green design techniques, these are all
themes that, while not new, take on a new character in the way in which they are now considered by active processes of transformation. The extra effort that it was intended to make was that of reading practices, issues, focuses of attention and dynamics in light of the consolidation of an Italian tradition: a tradition of urban planning on which this writer believes it is time to write a different page.

The Italian tradition of urban planning, in fact, until a few years ago saw a debate and a practice that was a bit too defined by the emergency and interpreted a bit too much following patterns of thought and trends which I do not believe have any role nowadays. From the reconstruction after the Second World War and up to at least at the commencement of the first urban transformations, the debate, practice and research have taken the form of a sort of trench warfare, with the guns aimed at building speculation, at the bad guys who failed to respect the plans and the pacts, but rather tore them up and aimed at maximising their returns, bad guys who considered the territory as a huge field of wheat to be cultivated for its seasonal fruits. Amidst laws, judgments, attacks and counterattacks, the bad guys kept on building and the good guys kept on shouting. The cities
have grown, they have been distorted in many cases internally amidst demolition and reconstruction, and the territory has been consumed. The battle was fought to defend sacred themes, it imposed by law minimum levels of decency and good practice for green areas, schools and services, and it helped spread an awareness that Italian urban contexts are more distressed than urban areas that are more structured and planned, such as, for example, in Germany. This awareness has not given birth to popular movements powerful enough to change the situation: the population, urban and not, has continued, as elsewhere in the world, to use urban and non-urban spaces without questioning the correctness of their being, their environmental impact, their being the result of the sprawl that has devoured the fields and the countryside or, conversely, of more environmentally respectful processes of urbanisation. At the same time, however, and especially in Italy, the citizens themselves have maintained strong urban behaviour in many contexts, especially ones that are historical, consolidated and in part related to the specifically European small and medium-sized cities, and they have also demonstrated a preference once again for the strongly urban in the first episodes of transformation that re-urbanised areas and settings that hitherto had been neglected and not a part of urban life. Above all, the forms and environments in which the urban life of the population developed were anything but negligible and demonstrated some of the features on which this account works extensively. Living an urban life in historic centres, areas and environments where history has very clearly left its mark, accompanied by a certain very Italian slowness in enthusiastically taking up transformations and urban regenerations, and analysing the methods of
reconstruction, growth and transformation of Italian cities, the continuity with history appears as one of their most powerful features, capable of maintaining life in urban centres, and keeping them at the centre of the urban life and organisation of the city, and, at the same time, so characterised in our thinking about urban planning as to also give it shape in important phenomena of transformation of external areas, with the construction of the outer boroughs. I have always placed great emphasis on the construction of the autonomous neighbourhoods, as they are called, both in my research and in my teaching, especially for foreign students. Although studied and publicised, the Rationalist neighbourhoods were a unique episode, never again repeated, of a combination of national policies, transformation programmes of cities and the ability of a number of local contexts to implement these plans. Certainly, and quoting the research and study on urban planning that has distinguished us for 50 years, not everything went the way it was supposed to: some cities were not as able as others to build in a way that is worthy of being remembered, others and even the more virtuous selected land that was too far away and not urbanised enough for this practice to also become economically virtuous; certainly almost all forgot the connection with public transport on main lines and the connection with the urban and regional green networks. But the neighbourhoods remain a planning episode in which the design of urban space was placed at the centre, giving life to a composition that not as feeble and objectively ugly like the many produced by the numerous implementation plans with which the city grew in those years, but objectively full of connotations that are ours alone. For this reason I think that they should be regarded as being the foundation of our way of thinking about urban composition and for this reason in exposing the results, the first results of this open research, the reading of recurring practices and instances in creating urban places today passes through the lens of the Italian experience of neighbourhoods. The vital road, the combination of private and public functions around a central space, the very way in which the central space is broken up to take on a new form of square, street and avenue, playing on dimensions, relationships and scales, is an extraordinary way of conceiving an object, namely the neighbourhood, whose size, halfway between small planning project and new city, and whose shape, dense but not compact, encourage us to think of it anew as an inspiration for subsequent transformations and of being capable of absorbing certain aspects of Italian life into urban planning.

And spending so much time abroad carrying out this research, teaching and participating in a number of design and transformation processes, I realise that in terms of the recovery of the Italian tradition and the good compositional characteristics of the Italian urban tradition everything is still to be done. I recently spent a few months at the School of Architecture of the University of Miami.
I have been carrying out a number of lectures on the neighborhoods, on Rationalism and the way in which the Modern Movement filtered down to local situations in Italy. I discovered the surprise and amazement people felt on seeing some of our best compositions, and I realised that this way of composing space is not widely known. For this reason I believe that keeping open the considerations of this text is crucial, even at the risk of exposing myself to the criticism of those who are not used to thinking openly, but who seek truth and judgments. I therefore use the lens of the Italian way of offering continuity with history and to compose space in episodes of transformation, and again to maintain the urban space in the existing parts of the city as an instrument to describe and suggest practices and ideas for handling the planning of the transformations.

Beyond this, I believe that Italian urban-planning culture should also make use of another important aspect related to the ability to maintain an open dialogue between those who deal with structure and those who deal with strategy; and, at the same time, between those who have interpreted the form through research into the structure of urban contexts and those who re-read the need to provide rules and regulations in the form of potential offered by the definition of the strategies. In a recent article, Patrizia Gabellini talks about two connoting ways

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8. QT8 residential neighborhood, Milano. This famous composition is centered on the large public space where all the public facilities and the shops would have been located. The centrality helps the creation of a specific place, helped by the presence of the church and remembering the origin of the population that was supposed to come to live into the neighborhood. The compromise between contemporary shapes and rural way of interpreting and using space gave the chance to organize and build these episodes, with a strong continuity with history and a decide attitude towards more modern compositions.
of carrying out urban planning in Italy, one historical-morphological and the other institutional-administrative. And it is important to recover this combination in thinking of it in the form of a confluence between structure and strategy, between form and management, and I think this is one of the connotations of urban planning in Italy that needs to be explored in greater depth, and through which I reread some of the instances that emerge and which I suggest as good practice when dealing with episodes of transformation and urban regeneration.

Finally, and it is only proper to mention this in the introduction, this account, before others already in composition, is open and it is dedicated to students. In recent years I have done a lot of teaching both in Italy and abroad, especially in the United States, and I have taught a lot of foreign students. Because I have always led urban-planning workshops, and am always called on to teach students how to conceive an urban-planning project, the confrontation with the themes this account puts forward and, at the same time, the construction of a system capable of describing a practice, have been central to my work in recent years. But even more central was the encounter with cultures and backgrounds not automatically related to the same imagery from which our urban planning stems. Speaking of the vital street, of the urbanisation of metropolitan areas and of what makes the urban, conceiving density as an element capable of ensuring urban exchanges of a certain level will not necessarily produce the same mental result in American, European, Australian and Oriental students. For this reason I felt the need to structure this account with a great many themes, leaving some open for subsequent publications and especially trying to explain the complexity of dealing with the urban planning of transformation today. This is the same
complexity that my courses have dealt with in recent years, in explaining a look across multiple scales (local, urban and, above all, regional), and in explaining the construction of a project method capable of drawing relationships and connections on a regional scale, and on a local scale the stratification of the interests and will of the players and users, and combining with the scale of the project, density, forms, uses and spaces to make it an urban environment capable of relating to all the scales from which it drew its raison d’être. Given the difficulty of this path I have to consider this – and I ask everyone who reads these pages to do likewise – as the construction of an open manifesto. I feel the need to think of a manifesto, because I believe that Italian urban-planning culture has a great deal to say precisely in rediscovering a more interesting “crossroads” in the creativity of the composition of spaces, in respect of the geography of the values and wishes of those who populate them, and in the construction of geographies on various scales so that the metropolis increasingly becomes our field of action. But I feel that the composition of this manifesto should remain open, strong from its recomposing of the urban-planning dialogue finally freed from the trenches, and permeated instead by the breath of the beauty and the interest in the issues I deal with in this publication; and capable of attracting attention abroad from those who do not know us and do not know that in addition to the Galleria in Milan, we were also capable of building La Martella13, and today we might be able to rethink our metropolitan space in an urban form, taking advantage of the relationships and smaller dimensions we have, and the ability to always think of every space as home to a dense urban life full of relationships. The look that I hope to have transmitted is my own, happy and convinced that evolution is always positive and able to make and remake in order to correct and change.

11. La Martella Village, Matera, Italy. The composition combines the compactness of a traditional rural village, along the streets, and the openness of a garden city composition. At the center, a rational urban place and landmark.

12. UK New Urbanism. Traditional architecture. Does this architecture represent contemporary urban needs?

The results of the research team from the abovementioned PRIN have created the conditions for an application to continue the research, with the nomination in 2016 to undertake a research project entitled “*Representing* Urban Italy: contributing to a new urban agenda/theory”. The research project aims to: construct an up-to-date and methodologically innovative representation of the Italian contemporary urban reality in its entirety; to help provide representation to the new forms and practices of urban planning in Italy, reducing the persistent gap between these and the institutions that should represent them; to contribute to the international scientific and policy debate, which questions the nature and the future role of “cities”: on the one hand, recognising their centrality in terms of social and economic challenges, while, on the other, affirming the need for an update of urban theory capable of powering a new era of urban policies.

A first complete report on the research is available at www.urbnetlab.com

Energy Corridor is both a place and a private entity, the property of the owners of the areas it covers, with the aim of creating a single coordination in a context such as Houston where planning and coordination are not at all common. The Energy Corridor is a unique suburban environment surrounded by two of the largest unspoiled natural areas of any metropolitan region in the US that lead to beautiful energy campuses, and secure, attractive neighbourhoods. The strength of the Corridor lies in the creation of a single instrument, in the form of a masterplan to coordinate all the private construction activity taking place.

British Pacific Properties is a company that for years has managed the development of the northern part of Vancouver with the construction of a number of clusters of residential housing for the luxury market.

Here the reference is to the research report and collaboration with York University in Toronto, Canada, and in particular with Roger Keil and his research into the form, the relationships and the governance of suburbanism. And at the same time to the relationship of exchange and study begun with Nicholas A. Phelps and his studies on the dynamics of the re-urbanisation of the metropolis. It was interesting to find points of view that were similar, developed in different contexts and at different times, for example, on the evolution of a particular place such as Tysons Corner, which I had studied for years (and which I published in Masterplanning the Adaptive City in 2011) and now discovered by Nicholas to advance of processes of densification and re-signification. At the same time, this open account does not yet take account of new research exchanges with UCLA and the Department of Urban Planning at the Luskin School of Public Affairs, with which, from April 2016, a series of research and exchange projects will start precisely on the way in which cities such as Los Angeles have long since set out on the road of the re-urbanisation of immense metropolises that already exist.

In particular, describing in this book at least two different approaches, and comparing the urban regeneration force that projects such as CrossRail in London are able to trigger, by working on the confirmation of the existing metropolitan dimension and the reinforcement of its structure, and, at the same time, reading phenomena of the reduction of form, at least of the form to be administered, as in the case of Detroit, perhaps able to focus some isolated phenomena of existing densification and urbanisation and physically forgetting the rest of the city. Two approaches that manage the same phenomenon differently, the first working on its size and giving it concrete strength, and the second cutting out and reducing an excessive size, and focusing only on its active points.

Having to decide by law the minimum
standards for green areas and services in general was always seen by the dominant Italian urban-planning culture as a peculiarity of Italy, a country with such a high level of speculative building its construction system was incapable of imposing on its own limits and minimums for green areas, schools, the economically insignificant part of projects. In reality the situation is different, and though the decrees on standards of 1968 which were then absorbed by successive regional laws when urban planning was handed over to the regions, are specifically Italian, other European countries have consolidated the requisites of good planning in law and in the manuals.

9 - The reading of Italian urbanism for generations lies within me. As the last student of Campos Venuti and his final graduate, and, even more, having grown up in the nest that a number of fathers, among them Federico Oliva, built in the meantime, seeing growth by generations is part of my way of looking. I recognise the limits, however: it is not true that the city stopped growing when it launched some early phenomena of transformation and it is not true that while the city grew it did not transform. I am inclined to think now that these generalisations serve a more educational and illustrative purpose than they are true reflection and research. However, above all in La Terza Generazione dell’Urbanistica of 1983, it is possible to obtain a clear picture of this approach a little bit of its time and a little bit didactic, but doubtless useful in bringing order to our thoughts.

10 - I got to know well in particular Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, godmother together with Andres Duany of New Urbanism. We met at school and at a number of board meetings for various transformation projects in Coral Gables, one of the more conservative suburbs of Miami in terms of its form and urban composition. I understood the need to know a less falsely historically stylistic way of composing urban spaces, made less with image (a fake bell tower does not a city make) and more with relationships, combinations of features and forms inspired not by a pedestrian-village landscape but by a modern city, capable of bringing together all the dimensions of transport, privileging the collective but above all through networks and large-scale urban relationships. This dialogue is ongoing.


12 - I described this approach and hypothesis in Masterplanning the adaptive city, and I used the masterplan as an example of an instrument capable of demonstrating the marriage between the two dimensions, one dedicated to studying the form of settlements and episodes of re-planning as a central element, and the other to using the form to try out and anticipate the rules and means in practice. In Facchinetti, M. “Masterplanning the adaptive city. The use of master plans to create urban environments”. Pitagora Editrice, Bologna 2011

13 - La Martella is the village/neighbourhood in Matera built starting in the 1950s with the involvement of Adriano Olivetti. http://www.materalife.it/notizie/la-martella-il-grande-progetto-di-olivetti/
SECTION ONE
1. Introduction

The city is changing. Mostly, because the city has always changed and because it’s constantly undergoing change due to the correlation between space and society, between its physical form and the relationship with those who populate it. Nonetheless, a noticeable structural shift has been taking place over time, the impact of which has affected the parameters that work and research have relied upon until recently.

The topics that interest us have changed: to accept the paradigm that we have reached the end of soil consumption in all areas of the world, would be unwise. We know that the dizzying growth in many urban environments, from China to South America, or the less vigorous but constant growth of other environment such as in some American cities, perpetuates soil consumption. Yet we know that a sizeable portion of the world has embraced the challenge to abandon facile growth in the creation of new housing, to embrace the bigger and also financial challenge, to regenerate and transform. Thus with this innovation and simultaneously with the impact that financial changes exert

over the city, the themes of transformation and regeneration undoubtedly dominate all areas of the city, not only the town planning agenda, but all other aspects of the city as well. Thanks to the transformations in places like Milan or Berlin, we have seen the emergence of some of the most significant architecture of the past few years. Meanwhile, elsewhere the regeneration of the inner city has enabled the inclusion of new urban areas into pre-existing frameworks. However, with these changes, the themes themselves have taken on somewhat different connotations. While until recently urban regeneration was an established practice that entailed consideration and study of the city, today transformation tends to incorporate the important aspect of scale. Given the inner-city no longer attracts attention with the presence of significant projects, it’s no longer just the metropolitan area that is undergoing transformation. Rather, it’s the outskirts that are embracing regeneration; rediscovering the urban environment and the ability of deepening and containing various functionalities and urban connections. There appears to be a new, closer connection between scale and parts: although there was a time when the inner-city and the build-up areas surrounding it communicated according to the concepts of inner and outer, of centralised and widespread, of ‘city’ and ‘suburb’; this relationship based on differences, now appears to have levelled off. Undoubtedly, the city exhibits its concrete compactness and its being a consolidated organism. Simultaneously, the suburbs prove they are not merely a ‘spatial fix’. As a pivotal contributor to the financial success and growth of the United States since the 1950s, they have become dynamic places thanks to the current processes of post-suburbanisation.

Thus the process of transformation invades the suburbs and the hinterland and changes, at least partially and not all over the world, the process of growth, expansion and amplification. In America, this trend is evident: despite a still significant incidences of urban expansion (and significant population growth in places such as Las Vegas or Phoenix), it appears that the suburbs are becoming urbanised. ‘America is changing... it will mature. This is a contrast to the half century after World War II when America became a suburban nation... As it matures, America will likely become an urban society’. The suburban process of urbanisation, which in the European and Italian context should be read more accurately as the re-urbanisation of the urban sprawl and of the areas belonging to the so called metropolis, are now evident. What renews the conversation following the regeneration and transformation process and beyond the amalgamation of certain suburbs and their increased high-density in some areas – specifically in relation to the presence of infrastructure – is the ever-increasing presence of spaces the structure, shape and functionalities
of which over time favour the expression of urban behaviour, serving various purposes, within the development of the physical environment surrounding these very functionalities. Urbanity is being expressed through behaviour, without the need to access the inner-city – that consolidated city – from which said behaviour escaped years earlier. What also has changed is the conversation around the physical forms of transformation, which are currently taking place and which underpin the findings expressed in this book. This story unfolds over different sections that follow the physical transformations proposed by movements such as New Urbanism. Regarding the latter, some New Urbanists suggest that the movement is ending sub-urbanisation through the creation of urban scenarios that it had proposed, and which trigger strong role reversals and end the urban sprawl. The author, and others, have frequently noted that this is not the case4. The scenarios linked to the practices and principles of New Urbanism are, in fact, circumstances that while often praiseworthy, suggest the creation of a different product within sub-urbanisation, and that is what they remain, when not resulting from more extensive and cohesive local projects. Denver, Portland,
and of course Los Angeles and San Francisco, are cities where new spaces have developed according to the principles of New Urbanism. These are expressed through the creation of strategic regional scenarios supported by new infrastructure and networks capable of servicing the metro area – and at least to some degree – reducing road traffic, increasing the density of housing and functionality around certain nodes. The expansion of the orange metro line into Virginia, after Rosslyn, highlights the trend of concentrating new developments around an urban corridor. Following this principle creates a high concentration of places offering a great functional mix and high-density housing, which feel entirely metropolitan.

But the physical design of housing with the ability of creating urban spaces, is not a matter of style nor one that can be understood through one scenario alone. What consolidates and transforms the metropolitan landscape is the creation of physical connections within a network, identifying the nodes and landmarks that express amalgamation and urban densification inside that network. Ironically, within the context in which regional policy pursues programmes of such scope, articulation and identity don’t reflect the language

15. Rosslyn, VA. The orange line high density corridor in the Washington Metro Area
of New Urbanism. Instead they are inspired by more contemporary language and structures. While a modern identity is preferred for high-concentration locations with non-residential functionalities, a more traditional identity is preferred throughout locations with the highest concentration of residential functionality.

Throughout the changing themes, one notices that the physical aspect of re-urbanisation – or the trends of urban concentration in environments that until recently were not part of the metropolitan landscape – involves noteworthy trends, several aspects of which, this research has focussed on. The desire to build projects for urban spaces, their focus on specific functionalities and their assembling of built spaces in which urbanity is not a strong suit, has led to rethinking the configuration of such projects. The spatial aggregation, which they relate to, inevitably leads to the abstraction of those elements that create an urban environment and to present it anew, on a smaller scale defined by the exact boundaries of a specific project. Thus, one must consider: the way in which built and un-built spaces inform one another; how the relationship between individual spaces is the rib of the architecture; the alternating codification of buildings making these urban transformations; connecting with the infrastructure via public and private transport, pedestrian networks, bicycle trails; all of which must connect to other networks articulating the space within the configuration itself. It’s the triumph of urban design and the reward of the strongly ‘designed’ practice of space planning. Thus, a number of current themes are back on the city planning agenda. These themes must be understood as integral elements and products of planning; they can activate connections and meaning where none previously existed and simultaneously, in belonging to a system, they confirm their urbanity according to precise parameters – like points in a network – that revitalise the urbanity of a region. The environmental theme takes its cues from such new ideas as well as from the renewed agenda upon which these trends seem to rest. Even if not clearly stated, re-urbanisation trends arise from different ways of perceiving the environment. Because it’s both finite and lacking in sustainability, physical space can no longer be utilised in the same way. Whether it’s due to values, necessity, urban sensitivity or the sheer unsustainability of expanding the road networks, and also due to increased travel time, the creation of new built-up areas cannot – unlike before – encroach on the open space. The process of urban regeneration compels us to reconsider the existing space and consequently, the re-urbanisation trend. Therefore, through this process alone, the environmental theme is altered. Yet again, the focus of this research is something altogether different. By accepting as valid only those trends that re-urbanise the hinterland through its relationship with the networks and regional
16. Atlanta, GA, Beltline transformation into a regional green belt
Houston, TX, Buffalo Bayou as a 20 year comprehensive plan for the development of a regional park.
connections – which actually give a region or a different infrastructure cohesion – the topic of greenery and the environment has re-emerged in several different arenas and simultaneously offered the opportunity to reconnect to the system and the network, all of which recall the original, basic theories of regional planning.

Re-urbanisation of the hinterland also brings the following conversation to the table: a different focus in creating a web of green interconnected spaces, the value of which manifests in the continuous flow of environmental systems and the opportunity for uninterrupted use by pedestrians, runners and cyclists. Houston’s Energy Corridor master plan is something the city boasts about and, which ironically, constitutes an attractive element in the city’s narrative alongside its offer for housing stock and the rest of services, almost as if to down-play the restructured corridor’s excessive urbanity to a decisively suburban population.

By the same token, based on how trends have developed, the way in which conversation around infrastructure positions itself, has changed. With their renewed designs, the areas adjacent to the train stations have been amongst the first generation of areas to undergo transformation; becoming part of a consolidated area within the urban system. Since the early 1980s, urban transformation has greatly impacted the areas surrounding the central train stations as part of a processes to rethink rail service and public transport in general. At the time, Italy elected to follow other European countries’ examples, which had been more far-sighted and upgraded their systems at least a decade earlier. Between relocating underground to occupy less surface space, and in some cases seeking financial investments to upgrade the infrastructure, the subject of infrastructure has become the dominion of the railway through the freeing up of space, improving services and accessibility, and by densely developing the very areas that had become available. This topic also requires a rethinking of the regional services and how accessibility is changed. Sometimes these projects were implemented right away, transforming many cities in the process. Meanwhile, other cities are only just completing their upgrades, depending on the greater or lesser technical challenges. London’s King’s Cross is such an example; being the latest transformation project to be completed. The first wave of transformation that ensued form rethinking the infrastructure has paved the way for two new themes to enter the conversation and be added to the agenda. The urban regeneration of areas surrounding the train stations has become the template for redevelopment in the city and the suburbs. Every time a train station or its rail services undergo an upgrade or a process of transformation, it can be said that there is also a plan
contemplating the strategic importance of investing in the development of high-density hot-spots and revitalising the area. Thus, while in the early 1980s France was amongst the first to re-invests in its train stations and their adjacent areas, the result of which was the development of the new TGV line, the redevelopment project for the Dutch stations of Rotterdam, Utrecht, Arnhem and Breda has only just been completed as a result of the amalgamation process with Randstad, which at local level, brought about the transformation of the stations and their surrounding areas. At the same time, with new train
lines and new systems organising urban mobility, the development of infrastructure is increasingly becoming a matter of regional planning and not just in some metropolitan regions.

The planning of urban corridors has been circling the conversation on infrastructure for a while; indeed, it constitutes an interesting way to continually re-assess the synergy between the planning of infrastructure, land use, and its function within the surrounding built-up space. For some time now, urban corridor planning has been recognised a catalyst for sub-urban development alongside the public transport lines. The template has been studied specifically in relation to the structure of American cities and the growth and transformation of metro areas. In renewing the conversation about transformation, the urban corridor takes on new significance, specifically, in relation to the way in which it is intended here: the relationship between the processes of re-urbanisation of metro areas and the hinterland. In a large number of cases, metro areas rely on the construction of a transport line to consolidate at least a portion of the dispersion around a bus stop or train station. At the same time, creating park’n’ride interchanges around train stations and stops, proves that road transport that is supported by a link system, can bring as many users as possible onto the (new) transport line. Many such scenarios, as in Denver, Portland, Seattle and elsewhere, are currently showing less propensity towards urban densification around transportation, but rather consider the directly accessible surrounding areas when increasing the supply of multi-storied apartment housing. Often, such scenarios add services and shops in the guise of small urban centres. As such, the urban corridor remains a key factor in the amalgamation of territorial systems in urban design and it does this on a completely regional scale, as is the case with London’s Crossrail, which is based around the development of a strong infrastructure.

The changes we are witnessing might induce one to question whether there might also be an underlying change in behaviour at play. Undoubtedly so, and such an assumption lies at the core of much of the research, which presumes that our expectations of the city have changed. Certainly the city is no longer seen as a place from which one needs to escape, but as an environment rich in attractions. Services, culture, shopping, leisure, work and home attract far more people to the city than in the past; most of all, they develop new behaviours that recognise in the city, its proximity, the ease and cost-effectiveness of travel, a set of values that nowadays are almost taken for granted. It’s not by chance that much of fashion, and the way one is ‘fashionable’ are completely embedded in the city: young hipsters’ social behaviour and
Consumption habits reference the city. New families, childless couples, singles and gay couples live in the city and consider it the most welcoming place to express their lifestyles and values and participate in the creation of the social system to which they belong. The fundamental difference is that while in the (recent) past this attitude was expressed in existing cities, (historical) centres and the most central urban areas, nowadays this is no longer the case. Indeed, it’s the actual urban population that changes the fate of the sub-urban areas and affects their transformation. It should be noted that the many suburbs surrounding the inner-city and the historic landmarks have been renovated and become part of the design network and the fashion system, or simply part of a newly created urban connection in places that before had none. 

One could say – and it’s evident from the research that we’ll look at here – that with regard to external environments and in comparison with the historical centres, the city’s transformation is generating a dual trend: on one hand the areas benefiting are those that find ways of expressing their potential and values, that have access to systems, design, functionality and meaning within their urban environment. On the other hand, many cities’ central areas are

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19. Lambrate, on eastern periphery of Milan, transformed into a cool and design district, taking advantage of being included into Salone del Mobile network and then developing a specific vocation as a new, emerging, urban hot spot.
extinguished. In Milan, while the property value of housing, offices and commercial spaces has remained steady, much of the historical centre appears to have lost its attraction, not only for the benefit of other areas and districts, but also caused by a specific and growing mono-functionality. The areas around Via Larga, Piazza Missori and the initial section of Corso di Porta Romana, all of which are über-central and of significant architectural value, suffer from shops closing and a general lack of vitality 24/7. The radius is but a few hundred metres, but the urban reality contained within has changed; it’s smaller and less vigorous. The attraction of changing trends is hunting for urbanity elsewhere, in a less central but more high-density locations such as Isola and Lambrate, which are external and distant from the city-heart but steeped in connections. Many speak of inner-city hinterland, I don’t support this view: this is not the vacating of urban spaces, but a devitalisation trend that affect some functions while still part of the urban agenda. Undoubtedly, this is a new situation that relates less to the way the low-income population (including the migrant communities), settles in the central areas of lesser value, and has more to do with recognising the values and connections in specific urban areas.

Can we then say that urbanity has changed as well? More specifically, can we say that what is sough within the urban dimension has changed? Maybe, and this research sheds light on specific aspects of this. What elements of urbanity

20. Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, New York as a new, trendy open air living room
does the study refer to when considering the trends that are transforming decrepit hinterlands, scattered amongst high-density, re-centred and connected places full of features? Firstly, one might have to prove the existence of a centrality. As mentioned earlier, the reason Brooklyn’s Williamsburg has rapidly consolidated its image as an alternative urban area and stealing the show from Brooklyn’s historical centre – which over the years has proven its ability to hold on to its status and attractiveness (including real estate prices and the rate of transformation) – is because the macro transformation taking place along the waterfront and specifically the micro ones, which spread along the Bedford Avenue axis, have created a new urban centrality. The presence of two subway stations and an established commercial fabric that already offered a mix of uses, as well as the capability of (micro) transforming itself, have made Bedford Avenue the perfect venue for recreating a human-scale atmosphere. Similarly to a ‘village’, the upgrade of many retailers and the revamping of many buildings, have transformed it into a new, über-urban external centrality.

Thus, the quest for a new urbanity is undoubtedly expressed in the need to build spaces and aggregate spaces with the opportunity of creating a succession of ground-level shops and establishing a direct connection between road, sidewalk and entrance to the buildings, including a short distance between the sides of the road. Indeed, the road functions as the organising element and the point of reference in this quest for urbanity. The experiments of the 1960s and 1970s notwithstanding, in the exploratory research of urbanity the levels disappear, the picture becomes simpler and, together with the square, the road with its sidewalks, parking lots, furnishings and traffic lanes becomes once again essential. In more mature, complex and articulated environments, when the functionality, the dimension and accessibility increase, then the configuration seems to become more complex too, and urbanity is expressed on multiple levels; entering the buildings and blurring the relationship between the inside and the outside, as we’ll see. Undoubtedly, it’s the human element that makes a built-up area “urban”. Similarly, it’s the functionality and the mix of features that lead us to acknowledge a place as being urban. Fundamental, commercial functionalities that foster human aggregation and exchanges between individuals, constitute the foundation of the functional mix that is being presented. With this regard, there is a significant two-fold process: on one hand the existing, typical suburban location that has undergone a processes of regeneration, transforming it back to a central, urban hub with the added functionalities of offices and administrative centres that had previously been squeezed out. Conversely, the re-urbanisation process of other places
such as the edge cities, which are more typical of the urban sprawl, have seen the introduction of commercial and residential features amongst the office monoliths, through the planting of trees along the roads and the widening of sidewalks in order to recreate a new urban atmosphere based on proximity and high-density.

Can we therefore say that the scale of measurement has changed? Undoubtedly yes, and this is one of the assumptions upon which this book is based. And in speaking of scales, it’s noted that in this writing they are considered with great care. It’s true that studies and observations tell us that the unequivocal high-density, built-up inner-city, which acts as a single point of reference and defines urbanity and the outer city, no longer exists. Internal and external now belong to a way of understanding and interpreting the city that’s no longer relevant, not even in the banality our daily behaviour, and for which no convincing new definition has been found yet. It’s a sign that the fluidity that has been referred to, and which would like the historic city to merge with the wider regional dimension, is not convincing yet even with its most relevant concepts. Of course the scales have been overturned; the form, the connections the triggers and the behaviours that are facilitated, the functionalities, locations and destinations that the residents and users are prepared to reach daily all intermingle, giving life to a new system. From here crucial questions arise that traditional models cannot answer convincingly. Like the process that has already liberated travel from previous models and which constantly blurs the boundaries of day – night. Undoubtedly, the regional areas in many cases take on an importance that once belonged to the city alone: that’s because it’s untrue that the city has grown. Gaps, unbuilt areas, drops in high-density and an environment lacking in distinguishing features, or is closely-concentrated, alternate with more focussed areas, which are better equipped in fostering intense connections – whether they be of a historical nature or newly established. It’s the hinterland that must be investigated; this book provides examples of how the region has been able to change according to different models, or through public transport links (as in the case of Greater London), or via a process of urban densification so intense to reach the scale of the building (as was the case in Tokyo) or even, tied to considerations about city management and able to embrace its challenges and offer significant reductions (as was the case in Detroit).

The research referred to here has made it possible to start measuring the effects that the new dimension of urbanity is having on large metro areas by looking at some of the traditional elements that have characterised Italian and European cities: access to welfare, measures for conflict resolution, places
of innovation and creativity, centres of strategic operations, a delimited and delimitative political arena, the concept of self-government. Where these characteristics, which typify the city of nineteen and twentieth century Europe are increasingly under tension, it seems appropriate to ask if, on one hand, these conditions are subject to relevant transformations and, on the other hand, if and how it is possible to continue to invest in the city as it has been traditionally understood. In Europe, the normative projects progressively adopted as the idea for the city within the project of European integration (Häussermann and Haila, 2005) push in this direction. They inform the equally heterogeneous and weak branch of urban policy within regional European policy. Because since the 1960s the city has been viewed as the cause and effect of contemporary social issues, disparity and inequality in economic development, it’s been identified as either a target for policy or a device for social and economic cohesion. The place-based approach, at the centre of the current programming season, and the prospect of a European urban agenda – as confirmed by the recent Riga Declaration11 (10 June 2015) with a renewed interest in medium-sized cities, while simultaneously focussing on the metropolitan dimension – highlight Europe’s enduring expectation of urbanity and its awareness of the complexities and plurality of the challenges. The same conversation,
which is in progress at an international level on the occasion of Habitat 3\textsuperscript{12}, highlights how such considerations are not confined to the European context: in a world that is becoming increasingly urbanised, asking what it means to place the city at the centre is a question the answer of which is far from obvious, and for which one must search amongst the answers offered in this book.

Within this landscape of changing themes, scales and behaviour, how we understand the city’s development has also changed profoundly. If on one hand, we identify and interpret transformative trends capable of imbuing the places in which they occur with new meaning, increasing their attractiveness and transforming them into strongly connected urban environments (a theme which this book will investigate at length); on the other hand, beyond the master plan as a tool to control and coordinate every single transformation, the plan’s criteria as a ‘container’ and the coordinator of detailed transformation, remains unchanged. By its very nature the plan considers the bigger-picture, whether its goal is designing a planned structure or directing a strategic direction. The plan, nonetheless, is still the place to reconstruct, forecast and organise a structure, the parts of which may develop according to completely variable timing and rate of growth. This is an aspect that this book may be unable to answer completely; nonetheless, the plan must accommodate different speeds as it has always done, some of them however, may impose a different geography upon the actual city structure. This can be gleaned from the stories within this book, or in attempting to report on a process based on tips and techniques. While the nature of the plan is to consider the city in its entirety, despite the connections between specific parts, some of which – according to their individual speeds – establish different geographies amongst them. Such places are noteworthy and connected in ways that differ from the rest of the city. They can activate connections at different levels, moving the goalposts between urban and sub-urban, between inside and outside, between better and worse. Can there be a new blueprint for the city? There could be, but it’s just one phase in the city’s evolution, a phase during which some of its parts are extricating themselves and connecting, embracing new roles and functions, establishing completely new connections. A phase during which the hinterland does not partake in this surge, may not necessarily result in places lacking in urbanity or intense connections, or all that makes the city man’s best creation.

It is as if a greater link, of a superior class, were being created; detached and diverging throughout the entire city, capable of severing itself in order to define something else, a more intense connection, some greater speed.
The author coordinated a section that was partially covered in the Prin’ research: a study on the city’s evolution and form and that of the hinterland, and which are affected by successions of plans, projects and policies shaped by planning regulations and circumstances. It may be time to rethink how the plan is constructed. Beside the guidelines and regulations that concern what is unchangeable or stable, both in terms of forecasting and implementation, it would be worthwhile to understand how planning might be applied to affect the transformation of the city or hinterland – which are already changing – in different ways, and how this could impact a region with different spaces, vaster and more suitable – even with different intensities – to invest in wider neighbourhoods and ‘awaken’ areas that were not expected to change. Precisely because the scale and the behaviour that increasingly filter through the scale have changed, it’s necessary for the scope of the plan to rapidly change and reach beyond its usual boundaries and skills, thus overcoming administrative differences and focussing on the key role that the agents of change can bring. In any case city, municipality and hinterland are often forced to collaborate on matters concerning the governance of urban trends. The governance of the city’s operations, its services and supplies has convinced even the most recalcitrant that sharing resources improves effectiveness and reduces costs. In waste management and in supplying water and power, cities communicate and join forces to cut expenditure and govern effectively. In the planning and developing structures however, that’s not always the case; besides, the transformation capable of investing certain areas of the hinterland with new vitality, or turning low density into high-intensity urbanity, still eludes us, as these develop independently and their outcomes are not necessarily connected to the neighbourhood.

For this reason, one of the goals of this book is to articulate a first manifesto that is closely connected to the Italian process of working with themes, planning and city-making. The strong attention that this story pays to transformation is an effort to understand and recount the reality of urban transformation, and to also address the rigidity of those urban planning processes that appear not to have grasped what is happening. On one hand the hinterland appropriates characteristics that the city has always had such as being structured around significant points and places filled with functionalities, and to be able to activate significant connections between people and spaces supported by the services supplied through infrastructure. On the other hand, plans and projects that work according to sectors, traditional themes and processes, are often unable to capture profound transformation. How can this dichotomy be changed in favour of new tools and a new urbanity that is connected to the evolving hinterland? Above all, how can we invest such
planning tools with this important, unique and hard-to-miss challenge of renewing the hinterland that was built over the past hundred years? To tackle such questions, this book is at times an observation and at others a manifesto. It sets itself half-way between a meditation and an analysis of current events, and also, a practical guide to planning such trends, which have been captured in their most definitive aspect: their manifestation through the implementation of specific forms and the recurrence of specific principles. In reporting on the results of studies and research, this book offers an opportunity to reflect on some operational aspects. The underlying goal is to identify the connection between observation, analysis and current trends. This, through referencing the best literature that historically has dealt with the sub-urbanisation process and now, the re-urbanisation trends: restructuring and retrofitting those same suburbs; as well as the current urban planning practice, which on one hand is busy holding together design and a big-picture vision of timely transformation.

One of the driving factors behind not only this publication but also my approach to town planning, is that careful consideration must be given to enthusiastically grasp the ongoing trends, to find ways of articulating them and really understand their drives, finding new tools to manage the effects of trends and the movements taking place. On the other hand, there are processes of urban planning and city-making that are dated and which consider the city and its connections with the hinterland in ways that are no longer appropriate. Mostly, their process fails to recognise that transformation carries the potential of instilling urban values to the vast, unstructured spaces of the hinterland, which possess all the shortcomings of the suburbs.

At the same time, large-scale urban developments have failed to fully grasp this trend, having so far been unable to customise their expertise by combining, mixing and fusing spaces, boundaries and limitations. Thus, the second chapter deals with urban planning as it has been understood in Italy thus far; by analysing the underlying forces of knowledge and skill that have been developed by architects, but that aren’t geared towards placing research and construction of form as their focal point. The book considers a key point in relation to urbanity returning as the main topic of conversation thanks to recent metropolitan transformations, which result in a rethinking of urban projects as important tools that, on one hand, can drive the increasingly challenging implementation of transformation, while on the other hand, can manage the production of forms that are at last urban even in suburban settings. Through transformation it is possible to witness a succession of generations and different ways of interpreting transformation projects, and to understand how the most recent evolution is the most interesting in terms of connecting city
and hinterland, urging us to finally break down the boundaries of established
urbanity.
Starting with the value invested in city planning through the recent pro-
cess of city-making, analysing some categories of transformation and asking
whether there is opportunity to create a more cohesive look in reoccurring
cases such as in transforming the waterfrotns. This viewpoint is expanded
in the third chapter, which analyses how urban transformation has accom-
panied several generations and different eras. It manifests on the city-mak-
ing scene as it’s currently understood, specifically in terms of urban renewal,
as a means to resolve and radically transform some of the city’s parts that
are often split by frameworks of a generic nature, with significant impacts
the distribution of functionalities and values. As we know, these are not
necessarily positive. Transformation, as an agent of intervention upon the
city, has evolved with the significant trends of the early 1980s; when the
available space meant that many European and American cities rebuilt their
centres, often with a focus on urban regeneration and a view on positioning
themselves in the city rankings. We’ll consider the actual outcomes of these
trends and we’ll look at how an expanding urban vision subsequently con-
quers the hinterland; on one hand, propelled by a new development process
taking place in the suburbs and, on the other hand, following the logical
aggregation of dispersed spaces, vast areas of low density hinterland that all
too often lie disjointed from the city that has generated them. Finally, the
last generation of transformation that most interests us, and it’s upon this
generation that the fifth chapter seeks to define some of the principles of
planning. It’s not easy to recognise recurring shapes or principles, and it re-
mains to be seen whether it’s correct to suggest some of them as reoccurring
and follow the treatment of transformation planning. These are matters for
the fourth chapter, which focuses on those guiding principles that in their
capacity to revitalise city environments not only make transformation what
it is today, but also an event that defines transformation as the driving force
in fostering those connections and urban trends that this book describes.
Therein some principles are suggested for the purpose of striking a balance
between the banal assumptions of some movements, which have made of
manuals, principles and guidelines their main reason for being (specifically
New Urbanism), and the creative freedom offered by the original solutions
of each context. In listing the principles and methodologies of the trans-
formation process, and with this in mind, the observation of the Italian ap-
proach to concept development and construction within a space was key.
Our design culture is the beneficiary of centuries of exceptionally-produced,
noteworthy spaces that it can not only boast to the world about, but also
express in new opportunities. There are different ways of imbuing urba
ity into the suburbs and the hinterland: its expressions are not haphazard.
They are the tangible result of how transformation was conceived: similarly,
to how retrofitting the American suburbs creates a certain type of regional
urbanity (not necessarily metropolitan, but rather, inspired by the towns
of the past), the Italian urban culture made up of high-density, closeness,
compactness and mix of uses, reveals a great deal and this, the fifth chapter
investigates, although it’s also the overarching theme of the entire book.
Steeped in such considerations, the fifth and sixth chapters discuss two case
studies that demonstrate two differing attitudes towards the city’s transfor-
mational trends. The sixth chapter concerns the most recent transformation
that is taking place in metropolitan and greater London. The construction of
the underground rail link will no longer affect the redevelopment of just the
inner-city but that of the hinterland as well, providing the opportunity to re-
think the transformation and development of much vaster areas and environ-
ments, and promoting a new urbanity and a new approach in the area thanks
to reduced travel times for both journey and distance.
Servicing the major employment clusters in the hinterland, Crossrail is config-
ured like an extended operation that considers the hinterland’s sections and
connections. This is all the more interesting given the trend wave of London’s
expansion, which comprises areas of higher and lesser density along the pub-
lic transport network.
It looks as if Detroit has travelled along a different path, or that the city’s
different circumstances may have driven the adoption of a different model.
Having succumbed to entropy further to the crisis in its main economic sector
Detroit (this vast city under a single municipality), has becomes synonymous
with the crisis. The solution being adopted, or the solution towards which the
city seems inclined, offers a different view of the hinterland and the oppor-
tunity for urbanity, which the chapter investigates, proposing a fresh outlook
and focusing on one single aspect. It is not a given that the re-urbanisation
process will be successful, nor that all suburbs and the vast areas of hinter-
land can be re-urbanised. To the contrary. Simultaneously to the story that the
chapter considers, we witness episodes of urbanity that can ironically take
place within the more historical inner-city areas, and which for some reason
have lost their energy. Thus, the outlook changes again and we must pay close
attention to the dichotomy of inside and outside and the fact that while the
city searches for its new identity though a new urbanity trend that is spread-
ing across the hinterland, also the hinterland’s negative approach to urbanity
(thus becoming sub-urban) can often also contaminate the inner-city, creating
enclaves where urbanity and connections are lost.
Thus this story deals with many themes, leaving many questions unanswered. Having been conceived in narrative form, it allows contributions to the research though the narration of several parties, and simultaneously allows to search for the most plausible answers. It is in town planning and city-making that it’s possible to understand with certainty the meaning of urbanity that one wishes to promote across the hinterland. That constitutes the best possible outcome to aim for. Once again, the absolute conviction is that urbanity, thanks to its ability to intertwine value, shape and connection, is the value that one must strive to achieve.
Perhaps the time of the Très Grand Traveaux in Paris is over. That is, urban regeneration is no longer uniquely responsible for the regeneration of the existing city, and no one conceives the occurrences of urban transformation as the only force capable of repositioning a city within its geo-political and economic landscape. Paris and London’s great projects and the extensive regeneration works of the past, signalled the transition from an urban, industrial economy to a post-industrial one. Services, houses and shops replaced factories; thus the identity of the areas that become available changed. At the same time, through important and strategic projects, from London to Lille many cities sought to alter their position within in the system of the city to which they belonged. It’s understood that transforming an area isn’t sufficient to ignite a city’s economy; the path of regeneration, which has become a multi-scale system for activating change, can redirect a city’s fate. As such, the transformation that Paris carried out on its physical spaces didn’t alter the nature nor the status of the city; whereas the transformations in Bilbao modified the city’s relationship with the entire region and its regeneration was extended not only to iconic areas such as the Guggenheim, but also to the entire metropolitan region, including various services such as public transport.


Sanders, W.: ‘Station to Station. New train stations in Rotterdam, Arnhem and Breda turn the NS’s traditional values upside down’, in Mark, n. 60 February·March 2016. ‘Around 1990, three things happened that had a large impact on this – hitherto unshakeable – railway bastion: from management to spectacular growth. The ambitious plan Rail 21 was developed to double the rail network and the number of passengers, to turn the six stations involved – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Breda and Arnhem – into urban hubs, and to build two high-speed train lines that would connect the Netherlands to France (Thalys) and Germany (ICE). This infrastructural plan was in line with national spatial planning as described in the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning Extra and is to this day the basis for the major station projects, of which Rotterdam and Arnhem have now been officially completed. The conversion of the remaining four stations is still ongoing. The second change since the millennium was the renewed success of large cities as attractive living and working environments, which subsequently led to an increase in number of passengers, cyclists and shared mobility users. Around the majority of the larger stations this created chaotic and unappealing traffic areas filled with buses, bicycles, and other transit services’.


7 ‘Keeping with the hipster-looks-outward theme for a moment, let’s consider the cover image of the February, 2013 anniversary issue of the New Yorker, perhaps the most iconic metropolitan publication around. It shows a ‘Williamsburg hipster’, the defining indicator species of gentrifying urbanity, on the other, suburban side of the river (…) separated by water, with only a faint reference to the skyline of Manhattan. The image is the classical New Yorker dandy in reverse including a reference to the monocle. But the hipster’s red cap also points to the symbolic bonnet de coton image of the French revolution. Will the Right to the City have to be claimed once more from the bank of the river? And perhaps from even farther afield in the (sub) urbanised hinterland?’ in Keil, R.(ed.) Suburban Constellations. Governance, land, and infrastructure in the 21st century. Berlin, Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2013

8 It’s significant that often such manifestations don’t necessarily arise from planning operations nor the increased potential for
infrastructure. If one considers the growth in places like the Design District and Wynwood in Miami, an evident aspect of the planning process is the close attention that the developers and the actors of the urban transformation have paid to the trends and movements expressed by the city’s population. With this regard, please read: ‘Resident Participation in Urban Redevelopment Initiatives in Miami, FL USA’ by Marcos Feldman (Florida International University) and Alex Stepick (Florida International University), and presented at the RC21 Conference, Humboldt-University Berlin, 29 August 2013. The transformation of Wynwood from stronghold of Miami’s Puerto Rican community, to hip district is very significant and demonstrates the way in which, before the planning, the metropolitan population had seized typical urban trends even in an environment that was not necessarily metropolitan, but placed in the outskirts and distant from the inner-city development boom.


10 Current forms of urbanity are obsolete and not just in Italy: not only is it no longer possible to describe and think of Italian metropolitan areas according to traditional parameters (such as distinguishing between small and medium-sized cities, metropolitan areas, inner and outer urban areas); it’s also no longer possible to govern the city with such traditional references – not only scientifically but also politically and institutionally. Yet recent institutional reforms have re-launched a rather unenlightened interpretation of metropolitan governance; and even some of the more innovative policy documents of recent years, while identifying the centrality of a place-based approach, have presented a rather mundane view of the Italian urban trend (CIPU, 2013), all of which are likely to stifle the potential of the proposed methodology. This hypothesis is one of the most significant outcomes of the multi-disciplinary research conducted in the past years by the author and which is reported on in this book. The outcomes highlight the complexities that space, social, economic, environmental and institutional elements effect upon Italy’s large metropolitan areas, which lie between path-dependency and innovation, between upholding a polycentric city and favouring dynamic innovations that may jeopardise the metropolitan model. Drawing from the international conversation on the processes of regionalisation of the city (soya, 2011), the research highlights the pressing need for new interpretive hypothesis, as well as the delays and weaknesses that the Italian political institution exerts on the large metropolitan areas. At the same time the emergence of a new urban topic is being investigated; it’s linked to the emergence of new levels of social hardship, economic crisis and the environment. However, evidence shows that the Italian city is not only comprised of large urban areas. It’s also and above all a country characterised by opportunities for multifaceted urbanity that are in conflict with complex processes that are no longer simply local-global, urban-rural, middle-marginal. Nor are they fully understood within the processes and conversations on metropolitan regionalisation. The observations that present themselves here are theories that feed the questions which remain open to future developments.

11 The Declaration identifies the key elements and principles that should be taken into account in future work on development of the EU Urban Agenda during the upcoming Presidencies. The main elements of the EU Urban Agenda covered by the Declaration are: recognition of the diversity of urban areas, focus on opportunities offered by urban areas, improvement of the urban dimension of EU policies and cooperation between.

2. Reflections on urban planning

The activity of urban planning in Italy is experiencing certain underlying contradictions that are so deeply embedded and powerful as to invite the conclusion that they must be two aspects of the same activity, not opposites, both needing equal consideration. We live in a country that throughout its history has created some of the most beautiful spaces ever built. So beautiful as to become iconographic milestones and instantly recognizable to all, everywhere, to the point almost of becoming the very term used to denote a particular kind of space, in their blend of approaches to open spaces, architectural inventions and schemes for moulding the landscape. At the same time, coinciding with the years when buildings were being put up an ever faster rate and with greater and greater impact, at least since the end of the Second World War, virtually no space of the same stature has been created in Italy, bar some very minor examples, leaving it to the single architectural wonder to transform a given portion of space, rendering it monumental and iconographic. Perhaps only today, and alas not in the whole country, can it be said that we have developed a certain current practice that at any rate displays a number of shared and recognizable characteristics, at least as far as the intentions and designs of the planners go.

Remaining on the subject of contradictions: urban planning, understood as a system of practices and techniques that have become established over time, has had an odd impact on the creation of urban spaces in our country. Taking into consideration only what has been designed and built since the period of greatest upheaval for Italian cities, just before and just after the unification of the country, the impact of the civil engineering approach has been strong and extremely visible. In its manifestations can be discerned a powerful German influence, and at the same time it is also responsible for perhaps some of the best planned city districts, corresponding to the first land developments beyond the town walls – Beruto’s Milan, Rome’s quarters and many housing developments in other towns. However, the discipline has since developed its own scientific, technical and practical expertise in the lecture
22. Milan’s Galleria: a urban covered elegant pedestrian boulevard

23. Genova’s Strada Nuova: a urban richness showcase
24. Florence’s Uffizi Gallery: a urban walled open air big room

25. Italian layout for African new cities
halls of the faculties of architecture, training generations of urban planners-cum-architects, who, possibly intimidated by this civil engineering background, have turned rules, calculations, politics and management into the yardsticks of their work, rather than design, layout, style and sensibility. And this is all the more paradoxical if one considers that this strange concept, which emerged from the faculties of architecture but was informed by a particular “poetics” of land management and development, was entrusted not to bodies responsible for administering the territory, but to the plan, as the vessel called upon to outline the transformations without giving them any form – a vessel able to include rules and regulations, figures, indices, minimums and maximums, but without designing precise forms. It was even able to incorporate a political view of the city and of the regulatory mechanisms that were to govern it, while neglecting more strictly compositional aspects. Form, compositional matters, were subsumed in the measures implementing the plan itself, at a different level, which was where the so-called detailed plans were drawn up. Architectural design and composition were thus relegated to what was more properly the implementation stage. On the one hand the plan was emptied of its ability to translate the architects’ concepts into concrete form, and on the other, for clearly outlined and confined sections of the town, the
implementation plans alone drew to themselves all choices that needed to be made with regard to the composition of the space to be created. The result was an odd system, in which the composition of the space was no longer the main focus, and its place was filled by rules, regulations, figures and the political and ideological struggles between anti-speculation militants and the speculators themselves. With the result that speculation continued, as occurred at the same time in many other European countries and without it being given even a form in Italy. Being above all a political instrument designed to administer the expansion, the plan had a hard time trying to compete with the power of the speculative interests of the period without lowering itself to the same level and finding compromises able to govern the form and composition of this expansion, as occurred in other countries, for instance France, which were equally affected by the spiralling growth of the time.

In more distant lands programmes of urban renewal and development have enabled the debate on the concrete form these should take to take place at an earlier stage in the urban planning process, which in Italy has been solely concerned with regulating the extent of the expansion. Albeit with decidedly questionable results on the ground and widely discussed in the literature, English and American urban renewal programmes, beset by the spiralling growth of the Sixties and Seventies, nevertheless encouraged debate about the form city expansion should take, strongly influenced by underlying economic interests though it was. The forms the expansion took were considered unsatisfactory and requiring reform – by means of fresh proposals, of course. In these new designs, open spaces and buildings would define a complete, architecturally recognizable concept. It is important to underline this point: adopting a measure that is also highly political, like the urban renewal plan that in Britain and America were frequently seen as a godsend for upgrading entire city districts, complex urban compositions were introduced in many cases that consisted of architecture, urban design, composition and form; the results were not successful, as always happens when things are forced and new, different objects capable of breaking through are introduced in such a vulnerable organism as a city. But the practice of urban design and the reliance on a complex plan have not been dropped in certain contexts.

Italy reached this situation initially in a perfectly respectable, though marginal context such as the development of certain working-class districts as part of the “Ina Casa” programme and much later at the time of the “Programmi Complessi” (complex programmes) and all the special, extraordinary measures associated with urban transformations. These were able through a project to “put on ice” the need to follow the plan’s regulations and at last introduce confidently designed variants and modifications.
There is nothing to be gained by rehashing the debate between the “planists” and the “designers”, if the reader will allow these two expressions, because it could have been happily avoided if it had been clear from the start that beneath it lay the entrenched defence of urban planners, who perhaps were not aware that the extent of the changes was such as to require the complete rethinking of plans consisting only of figures and rules, set against the tension of the designers, who were at last ready to design something of consequence on an urban scale.

The “Programmi Complessi”, followed by the special projects (such as the PII, “Programmi Integrati di Intervento”, in Lombardy – integrated intervention
programmes – for example), were the first to make it possible to focus the urban planning debate on the concept of the city, or its individual parts, through the idea of the urban plan. In effect, this translated into an Italian context a tradition associated with the use of the master plan that was extremely strong in other countries. Thanks to this step, questions of form became relevant once again: the design that these plans were supposed to produce grew out of the need to respond to a contingent need for transformation, while operating on several levels, replying through the physical nature of their response to the upgrading and involving infrastructural topics to make up for backwardness and shortcomings. The new approach even considered schemes that would involve both the public and private sectors in building portions of infrastructure systems or services. As a result of the form imposed by these special projects, urban design thus acquired an important role linked to the redesigning of the sections of the cities to be upgraded and especially became viewed as a complex instrument meant to administer the many ways of implementing the transformation. The designs assumed forms and compositions making it plain what aspect the

28. Boston’s urban renewal project. The creation of the new town hall and town hall’s square erased the previously existing city, with no respect for heritage and history of the neighborhoods.
29. San Francisco Embarcadero’s area, before the downsizing of the highway into a urban boulevard and before any process of renewal

30. After the demolition of the highway, San Francisco Embarcadero’s area started its revamping and transformation into one of the most vibrant district of the city
transformed space would take; the blueprints also began to give form and structure to details that had always been considered absolutely secondary, such as art works, green spaces and infrastructure, which until then had never been part of the things to include in the design. The blueprints followed thick and fast, as did the topics. And finally, urban planning categories reappeared as project topics, in the form of highly-structured complexes, consisting of architecture, urban planning, design, open spaces and built spaces, which should always have been at the heart of the city’s construction and form. It was these considerations introduced at this stage that key questions re-emerged, such as the planning of urban systems, viewed as types of spaces made up of multiple elements, representing the lives of those using them, the various functions and ground layout. Form was restored to urban planning and perhaps, through these methods, in the right way.

In the meantime, cities have been transformed: aside from the more eye-catching transformations, which in many cases have found their way into magazines or as items in an exhibition or at real estate fairs, there have also been
Cassano d’Adda is a small city on the Eastern section of the region around Milano. The project aims at re-inventing the former industrial site along the canal and the main river (Adda river) using a complex set of rules and maps to take under control urban shape, urban composition, rules and implementation aspects.
33. Cassano d’Adda Linificio district masterplan. The organization of green network and connections
many appropriate, small-scale transformations – and they continue to be performed. They have made all the difference to zones that are perhaps not central, where they have altered the weight and role of whole sections of cities. But above all, the very transformations involved in the first wave of redevelopment, affecting central or semi-central areas that had become industrialized or served industries (such as rail yards) since the beginning of the twentieth century, had in the meantime begun to affect outer areas, into which the city had long started to stretch its relations.

Although less obviously than other major cities in Europe, such as London and Paris, and involving feature largely restricted to a number of large conurbations, Italian cities since the 1970s have grown in a manner that has gone way beyond the expansion of their centres. In the wake of unplanned decentralization, certain functions have been cast out of the continuously built-up area of the city and at the same time new types of buildings have been created and built as an alternative to the functions that already existed – new outer residential areas, in the form of (un)gated communities, new service sector functions concentrated in the form of business districts and new centres in the form of shopping malls. I say “in the form of” advisedly: this decentralization was not modelled on regional planning processes (as in America), or metropolitan ones (as happened in Holland and other parts of Europe), but was concerned exclusively with the invention of new types of redevelopment. These new products borrowed their form, weight, impact and organization from abroad, feeding off the fashion for widespread expansion taking place in many European countries at the time. The result has been decentralization totally lacking organization, with certain large buildings of considerable importance sited well outside the compact city, close to infrastructures, or near smaller towns or pre-existing manufacturing areas (and this is an important point, because industrial areas continued to be planned according to the rules laid down by the town planning regulations/detailed designs, only to be suspended by the delocalized factory redevelopment). With the passage of time and the proliferation of this type of building, Italian cities too began to grow much bigger, with structures ejected from the city centre being re-sited outside. These included residential buildings, centres providing private services (with office blocks) and shopping areas, in response to uncontrolled speculation rather than being based on plans and programmes designed to lend coherence to the region that was already emerging. Many of these new areas took forms that were distinctly untraditional, atypical and in no sense the fruit of reflection on the role of the city, which in those years nonetheless generated a number of proposals. Forms arrived from elsewhere: from strange crosses between
34. Milan’s new Gae Aulenti square. A traditional element and shape (the round square) reinterpreted with contemporary typologies.

35. Milan’s new CityLife district. Are we facing a new way of considering open space and pedestrian networks? The traditional square and the traditional main road merge into a new urban spatial typology.
German rationalist neighbourhoods and English garden cities, as regards residential developments, to American-style office and private service space sprawl (which in the United States accounted for entire edge cities, while here they appeared only sporadically), and the reiteration of the shopping centre concept that was already present and expanding in many Western countries. There was very little in the way of connection between these new developments and infrastructure designed for collective use, although this was not the case in the residential complexes taken as models, little interest in taking the decentralization of offices and service industry functions as an opportunity to lighten the load on historic cities or as a chance to establish areas of research, development or production and poor vision displayed by business circles in their inability to reproduce some of the city’s attractions in the new environment.

So these were the dynamics that had acted on these spaces over the years and which confronted the transformation of the city that began to appear in Italy too, especially from the 1980s and particularly in certain contexts. The closing down of entire manufacturing sectors, delocalization and the obsolescence of most industrial plants, which were also closed down one by one, together with the need to re-assess many parts of the economy struck by de-industrialization, accelerated the process and led to drastic changes in the appearance of large parts of many cities. As we shall see below, refashioning whole swaths of territory necessarily leads to having to consider the means by which this can
be achieved. And the urban project has become the chief instrument through which and thanks to which many areas have been renewed. As we have seen, in the form of “Programma Complesso” (complex programme), “Programma Integrato di Intervento” (integrated intervention programme), or some other measure often buttressed by some regional legislation designed to reform local town planning, the urban project has begun once again to be used for the design of the city, at first the inner city and later spreading out to the outer parts of the city.

The intention here is to reflect upon exactly how the urban project has tried to eliminate the contradiction mentioned at the beginning. While on the one hand Italian urban culture has produced urban spaces that have become iconic owing to their ability to arrange and give form to architecture, urban design and landscape, the stark truth is that for many years it has ceased to do so. So the prospect of redesigning huge areas within our cities reawakened hopes and expectations: of restoring quality urban spaces that have been neglected for too many years, of addressing the lack of green spaces and services, of bringing up to date the transport system and infrastructure and upgrading community life in many areas that have experienced the loss of vital parts of their urban environment. So many hopes, so much material and so many possibilities resting on a single urban project.

With the benefit of hindsight after so many years and with the good fortune of having seen a good many of these things take place, a few things can be said regarding the ability to reorganize forecasts through form and composition. In view of some well known and successful schemes and a regular practice that scattered transformations in the enlarged city mentioned earlier, there seemed a clear need for a reappraisal of forms using simple elements taken from the tradition of creating and building spaces. The piazza and the vibrant street seem to have been the strongest elements around which plans took shape. Looking at the most recent examples of transformations in Italy, arranging compositions around central spaces seems to be a recurring feature. This suggests something interesting regarding the formal relations of the Italian way of thinking about transformations and formal compositions and certain foreign equivalents, especially as regards the contribution of certain movements, such as New Urbanism, to other contexts, and above all with regard to planning areas of transformation that were not completely central.

One can discern at least two generations of transformations: the first set of transformations, which are key elements in the debate on the rebuilding and regeneration of the city in the 1980s and 1990s, involved areas that were so central that formal images and compositions of quality often had to be sought
through competitions able to generate them and undoubtedly capable of re-arranging space in novel ways. Other more external, less central and less strategic areas in the composition of the city in general, areas that are more ordinary and also smaller, seem to have relied on a simpler type of composition, with less straining after form and at the same time perhaps more capable of simplifying the composition. Central green spaces, pedestrian precincts, the dovetailing of functions and uses (residential, service, commercial), road management and parking facilities set away from pedestrian systems – these are all features that have become common currency and are able to outline a space that is maybe duller, less sophisticated and less experimental but is better able to find a kind of harmony with the style of urban life in Italy. At the same time, these recurring compositions made it possible not to repeat the way large cities expanded in a series of redeveloped plots and single buildings and instead to create spaces and dimensions that were more typically urban in nature.

So, while on the one hand cities were being transformed internally by events that were in varying degrees exceptional, with the redesigning of abandoned and derelict spaces in the form of new central areas, with the power to attract and in contact with their strategic role, at the same time, and more commonly in many contexts, the more external areas found it possible to coagulate certain spaces at a small scale into more urban, less haphazard and formally more complete forms. Less emphatically and in a more down to earth way, Italian urban planning has therefore perhaps found how to take certain elements typical of centrality that are centripetal and marking it out from the rest and insert them in the present diffuse built environment dotted with repetitive, centrifugal forms. The composition of these elements is decidedly a far cry from the fine examples of the past, whether the more famous, historic past when so many wonderful examples were built, or the more recent past, which saw the development of rationalist neighbourhoods as an example of the modern reply to the Italian genius for creating spaces. But little by little this has led in recent years to a reappraisal of areas outside the more compact part of the city as places that deserve a greater centrality and fresh attraction. However, although building rationalist districts as examples of uniform, inclusive design suggested a strong historical continuity, the same having occurred with the first expansion of the city following the pulling down of the city walls after unification, the city’s forms and dimensions banished any thoughts of continuity precisely on account of that simplified design, which, although bringing order and improvement to the extended city, marked a decisive break with the city’s historical roots.

From this point of view Italian urban planning now has the chance to take
stock: it has often been said that it was the strong physical link with history, the extraordinary continuity between old city and new that on the one hand enabled the forms and relational weight of the old city to continue to thrive, and on the other prevented the modern city really taking off, self-confidently exploring new avenues and growing in continuous contact with its historical side. Losing this continuity, partly out of negligence, partly owing to the passage of time or the changing size of the transformations, has meant that there have been no attempts in Italy to recover old forms and urban compositions. Which is absolutely typical of New Urbanism. This presents a considerable opportunity, if Italian urban planning can work out how to repackage its unique capacity to create compositions in line with its history, and not forced or exclusively stylistic, as in New Urbanism. The opportunity arises from identifying the formal compositions on which recent transformations have been built, with the simplification mentioned above of finding certain salient elements in the composition able on the one hand to explain the nature of the transformation in relation to the dynamics in the urban region and on the other to create complex spaces in which certain basic principles can give rise to an urban environment that is dense and able to generate relations. This topic will be explored below, analysing exactly how certain compositions have been conceived and built. Bearing in mind the double tracks on which the discussion is based, there is no doubt that if on one hand this way of regarding transformations has enabled the first new form of central hub to be built, tiny though it was, which saw it break with the monotonous repetitiveness of growth by constant accretion, on the other physical densification in some points and attempts to attain differences in form within the vastness of the city have created a new vision of the structure of the regional city. It was thought that investing in structural “invariants”, such as transport networks, environmental systems, large-scale transformations or city centres would be enough. Only to realize that these elements are in fact more than design invariants: they are minimum elements, without which it is impossible to organize the region; all initiative is stillborn. Investment in these minimum elements must be continuous and of a standard commensurate with the city’s status. In dissolving into the surrounding region, perhaps the city now behaves like an octopus that extends and retracts its tentacles. This takes us beyond envisioning the structure of the city to embrace a vision in which strategies, in the sense of amalgamations of visions, designs, policies and actutable behaviours that continually change the form of the city, dominate what must be visible in the city, leaning as it is on a weak warp of pre-established physical relations, a strong warp of flexibly actutable relations and an equally
strong weft, albeit with the occasional perforation, made up of urban environments with unmistakeably urban features in the great ocean of the region. As if the choice were between deciding to be higher, superior, the elect of this superior macro-network, and the rejected, lost in the continuous, infinite space of the metropolis. A supreme region above, an indistinct space below – gradually dumping whatever is not worth choosing and thus reducing the size of the city that has been deliberately devised and planned for excellence. The minimum and the maximum. The minimum is acted upon by the ordinary plan, as management. The maximum is acted upon by the strategic regional plan and the urban project, as a transformation. In this way it is possible to revisit the concepts of the reduction of urban space, the containment of its form and size, unless its growth is justified by a sufficient urban energy.
Something new is happening in the way people are experiencing our cities, how the cities themselves are being transformed and planned. Something new is also happening around cities whose structure, history, tradition, perhaps even slowness to embrace transformation suggested that nothing would ever change. It’s as if distances had changed and with them the way we perceive and experience parts of the city. While we were used to thinking until recently that a shopping mall on the edge of the more consolidated areas, was just that, an edge development and part of urban sprawl and the general expansion of the city, and while until recently we were ready to define objects of this kind as “metropolitan” episodes, today we use these places more casually and for instance stop over on the way to somewhere else, to a “regional” space where we move with more doubts as to what is inner and what outer. Attracted by spots, hubs, places that feel central even though they are far from the traditional centre, in a weave of urban episodes that strengthen a sense of network, where the meshes are however not all the same and not all parts of the network are connected.

Transformations are recent and probably the result chiefly of the growing capacity of the real estate industry to move into new areas and new places and set about transforming them. Urban transformation is a topic that has been much discussed and written about in recent years, although it has been part of the way practical planning is approached in Europe and in the West at least since the period of reconstruction after the Second World War. By the end of the first stage in this rebuilding, certain cities were already regarding transformation as an instrument of regeneration and an opportunity to correct past mistakes, places badly planned, areas to be reorganized and renovated. So it was that from America to Europe, and in Italy too, urban transformation became one of the activities most keenly planned, hand in hand with expansion, to the point of becoming equally paradigmatic and worthy of attention. It is thanks to urban transformation that urban planning was able to reinvest in parts of the city already affected by urbanization, and it is through
transformation that these parts tried to change their destiny. Or, vice versa, re-planning these parts of the city was an attempt to restore meaning to the inner city. There are many ways of studying urban transformations in Europe and in the United States. There have been many interpretations and many new meanings found and expressed: from tool in the hands of speculators, which they use to control and govern the property market, to method of drawing attention to certain already dense and central parts of existing cities, or even more recently as an intelligent and sustainable alternative to continuous growth and endless consumption of unurbanized land. Only a few have really tried to understand what was the real role of urban transformation in the evolution of urban planning over the past seventy years, identifying “generations” of different approaches to urban transformation and appreciating the links urban transformations have always had, and continue to have, with growth. It is worth bearing in mind though that urban transformation policies designed to reinvest in land that is already urbanized have not completely stopped growth and expansion anywhere in the West.

What is important here is the way the transformations have been conceived and managed at the various times to understand how today the very structure of the city has changed, precisely thanks to certain interpretations of urban transformation. This has made it possible to talk about “regions” of urban space rather than just plain cities or places lying outside them. It is through certain recent transformations taking place in non-central places that the city has changed, attracting new displacements and new relations through a special relationship with infrastructures and defining urban spaces in place of empty spaces or interstices that were meaningless before the transformation. It is as if, once the more central places have been sorted out and after the regeneration of urban locations belonging to other economic periods (old industrial areas, rail yards, areas providing infrastructures in the past), the practice of rethinking and regenerating contexts that are already urban spread outside the more consolidated system of the city and tried to restore meaning to parts that have always lacked one. In practice, externalizing a particular sense of the urban, a strange mixture of density, designed places and spaces, new approaches to the sense of a place (and on a plan’s capacity to create a place, in accordance with the principle of place making in the deepest sense), which had never been seen or experienced in such outer areas. It carried towards the open sea of (previously) extra-urban spaces those special objects that were able to regenerate and reinvent central urban spaces. These are the objects this book intends to discuss, putting forward a highly practical point of view aimed at planning and implementing transformations.
All urban transformations have been carried out by means of a project, that is a concept of what a change would mean for a particular circumscribed place, set down in a design. Designs have been able to introduce a special new geography and geometry of the space to be transformed within a pre-established perimeter. Over time, the poetics and method of composition have changed, influenced by their period and the way the project was conceived, but there’s no doubt that transformation has led to specific new projects being outlined, handled more or less openly through the instrument of the master plan. The master plan doesn’t really fit into the Italian planning tradition and its way of devising new projects for new places. It has been borrowed from the British and the Americans, who share a common tradition of considering the design together with the rules, form along with norm. There have been some examples even in Italy, it’s true, but not enough to generate standard practice or at least not enough to distinguish this practice from a pure architectural plan, which in Italy seems to have been the main approach to transforming spaces, at least until after the Second World War. Other countries, especially Britain and America, have long seen the master plan as an instrument able to combine two dimensions – design and rules – which are the main focus of this book. And it is precisely through the design that transformation introduced an urban element, initially in an urban space that was already consolidated and later in increasingly rarefied urban spaces. In some cases the design has led to mimetic behaviour, drawing the surrounding space in, incorporating the rules that the city around the project already offered, or else to completely new behaviour, imposing a principle capable of ordering space differently. What counts, what lies at the heart of this analysis is the importance of understanding exactly how the regenerative potential of transformation has been entrusted to a design, the creation of a new image. This is equally true in cases such as those associated with American urban renewal projects, where designs are created as alternatives to existing ones, which break the mould through having to introduce a given design in that specific urban environment.

So, maybe it’s precisely by interpreting the way specific designing and planning instruments have influenced practices in place transformation that we can understand which generations succeeded one another in their concepts of the theme of transformation and to which different designs places owe their transformation. Initially in the form of a political policy aimed at reforming certain central areas (and this brings us back to the urban renewal tradition), but especially with the transformation of areas that are no longer productive, such as the more central industrial zones and areas providing obsolete infrastructure, European cities have tackled the theme of urban transformation as
37. Masterplan as a urban planning tool to set rules and design standards. The experience of the new industrial areas planned for some northern Italian regions shows how transformations can be planned aiming at understanding and helping the implementation process and the design elements. This gave to transformations a new, larger role.

...a system of management and planning practices able to restore a new layout to specific parts of the city, where considerations of practicality, appropriateness and economic values have combined to urge the political decision-making machine and bulldozers to raze old functions and build fresh slivers of city. The transformation of these parts made a big impact on a precise historical period, the 1980s, when the attitude of politicians to the city was vitiated by the need to represent a particular vested interest and a precise political design. We looked at London and Paris to see how in those very years transformation was regarded as a precise way of rethinking the city. It was frequently introduced at the end of periods of particularly rapid expansion and was undoubtedly stimulated by the functional decay of many central areas owing to momentous economic changes. At the same time, it was also supported by the desire of the administrations of those cities to show how the economic stimulation of the city could help them to compete against other cities in...
38. Sestri Levante, Italy, urban transformations. Apartment houses on former industrial sites. Mimetic approach to transformation

39. Sesto San Giovanni Falk area renovation project, by Renzo Piano. A new funding geometry gives new life to the area
attracting resources and generating development. The following generation of transformations established special transformation designs and projects and these designs began to experiment with the composition of new parts of urban areas, with objects capable of attracting development and objects designed to establish a relationship with the existing structure, in an as yet precarious equilibrium between the built environment and open spaces. The outcome was a special generation of transformations with both positive and murky aspects, but there is no doubt that from that moment the practice of rethinking urban spaces in new forms continued unabated and tackled various topics and specific kinds of urban space, eventually taking the shape of precise types, such as waterfront restorations.

So, over the years and right up to the present day, leaving it to the master plan to remodel certain spaces in the city has made it possible to define urban objects that shifted outwards from central areas. Certain ongoing trends have led to the size of the city being reconsidered, initially owing to the saturation of the spaces made available by sprawl, together with the need to densify spaces.
that were so rarefied as to be no longer manageable, but above all thanks to
the debate about new relationships between the city and the metropolitan
area.

The literature shows that these two figures are not in fact able to distinguish
differences in size between a compact centre and the increasingly endless
suburbs. New infrastructure policies boosted certain branches of the urban
network and underpinned new patterns of consumption of these spaces to the
point of no longer necessarily being able to tell inner from outer, near from
far, compact urban from extra-urban urban. Thus, it’s as if the planner’s hand
at a certain point started to cast out, into an outside that was fuller and fuller,
compact episodes of urbanity, areas whose design was so powerfully urban
as truly to create slivers of city around systems that were at first rarefied and
now had the opportunity to reorganize themselves. Transformation involves
metropolitan areas and enables us to see how bringing episodes of urbanity to
their heart is a new way of upgrading areas of not especially high quality and
at the same time to increase the exchange between inner and outer. This stage
is of the greatest interest since it enables us to see how the transformation
in urban terms of (erstwhile) non-urban areas clears the road for proposals
to upgrade and re-sign the so-called suburbs (in the English-speaking world)
and outskirts, and at the same time broadens relations, finding the way to give

41. Antigone, Montpellier, France. View from the top of the connection between the new area and the
existing city, opening towards the region
42. Rezoning the river shores as an opportunity to create redevelopment regional systems

43. San Jose Cotte village, new transit oriented development as a regional feature of a growing region
form and structure to precisely those hubs which the mesh of infrastructural connections have begun to build. The design of these spaces has taken unusual forms and this is another interesting topic for discussion, but especially in relation to the form taken by the planning and management instrument used through the design, lending meaning to a practice of transformation planning with distinct characteristics, depending on the place and tradition. While in the context of American New Urbanism these very transformations served to sketch a simplified geography of what is urban, taking a few clear types and building around them quite easily repeatable urban microcosms, in more forceful traditions complex episodes are occurring that blend architecture with urban planning, as is happening in the construction of the Cross Rail links in England, or in the complex interlinking of nodes and stations in Japan, or in other European upgradings of older projects. So, what we are keen to explore here is precisely this: there are now, as the result of years of experiments in transformation, types of urban transformation that on the one hand
consist of repetitive examples of building urban systems by combining types so as to provide a structure for outskirts and suburbs, as often happens in New Urbanism, and at the same time in other contexts produce new episodes of transformation that are anything but predictable and are better able to exploit the metropolitan dimension, using it to create new spaces and forms, in which functions and uses are arranged differently. And this innovation is used to build an interesting urban region. There is a close relationship between planning the region in terms of the strategic management of its relations and planning transformations when these perform the re-signification of spaces and places created by the strategic dimension. But when this is done they include precisely the stimulus of this new regional dimension in the forms taken up by the planning of the space. We shall see to what extent these two aspects are both the result of the desire not to lose even a piece of the city to the clutches of urban sprawl and dilution, and how the recent past has passed this desire on to us together with the wish to embrace it all within the urban region, with a tightly-knit, though not necessarily hierarchical network of relations that are able to offer the freedom to move through time and space to people who choose to live there attracted by focal points varying in density, form, function and meaning.

Among these observations, ranging from less contemporary formal traditions to more innovative solutions, united by their common desire to shift the city towards the region, the Italian context, which like other countries is embroiled in the transformation of various urban systems, deserves special mention. With regard to some of the aims of this publication and bearing in mind a section of the readership I should like to reach, the Italian tradition in the field of transformation deserves close attention to tease out points for further reflection. Italy’s reconstruction was unlike that experienced by other European countries, the stress being placed on rebuilding the residential housing stock, with inevitable consequences for its ability to update the country’s infrastructure serving the manufacturing base and transporting goods and people. However, this impetus led to a debate in the 1950s and 1960s on the form the residential housing redevelopment should take, opting in the end for an approach that I’ve always found extremely interesting. Discarding the alternative route taken by several other European countries, which saw structured urban systems established in satellite towns, partly through lack of space, partly through lack of time and certainly on account of a very strong implicit desire to preserve Italy’s urban tradition, the idea of building entire city districts became the focal point of all discussions concerning the transformation of Italy’s cities in those years. I have always thought that this solution is of the greatest interest, at least from
45. Tokyo’s Shibuya Hikarie. Architecture takes it all. Uses, shapes, spaces are all included into one, single, huge building on top of existing rail tracks.
a formal point of view, and constitutes the meeting point of several schools of thought. Leaving aside here all matters concerning the district as the focal point of the community and the social and political forces encouraging this type of approach, the important thing here is to highlight certain particular aspects that perhaps have not obtained the attention they deserve owing to modern ideas of how to tackle the question of urban transformations. Although not always or in all contexts, the decision to build city districts grew out of visions of urban planning that for the first time, albeit not with the same self-confidently large-scale results achieved by the new towns in the English-speaking world, involved part of the metropolitan region around the historic towns. The aim was to build new quarters there and hope to connect them through public transport and green spaces, as had been done for years in other countries, such as Germany for example. Something went horribly wrong, though not everywhere, as regards the infrastructure and green spaces, but at least in the early attempts these districts soon displayed the typical urban features, while situated in areas not yet strictly speaking part of a city. Building Italian city districts has always followed certain basic underlying rules: there is a central space, dominated by two typically Italian focal points, the church and an area providing public services and

46. A rationalism way of reinterpreting the mix of uses, mix of densities and social mix. Public and private building, social and private housing are all surrounding a new urban space. A new square becomes the center of this neighborhood, in close continuity with the existing city.
trading opportunities, taking the form of a piazza, main road or some sort of open space. Around this, in a variety of assemblages, are arranged various types of building, designed by various architects, at different densities (never low), creating a particular kind of urban system that could take as its natural point of reference both its own centre and the town around it, when it exists. This microcosm of urbanity was able to make use of a completely new type of language that was at once contemporary, in being strongly attracted to experiments in form and at the same time respectful of traditional styles and materials, such as bricks and pitched roofs. This tradition for the first time enabled considerable urban transformations to take place, inserting urban hubs within the city in the form of residential built-up areas in a position to establish a relationship with the existing city. The transformation was free to borrow redesigned forms from this very city, such as the road, the piazza, the arcade, the space for services, as well as establish a dialogue with the city-region still to be created, with which they shared position, dependence on networks and a system of open, green spaces larger than the standard public garden, on paper at least. It is worth reflecting on this when considering more recent transformations in Italy, which are giving a new form to conurbations in various parts of the country. When designing urban spaces one can always learn from old blueprints and previous traditions, which it would be wrong to jettison in order to adopt “international” models that are unable to encompass the land and relations with the variety of different types of transformations, or to judge whether their introduction in existing systems is morphologically appropriate.

1 Urban transformations in Europe and in the US give the possibility to see and study the effects of transformations on consolidated and structured places. Above all, they give a chance to understand how transformations are able to change the relations in the larger urban regions. In many other countries urban activity is creating new places and new urban hot spots, but maybe, considering that in many other countries urban areas are newer and more recently conceived, urban transformation is not always something that came after, or changing a previous period of urbanization.

1 Starting from Retrofitting Suburbia, by Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson and on through various manuals and essays on speedy solutions to restore the suburbs, rediscover urban design and shape and take inspiration from models and designs of simple appeal, repairing the suburbs and transforming them in comparison to what they are now, has become a central theme in the debate about how to carry out urban planning, first of all, undoubtedly, in the United States. I believe it is not so easy, and while all the efforts that lead to a reshaping and rediscovery of a centre in the diffuse suburbs are to be appreciated, I do feel that the solution lies in rethinking the entire region, its connections and relationships, the intensity, quantity and velocity of the exchanges that are ensured by the relations between the parts. It is not sufficient to build a new small centre, perhaps with a commercial bent, with a few houses round about, maybe multi-storey ones, to think the suburbs have been redone and that the principal tendency to diffusion has been interrupted and redirected. Cf., if nothing else, Kelbaugh, D.S., “Repairing the American metropolis. Common places revisited”, Seattle&London, University of Washington Press, 2002
4. Principles of urban planning involving transformations

Studying and analysing the most recent urban transformations, with the aim above all of understanding their role in structuring present regional urban landscapes and at the same time trying to understand if there is an identifiably Italian form of spatial arrangement in this kind of planning, prompts considerations about certain principles that can be set down in the form of a small manifesto. There is no shortage of good planning principles in circulation: it’s as if for a long time, with the urban planning debate in Italy not focusing so readily on the territory’s structural invariants and therefore on planning, a considerable series of good and sound planning principles are nonetheless available and are shared by a fair proportion of those in the discipline. It is obviously better to design places that are energetically sustainable rather than those with a large environmental footprint and high consumption, but what is not so clear is how to achieve this end, what rules should be followed and in accordance with which planning restrictions exactly.

This chapter will not go into the regulations in detail, but in drafting a possible small manifesto for a different approach to planning transformations and in the attempt to structure some of its suggestions in the form of a guide for those dealing with these topics perhaps for the first time (such as students), it is useful to analyse certain principles of good planning so as to understand their impact on the composition of urban transformations.

As the analysis shows, a number of different types of transformation recur, depending on the time, the historical period and the context. The different ways of approaching the topic over time has led to specific, more or less recurring forms of transformation, so that today certain urban places are reproduced in contexts that are not central and not necessarily urban. The ability of transformation projects to portray themselves as new examples of urbanity should find expression in principles that oblige the project to appreciate its scale, role and position.

Accepting the importance of principles, to the extent that stating that in the
absence of such principles in the project the transformation cannot claim to represent an innovative way of urbanizing the region, must in the same way accept certain basic assumptions that enable the city to be deciphered and provide a specific idea of the city.

One is aware that cities and their surrounding territory have a form and a structure, and one is also aware that there exists a changeable organization that tends towards the creation of a fixed, rigid form. Especially now that it is dissolving into the territory that surrounds it, becoming a region, the city has a form that is recognizable, at least in its unchanging, or more rigid parts, and less recognizable in those that vary or are less consolidated. The form is derived from the structure of the territory and this derives from its mutable organization. It is for this very reason that the transformation of specific areas, and the introduction of episodes of urbanity within these areas, best expresses the evolution of the form of today’s city. This is because the new contents of the areas subject to transformation initially modify the organization of those spaces, altering their accessibility and usability and changing them into something that wasn’t perceived in the same way before. If we believe that there always exists a form in any case, this can only be relational, initially as a composition of several forms, engendered by the organization that the use of the parts expresses. The urban planning project, which will be described and inspired below, can only be a meeting point between different economic, social, relational and usage forms. And a site’s urban transformation project also applies to proposals for its different organization.

This is why we believe it is important to draw up a list of principles, without letting them harden into rules, with the aim of putting together a manifesto and a poetics for the creation of projects with this ambition. This list of principles and criteria comes mainly from the observation of recent transformations and from the way many of these have been able to perform the foremost task in this enterprise, namely the ability to urbanize the region and to create remarkable new places within an urban region.

Defining guiding principles is a widespread operation that enables a shared understanding of the basic rules that a given type of planning would like to pursue, especially with regard to planning practices unlike those in Italy. And especially in relation to the American context, where producing guides, manuals and lists of principles seems to accompany every kind of practice, all the more so when these practices assume the mantle of manifesto, ready to claim it is better and more important than others, in a game between the goodies and the baddies that often avoids seeking underlying rules to share.
4.1 Density, diversity and mixing. Composing regional urban places

The subject of density is a key aspect in discussing the transformation of the city as we have known it. Much has been debated regarding the subject of urban transformation in the Italian context too, especially in the early years. I still remember certain discussions at the end of the 1980s, when the chance to transform highly central urban areas, such as derelict industrial zones, often in cities that were important from the urban planning perspective like Milan, raised some doubts about whether it was advisable to proceed with the transformation on the basis of high densities in recognition of their position, centrality and accessibility, or whether to reduce the density instead, in order to “punish” their position and forestall any advantage deriving from their privileged position. The dispute has run its course and we can now confidently affirm that it is a widely held belief that in the construction of the modern city the areas of transformation should be planned at high densities, on condition that their position is central enough with regard to the urban system they belong to and above all on condition that the area is adequately served by the public transport systems. It is hard to say in manifesto form exactly what high and low densities are. It doesn’t even make any sense to state it, because it depends on the context and on the urban system where the transformations

47. Tokyo’s Shibuya station area plan
48. New Urbanism’s method of adding density and new buildings to transform a large parking lot around a suburban shopping mall into a urban environment. There is no way to do that without adding relations, connections and linking this new episode to the existing networks of urban areas and spaces. Otherwise, it will always work as a new way of doing the same, sprawled shopping area.
are to take place, but it does make sense to state that transformation areas well served by public transport systems can be planned at high densities.

European culture assigns at least two conceptual values to the density and compactness of residential quarters: the capacity to reduce mobility, especially the means frowned upon, namely private vehicles, often with no passengers, and to concentrate in a circumscribed space such a concentrated density as inevitably to precipitate an urban effect. Bearing in mind that this type of thinking arises from assuming that a dense and compact city is where things happen, where relationships are established.

Concentrating the density in a specific place has the added advantage of achieving a concentration of several uses and functions. As we know, transformations have led in Europe and in the West in general to building urban objects where the density and the mixture of uses recurs and indeed defines one of the characteristics of these places, increasing their chance of being urban.

In the literature, “high” density commonly means planning with different parameters to those used in the more diffuse suburbs, where the standard building is a dwelling for a single family on its own plot of land. It allows the construction of blocks of flats and buildings with several floors, whose height and size obviously depend on the context and the regulations governing the area where the transformation is taking place. It is important to point out that it is the mixture of uses, together with the density, that enables the urban episodes mentioned to be built. The goal is to build a particular urban “environment”, usually consisting of the urban planning/architectural object rather than the rule. It is the desire to build a piazza, a boulevard or a shopping street that at the planning stage suggests a specific density to obtain the desired effect.

This combination of architectural reasoning and urban planning reasoning is extremely interesting: it is up to architects to work out how to incorporate elements of urban design and not just buildings, but architecture, and it is up to urban planners to work out how to translate the need to build increasingly complex, interdependent architectural elements into rules, regulations and instructions. A master plan encourages just this type of reasoning, uniting in a no-man’s-land and on an intermediate scale these two points of view and these two needs.

It can therefore be said that density is a planning parameter of great importance, but also that the contexts meant to exalt the ability to create urbanity have to work with densities capable of producing complex urban architectural objects. We shall address the subject of how these places are to be understood formally today, but it is worth repeating that the mixture of density and uses creates substantial objects, from the urban perspective. From a practical point of view, this is the direction we need to take.
It is essential to establish exactly what is the purpose of the transformation. It’s true, the intention here is always to consider transformations able to reconfigure in urban terms places that were not urban at all until they were transformed, and places so urban as to establish a new concentration of meanings within the regional network of spatial organization. Having said this, it is clear that this type of transformation aims to combine residential functions with ancillary functions able to render a given site liveable for as much as possible of the day.

Once the goal has been pinpointed, the project has to focus on the functions to be included. If the aim is to build places with a high urban element, the choice will have to take into account scale and relations. It is by understanding the system of relations a given place must and wishes to forge that one appreciates the nature the area will assume and what relations can be introduced. Areas of transformation are not all able to attract great urban functions and areas of transformation are not all able to put themselves forward as main nodes in the complex regional urban network. Much has been said on this topic, especially regarding the first generation of urban transformations: many European cities have seen areas with functions of an urban, metropolitan and even international rank built within their urban systems. Some have worked, others haven’t, but they have all shown that it isn’t the functions put down on paper and allotted to a particular area that decide how things will turn out.

49. Denver’s central station area redevelopment project. A new hub in a low density central area will transform it in a dense, vibrant and urban space thanks to a special mix of architecture and urban design.
What does make the difference to the success of the transformation is the right combination and the right weight accorded to the functions in relation to the correct urban scale the area is in. The most appropriate approach is for the mixture of functions to be determined mainly by observing the different scales the area is expected to act on: from the local neighbourhood scale to more far-reaching ones, on condition that the project is itself able to establish physical and non-physical relations with all the contexts with which it endeavours to enter into contact and to relate to.

Considering the system of functions and the combination and degree of density means at the same time thinking about the urban composition that the project intends to pursue. At a time when extravagant forms appear and any discussion of composition seems to oscillate between those who drop any pretensions to style and resort to a hackneyed rehashing of the past (for instance, much of New Urbanism and the work of those influenced by it), those who rely on an architectural object to astonish and attract and those who opt for mimicry and continuity with the existent, weighing it down with the responsibility of becoming the object of inspiration, urban composition has taken on the connotation of a rule that underpins every transformation, with varying degrees of confidence and seems to follow the trend in transformations, or what emerges from the context. While in the first generations of transformation there was a fashion for more rigid compositions, where the need to resort to the city block and a grid structure was evident and had the effect of keeping lines and compositions more rigorous (one need only consider the many European transformations, such as Orestadt in Copenhagen, or the district at the foot of the Très Grande Bibliothèque in Paris), the increasingly frequent introduction of transformations in emerging urban contexts and the exploration of new architectural forms has softened the rigidity of these compositions, offering the chance to compose freer spaces that are less obsessed with the formal recomposition of the city. Of course, once again transformations inspired by New Urbanism are closely associated with compositions based on the city block, partly in response to the zoning requirements and implementation regulations involved in every aspect of transformation, but in this instance we are interested in understanding exactly how mobility in specific areas today occasions closer attention to the form the urban space composing the projects will take. So, while on the one hand there are whole families of projects that use the road, the boulevard and the piazza in a traditional manner and around these they arrange their buildings, which may display innovative architectural forms, on the other more interesting groups of projects emerge that build more innovative open spaces, where flows and exchanges engender
50. Euralille as the epitome of a new urban place out of the city center and shaped with a mix of architecture and urban design.
51. Euralille general plan, with connections and relations with the existing city. The new transformation reconnects the city center with the periphery and extend the sense of centrality.

52. Euralille mix of uses and high densities creates a contemporary dense image without re using the traditional organization into blocks, but at the same time without loosing relations between buildings and streets.
new forms. Thus, the space at the base of the three towers at City Life in Milan creates a strange machine, combining built spaces and open spaces and exploiting the mixture of functions (mainly shopping) to break down the rigid distinctions between private and public spaces. It is very pleasing and seems to recur even in more complicated transformations, such as those in certain Japanese cities that are undergoing infrastructural upgrading processes. Of course, it needs to be understood how this planning practice can respond here to the two guidelines of our earlier reasoning, regarding the capacity of the transformations to enter into a rapport with the urban region and not only with the traditional city, turning into places of connotation for the regional network of relations, and regarding the need to respect certain suggestions that this manifesto intends to put forward. The exploration of new forms or new formal arrangements may be able at the same time to express the novelty of the relations the transformations can establish with the urban region. Or, on the contrary, it is precisely the new relations and their new scale throughout the urban region that should determine new compositions and forms that are capable of expressing a sense of belonging to flows, relations, exchanges and attributions of meaning that were not previously present. For this reason it is advisable not to seek new forms or compositions out of obligation or for the sake of fashion, but to wonder how to give shape to the novelty and “regionality” of the new urban relations. There is plenty to work on: forms and
compositions can find fresh inspiration from combinations of new functions with the role of the infrastructures and the way the accessibility of these remarkable new products is approached.

At the same time, responding to the second of the two guidelines, one wonders what can be transmitted of Italian culture and Italian compositional methods. We have compared the operations of urban transformation with experiences from Italy’s cultural past and Italian compositional practices, such as the construction of rationalist districts, as the best outcome of post-war rebuilding policies. We have discussed the originality of certain compositions and the strongly urban connotation of the way space is laid out and the kind of relationships that exist between built spaces and relational spaces. Besides absorbing within themselves the new dimension to which they were expected to relate (in the form of districts, and therefore with an intrinsic local connotation, but existing as points in a network, whether it be infrastructural, building or environmental in their having to be part of an integrated system influenced by Germany), the composition of many of these spaces reveals the desire to reorganize roads and piazze in different forms, inspired by rationalist experiments but with a light-hearted nod at local traditions, materials and the most contemporary place making. These experiences and having managed to keep these two dimensions together as part and parcel of the planning should be borne in mind. This road needs to be explored to understand formally how the new regional relations which rely on individual transformations to recover urbanity where there is none can create spaces strongly connoted by a mix of functions, density and capacity to reinvent the basic forms of urban composition (once again: the shopping street, the piazza, the boulevard and the public garden), acknowledging their intrinsic aggregative and compositional capacity, but translating them into objects that absorb their novelty from the contemporary nature of the ways they are used. Looking at certain Italian poetics, such as typological variations, or the value accorded to the use of materials in the composition of urban landscapes, or again in seeking those minimum relations typical of villages and small towns, today’s recompositions need to understand that those forms innovated through rationalism age-old ways of living that space and that, similarly, today the new compositions have to innovate space according to today’s canons of use. In the present context, speed, poor continuity, carelessness even towards physical space, the increasing attraction of the non-physical nature of many exchanges, shift perception, which however can take a pleasant rest whenever it finds the traditional appearance of Italy’s central urban spaces.

Only in this way do we have a precise key to escape the sadness of certain spaces that still display the volumes of the early attempts at transformation (for instance, the ways the areas of transformation in Holland, especially
Rotterdam, which are part of the national reorganization of international relations along corridors of national infrastructure are being completed) and re-find the contemporary warmth of the more consolidated, rediscovered urban spaces, which have been turned into part of today’s culture.

The design must then be able to deal with the implementing mechanisms and account for the fact that, as already mentioned, using the master plan must allow an advance experience of the way rules, indices and regulations can be easily applied without running the risk of changing the form, composition or architecture. The rules and implementation procedures governing a transformation project contain many facets that need careful attention: it is during the implementation that a project’s feasibility is tested and it is at this same stage that the project emerges from its strictly architectural sphere and is tested by the economic system, its relationship with the values and interests present locally and further afield. The question of implementation concerns us here insofar as the creation of forms and types of innovative spaces has to come to terms with implementing mechanisms that are not necessarily ready to accommodate them. Especially if forms, built spaces and open spaces, or public
and private spaces tend to blend, following the highly contemporary trend towards more complex arrangements. For this reason implementing mechanisms will have to be in place beforehand, devised together and in relation to the particular building developments the transformation project envisages and they will have to be commensurate with its capacity to turn itself into a place offering urban attraction in a regional context; in other words, they will have to develop rules and mechanisms enabling the construction of that particular layout.

4.2 Pedestrians first

The care taken over the pedestrian friendliness of the transformations that the regeneration of many urban sites entails throws into sharp relief certain particular connotations which it is worth considering. The pedestrian perspective and the pedestrians’ use of the areas means above all that the transformations have identified in a specific dimension and a specific type of building associated with the use made of the spaces by pedestrians. The pedestrian

56. Albany’s Empire Plaza. Every space is for pedestrians only. Cars are not allowed on the plaza. But cars run at a lower level, crossing underground the platform. Above all, pedestrian networks are completely separated by the other areas of the existing city center
57. A new plan for pedestrian networks in an existing city center (Melegnano, MI, New transport plan, by Marco Facchinetti)

58. Connections between the new pedestrian networks and the historical, existing ones (Melegnano, MI, New transport plan, by Marco Facchinetti)
perspective puts into focus a very precise image of the urban context of the project, which other transformations of the recent past did not take into consideration. Looking at the transformations undertaken under the Urban Renewal programmes in the United States above all, especially examples like the ostensible urban regeneration that has altered the centre of Albany, NY, it is clear that the paradigm of human mobility and displacement was not based on the pedestrian perspective, but rather on the need to build platforms that can be easily reached by car and equally easily crossed, after which pedestrian space was sovereign in the sense that it was separate and distant from other forms of access. The paradigm and the way projects operate now are very different. Just as the emphasis on crossing and accessibility prompted the creation of urban compositions where architecture was the expression of mobility and modernity, so today the emphasis on the pedestrian perspective inspires the addition of broad pavements on streets and boulevards, and implies a certain arrangement of shopping facilities and services on the ground floor of buildings and the creation of underpasses and other connections to ensure the pedestrian network is precise and continuous. In highlighting the common sense in these items in the planning manifesto, it is nevertheless essential to be clear about the scale at which they apply. Very often, especially in the analysis of transformation projects and above all in many of those that were developed following the teachings of New Urbanism, the pedestrian perspective prompts the creation of sometimes large-scale networks and routes, in the form of islands, that are closely connected to the project and the interior of the project, without the slightest possibility that this aspect might create connections with the wider territory and other surrounding built-up areas. The pedestrian perspective cannot be merely a way of using the urban environment we intend to create, but has to be a means of transfer and access, at least in relation to other transport systems. It’s not a matter of creating isolated privileged areas where pedestrians can be a central concern to the planners, but of considering pedestrian use as a network connected either with other pedestrian networks or other systems of collective transport. It is precisely on account of the “regional” nature of the transformations that concern us here, that it is essential this subject be considered in relation to the networks that make the region usable, or that have enabled the city to be linked to the wider territory. Considering the pedestrian perspective in this way also enables one to take a more critical stance on questions of style that are closely associated with this type of planning, considering whether it might be better to devise compositions and urban forms that are able to express precisely this new regional dimension, rather than simply repeat forms and compositions from previous times, other periods and other places. A composition
combining layout and the distribution of uses and functions, relations with access networks and full usability of all the project’s components may at least provide the prerequisites to avoid the schemes of the past and to seek new, more contemporary arrangements.

4.3 Supporting transit systems

There is no doubt that collective transport and the networks that enable it to be used efficiently lie at the heart of the discussion of the ways the city should open out to the wider region. But above all it is a widely held view that transport infrastructures and urban forms are interrelated. Transit can influence the character of a community, providing the interaction of land uses and creating the potential for more walkable and liveable communities. The role of transit infrastructure in shaping urban form is as important as its role in meeting the mobility needs of the corridor and the area it serves. Premium transit alignment and mode choices influence, and are influenced by urban form, population densities and regional land use patterns. Yet, when transit systems are planned and designed, their ability to be influenced by and, in turn, to positively influence urban form at the regional scale is seldom discussed, documented or fully incorporated into alignment decisions and mode choices.

In the literature, especially when dealing with American examples and cases, but in other recent large building contracts too, such as the Cross Rail project in Greater London, reference is often made to corridors in discussing the connection between the urban transformation and the transport system. Organizing the territory through the use of corridors makes it possible to unite the two aspects, namely an efficient, high-capacity transit system, and the planned control of density distribution, keeping it high close to the stops in the transport system. The image of the corridor is also well suited to discussions on the structuring of the region and the proliferation of certain examples of urbanity; it fails to take into account the fact that episodes of transformation and upgrading of the territorial system do not occur always or everywhere, so it is probably more accurate to consider situations more like an archipelago, in which certain islands exploit the potential of collective transport to gather around themselves larger episodes of urbanity, while other contexts cannot manage to attract particular transformations.

There is no doubt that one of the main characteristics of regional transformations with a strong urban connotation is the sure presence of transit systems, with few exceptions. It can be seen how in some cases, such as in Houston for example, where highly-structured urban hubs have been created within a vast urban region,
there are no forms of collective transport, but instead the growth and development of urban areas in the region is served exclusively by the road and motorway network in view of the characteristics of the context. In terms of a study of the principles of good planning and in relation to what is being analysed here, I don’t think that these cases are examples of good development. Of course, even in these extremely extensive conurbations, these instances of densification and concentration of aspects, functions, uses, weights and urban densities are still noteworthy, but the presence of a transit system remains a basic, crucial principle about which much has been said and written and which is still greatly relied upon in the rebuilding of urban regions. This is why I have always liked cases like Portland or Denver, which have at least tried to combine planning theories and experiments with regard to densification, suburban redevelopment and the building of widespread transit networks able to influence density distribution. The same goes for Washington and for many programmes and projects for European cities, where accessibility is a straightforward sine qua non of development and transformation.

It is matters of accessibility that can determine whether a given context is transformable and densifiable. Accessibility changes a place’s value, turning it into a context which more people, in more ways and at more times of the day can reach by means of various types of collective transport: calculating the distance from a stop on a given transport system means a certain area is more or less able to attract building schemes and to contain some functions rather than others. This is therefore the reason why the presence of a transit system should be

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59. Los Angeles Transit Oriented development centers map
considered a determining factor without which a particular type of transformation cannot take place, and it is also why the collective transport network should be chosen according to the type of service it provides. There are three important things to consider in connecting transformations to the transit system: coordination with the urban forecasting system (especially land use, assigning the right degree of transformability to areas according to the degree of accessibility), planning for several types of mobility (multimodal mobility) and defining methods of physically connecting the transport system’s stops and its pool of users.

However, I am fully aware that it is common knowledge that compact, mixed-use development should be promoted around a collective transport hub, irrespective of the degree of accessibility and the type of service that the collective transport system provides at that point. This type of development contains a mix of retail services, jobs, housing and other uses that can attract a critical mass of people and activities. Compact, higher density development patterns shorten the distance people have to travel to reach their destinations and supply the customer base that can support a more frequent transit service and a greater variety of routes. Higher service levels in these areas in turn attract more users and support the local land use vision. The subject of compact development is considered central to transformation strategies, both in cities and more structured built-up areas and in planning improvements to suburbs, outer areas and small communities which are at risk of expansion. It is a common belief that development should be compact and mixed-use, especially in transformation areas in zones that are already built-up. Ideally, this is the opposite of what caused the crazy, unplanned growth of the contemporary city and is therefore rather simplistically seen as a means of finding a cure. However, interest in compact development lies particularly in its ability to concentrate uses and functions in a restricted space and thus to stimulate developing new urban relations. Aside from the design forms and methods that may be devised, the interesting point in the context of the present discussion is the possibility that thanks to the concentration of different uses and functions and using limited space it may be possible to create living urban contexts, thus solving one of the main problems associated with not being central, not only from the physical point of view.

4.4 Place making

One of the most interesting principles regarding the planning of new built-up areas, especially if it involves the transformation of previously urbanized zones, concerns the need for every re-planned area to be able to express a
60. A new social housing complex around the city of Milan transforms an unshaped place into a new urban village, around a square and connected by a network of pedestrian paths to the existing city and to the agricultural roads (Inzago, MI, new social housing complex plan, by Marco Facchinetti)

61. Battery Park City, New York. Maybe one of the greatest new places addition ever planned. Of course, today is an interesting series of new urban and green spaces but its connection with the existing downtown areas is still debated
sense of place. This practice intersects with certain particular considerations regarding the very idea of place making, its origins and the meaning of considering building a sense of place as a key aspect of a project. While appreciating once again the origins of this practice, originating mainly in American contexts that are distinguished by a total lack of sense of place, belonging and even representativeness of the built-up areas, the desire to associate the need to create a place where people can feel they belong to a process of regeneration or transformation is significant and an entirely new input, which was hard to understand in the past or at least in the first generation transformation areas. The first areas at all events tried to restore their true nature and the fullness of their meaning, uses and values to places strongly marked by being central, and perhaps this is why what is especially interesting here is the need to build places in outer areas where one belongs and above all seizing the opportunity to use transformations as producers of places. The chance of reconsidering outer transformations in more urban contexts and forms grew out of the capacity of certain transformations to create precise places. I don’t think attempts to create a place ex novo and suppose it can take a similar form to historical places can hope to succeed, particularly in an Italian context, where every sphere is so strongly connoted, whether it be central or peripheral. The sense of place is something much more complicated in Europe compared with the situation in America, particularly when the attempt concerns an important central context. However, I believe every planning area should aim to see

62. It is all a matter of vocation. New top brand fashion stores open on the new streets of recent urban cool transformations ideally connecting to an already existing fashion devoted neighborhood (Milano’s Garibaldi new development area)
itself as an opportunity to create a place, avoiding the pitfall of becoming just an addition to other contexts. Small though they may be, all transformations should be duty bound to develop a sense of place through their planning, thus turning them into a generation of new places. In more contemporary terms, each transformation should be able to define a place – and urban to boot. We have seen how recent transformations take the form of urban scenarios, although they are not in typically urban contexts. Combining established densities, forms and functions, their being recognized as urban contexts alone acts as place making. It is worth noting how the tendency of many projects to proclaim a specific lifestyle is increasingly evident. Besides being unequivocally urban, many projects reserve certain sections to the young and fashion trends, turning some of their creations into statements. So it is that thanks to its closeness to the Brera district on one side and Isola on the other, both places that are already extremely trendy and urban, Garibaldi Repubblica in Milan has become known as a creative place associated with design and fashion, while the Milan Fair rebuilding site has become far more residential and traditional, although greener and more modern.

What are the characteristics that turn a project into a “place”? Of course, it remains true that a piazza, a monument or an important site can increase a sense of place and belonging, but I believe what a project needs above all in order to become a place is a clearly identifiable formal composition. I have often referred above to a particular poetics underlying the planning and building of
Italian rationalist districts. I mentioned that many of these designs reflected contemporary views of the modern city, halfway between the satellite town, a residential suburb and the typical Italian village, an often perfect blend able to combine formal rationalist and modern notions and a wholly Italian attitude to building, consisting of urban places such as towns, villages and little hamlets that even now most people identify with. Formal composition required a central axis, sometimes taking the form of a widened piazza, at other times a vibrant street and only at the end the appearance of a multi-function square. It was the attention paid to formal Italian culture that ensured that the formal layouts stayed stylistically close to historical examples and able to establish a dialogue between the architecture and human beings, the people who had to live in and use those spaces. Looking at the transformations today, it is important to recognize their formal inspiration: you will not always find a street, a piazza or a simplified urban context underlying the formal composition. Often, seeking contemporary, innovative, different forms at all costs leads to traditional structures being discarded, thus losing sight of a useful yardstick it would be a mistake in my view to jettison for various reasons.

It is the blend of uses that creates a place, if that place is a living urban environment. The creation of a place cannot fail to be linked to the creation of a network of functions supporting the full and active life of those living there. Planning techniques often encourage one to distinguish different parts inside a single place being transformed or planned. These parts may differ in the importance of the thoroughfares, the weight of the developments along them or simply because they are part of the structure the project brings with it. It is worth considering this topic, too. According to rationalist precepts, the design of the structure was once of fundamental importance in the aggregation of areas of transformation and planning. The role and task of the central, stronger part was to provide the structure, to formally and functionally connote the composition. The structure was the central avenue or road or the axis from which the other functions led off, in accordance with a wholly rationalist way of arranging space, distributing weights and ordering the central parts and those that were less central. I believe things cannot continue in the same way today. Recognizing a structure entails assigning a greater or lesser weight to a given area. At the same time, it entails creating more important parts and secondary parts. This type of design has often created vibrant parts and other less vibrant parts, parts able to attract development and transformation and parts that have dwindled away as marginal areas. The spread of centrality in formal compositions makes it possible to envisage a less structured and less selective layout only in certain parts, even in relation to the functional blend that is to be introduced in the area. It is this urban nature on a regional scale that should
lead to compositions that are freer from such rigid, structured approaches, wel-
coming types of space that are dense but more open, able to unite several en-
vironments and several areas, depending on time and function and in accord-
ance with a variable layout that alone makes every part of an area central, and
not only the parts that are most naturally structural. The areas envisioned in
this manner can be seen as little archipelagos of centrality, connected whenev-
er so required by the demands, functions, time and usages in the life of an area,
or even reconnected according to the neighbouring functions and the requests
that the inhabitants of the surrounding region are able to communicate.
Herein lies one of the principles relating to place making on which to reflect.
The risk implicit in certain approaches, especially those stemming from New
Urbanism, consists in thinking it possible to turn the planning process in an
area inwards: with the borders established, the classic method is to invent a pos-
sibly central, perhaps not especially contemporary place (at least as regards the
composition of the urban space, even if expressed in new architectural forms
and styles) around which to concentrate weights and functions. Surrounded
by tall, compact buildings, with public facilities for the use of the public, the
central space, whatever shape it might be, gathers around it other minor, resi-
dential spaces or spaces with more highly defined functions (offices, in the case

64. West Palm Beach new city center
65. Even if West Palm Beach city center project aims at creating a new dense, vibrant, compact city center, it will be always surrounded by sprawl and it will always remain nothing more than an attempt to put on the market a different product, not able to retrofit the suburbs for its lack of connection, transportation, relations with the rest of the city.
of service sector complexes), whose relational intensity diminishes in proportion to its distance from the heart. If they are well planned, the areas following this principle have their transit access point at the centre of their densest part and their density diminishes as the distance from it increases. Thus conceived, these areas have little chance of impacting on the surrounding neighbourhood, unless they portray themselves as the effects of a highly selective process, in which only certain parts of the territory are earmarked for densification, the parts around the infrastructures obviously, circumscribing their actions and effects and dropping any pretence of being a beacon for the surrounding area. Alternatively, and with greater hope of success, the areas of this type to be replanned don’t run the risk of turning inwards: on the contrary, it is precisely wanting to consider them episodes of potential transformation of the urban landscape, places where the new urbanity can be expressed within structured urban regions, that should lead to them being designed with a less rigid structure that doesn’t tend to concentrate central areas only in certain places. By including and opening themselves to what they have around them they can become true regional urban phenomena and not simply isolated episodes in a system that operates under its own rules; it is part of the planning process to open its structure and distribution of functions, a little more like an archipelago and a little less rigidly. Not many areas display this kind of approach; seeking to achieve completeness in planning an area brings one up against a series of problems regarding borders and the capacity of a forecast to influence what lies around it. But simply turning a project area’s centralities outwards and not leaving them inward-looking prepares the way for an increase in positive effects in the surrounding area, building networks of relationships and re-meaning.

4.5. Complete communities

The construction of specific communities linked to an urban project, or, on the contrary, the capacity of a transformation project to compose and aggregate a new community of people, users and players, is typical of planning cultures and traditions that consider this kind of project as an element capable of restructuring local conditions which are non-cohesive, open, diffuse and with difficult relationships between the people who live in and use these territories. The Italian context, and to some extent also the European of which the Italian is a part, present with very different spatial and social structures. The processes of diffusion and land use have rarely related to consolidated contexts, limited and with a strong historical presence, and in a narrow territorial network at close range in terms of distances, even in significant phenomena such as northern Milan,
the Florentine plain or around Rome. Even today, and even in places of greater diffusion, low-density areas, typical of contemporary urban landscapes, always seem to be related to historical presences such as small towns, minor cities, networks of historical relations that diffusion has not interrupted, but merely rarefied. Certainly, there are suburban and peri-urban contexts in which social problems are significant, such as, for example, many areas which in the past saw the construction of public-housing neighbourhoods and in which the reconstruction of a sense of community and belonging is a very specific project that follows other paths. But, as mentioned, the Italian context has never specifically dealt with the possibility that new and particular communities and settlements can be built through planning and the use of a masterplan. This theme now ties in with the transformation of already built-up areas, in urban settings, and even more in extra- or peri-urban settings, whose dimensions and need for content encourage thinking about new urban systems, which for obvious reasons are different to the contexts in which they appear, and are therefore more open to accommodating systems capable of aggregating people, residents and users in a different way. Above all, the possibility arises that planning through the use of a masterplan might lead to masterplanned communities appearing on the market, in which architectural and urban planning work to create an environment that favours the aggregation of a certain type of inhabitant, capable of expressing a certain type of lifestyle. And it is precisely on the concept of lifestyle that these communities are very often aggregated. While not one of the stated aims of some of the ongoing or recently concluded transformations in Italy, this aspect can already be noted: if the Garibaldi area in Milan is a continuation and an exaltation of the trendy lifestyle tied the fashion and design that characterise the area, in the same way the CityLife zone seeks to highlight the residential notion of the area, and its being for some time the favoured location for middle-class residence. Again, the Assago area, expanding in terms of the already existing centre of MilanoFiori opens to an urban lifestyle but one that is more green and sustainable. Obviously to this is added the advertising campaigns and the ways in which these operations are sold and placed on the market. Recent research conducted by RCLCO demonstrates that it is precisely the most successful masterplanned communities in America that continue to show the best performance in terms of maintaining market value and speed of transactions, demonstrating that this kind of product indicates a specific activity of planning that is extremely recognisable on the market.

How can an area of transformation build a new and different sense of community to the place in which it is installed? Evidently, it is once again the mix of functions and uses that planning can provide, even if from this point of view it is important to establish a central **vocation**, one that is predominant for the transformation,

67. New Haven Hill-to-downtown area plan, CT. General plan and districts zoning map
especially if understood as the possibility of inserting a new episode of strong urbanity in a region that is external compared to the traditional sites of urbanity. Deciding a particular vocation for an area is a particularly important task related to the need, as repeatedly advanced here, to refer the changes to a strategic framework at the regional level, so that they assume the capability to revitalise specific points but as part of a large-scale strategy. Speaking of vocation in a market that demands the maximum flexibility of projects especially if still a long way from being implemented in terms of time, with the uncertainties that the implementation process itself brings with it, is not always easy and it shows that it is not always possible and perhaps not even correct to think of a specific vocation. It is already a vocation for a setting to take on relations with the large scale and, at the same time, with the local scale, to assume the connotation of the transformation of the strong urbanity even in a non-urban setting, to aim to become a hot spot in the system and network, to connect with the infrastructure networks and the green areas. Assigning a specific vocation to an area was a distinct feature of the transformations of the past when it was thought that the availability of an area could give rise to the construction of a specific function, albeit with the corollary of other related functions. Now, thinking specifically of a more fluid urban structure that is capable of appropriating spaces and places for specific functions in ways that are not always the result of planning, what emerges is that the recurring
pattern and vocation is precisely the construction of “urban villages” where the functional mix is strong and the compositional architectonic system is such that it can accommodate major as well as residential functions. This vocation thus allows the aggregation of particular communities that benefit from living in high-volume environments, with features that allow them to “stay open” for many hours of the day or night, with activities on Saturday and Sunday as well, as happens and perhaps even more so than in the historic central areas of cities.

At the same time, planning techniques for life in neighbourhoods need to be put in place, enhancing the use of neighbourhood plans, able to focus on strengthening and renewing diverse urban neighbourhoods by providing shared places, new and expanded housing choices, improved safety, and better amenities and services. Through effective engagement of community stakeholders, these activities should be able to create aspirational plans that are grounded in everyday needs, including:

- Neighbourhood-wide revitalisation plans that address the full range of factors shaping community quality of life including design, housing, education, services, health, and other factors.
- New neighbourhoods that promote the arts, innovation, and smart growth.
- Housing masterplans that meet diverse housing needs and strengthen neighbourhoods.

It is about considering the construction of the social relations that a transformation has to be able to trigger as a theme of the project and a theme capable of giving different shapes and weights to the foreseen and planned settlements. Worthy of mention is the plan developed by New Haven in the United States, for the Hill-to-Downtown area, with the development of a community plan to unlock the potential of this transit-served location as a walkable, mixed-use medical, research, residential and retail district between downtown New Haven and the Hill neighbourhood. Located directly adjacent to historic Union Station, the area has languished since urban-renewal-era planning resulted in widespread land clearance and left a disjointed and dysfunctional street network.

Developed through a robust public process that engaged all community and institutional stakeholders, the Community Plan includes the following initiatives:

Reconnects Downtown, the Hill and the Medical District (Yale New Haven Hospital, Yale School of Medicine, and related research enterprises) with each other.

Promotes redevelopment of the 300-unit Church Street South section 8 residential complex as a 750-unit mixed-income, mixed-use community.

Links Union Station to the district and downtown through creation of a Union Square, a gateway public space and destination.
69. New Haven Hill-to-downtown area plan, CT. Policies and action plan

70. New Haven Hill-to-downtown area plan, CT. Locations for the new action plan.
Revises zoning that incorporates height transitions between higher density research and residential areas and the modest scale of surrounding neighbourhoods. This plan, which won several awards from planning institutions, demonstrated that the planning of a neighbourhood can be entirely compatible with the needs of developers and the city, and together define a shape and weight for the plan that is better able to repair existing situations through the strategic replanning of this area.

Certainly it is necessary to add a consideration. The construction of a community as the aim of a transformation plan of an area has to be able to take into account not only the content that the planning intends to give to the project, but also of what the context offers and presents at the time of planning. The analysis of how social forces are distributed in and around the area is important and has to be able to lead to building relationships and connections with the existing community. The tendency or the risk that seems to arise is that the attention to transforming these kinds of places according to the large-scale strategies, so that they might become hot nodes in the wider regional network, often leads to demanding of certain contexts a relational and referential leap in scale which, for obvious reasons, fails to relate them to the local, minute context. For this reason, the focus of the project should be to ensure that the building of the community might still be the construction of a new and different community, populated by players, users and inhabitants who refer to the large-scale, but not forgetting the micro-relationships at local level, which alone are capable of attaching the transformation to the place, to the context in which it occurs.

4.6 Integrated natural and open system

The planning of natural areas in relation to urban transformations has become particularly significant since, with the first generation of urban transformations, planning pushed to consider this occasion as one of the last to provide urban areas with large green zones, that the construction of cities, through historical processes, had not made possible. For this reason, transformation is always accompanied by the need to include within the themes of its (re)planning that of the green. Italian cities, from this point of view, have grasped precisely this aspect: built in a hurry and not always following criteria of green spaces and amenities at a European level, many cities have come to understand (and at the same time the discipline and debate generated in the meantime) how green areas need to be a central theme in transformation
projects. Thus, cities re-plan themselves through areas of transformation, considering the construction of parks and green areas in a way which did not happen in other parts of the city. Very often, green areas served to reorganise the composition of neighbourhoods, as a central element of composition or as a coupling element with respect to the rest of the built fabric. Undoubtedly the consistency of the green areas has been conspicuous and it is thanks to this that the transformation of the areas has come to assume its recurrent appearance of integrated buildings and green areas. There are many examples, in Milan as in other cities, from the Novoli neighbourhood in Florence with its central park to the projects in Turin along the Spina Centrale, and in Milan in smaller areas as well transformed during the time of the Programmi Complessi, often with specially designed green spaces and new parks. This generation of transformations was intended to provide the cities with new green areas, to respond to the historical lack of them in city-centre contexts and to provide the areas themselves with features capable of properly composing volumes and spaces. Most of these compositions, however, have seen green, albeit in the correctness of its compactness often at the centre of the areas, determining views that are also important, as a presence in its own right, sometimes linked with the roads and the tree-lined networks of the transformation itself, but often separate from urban environmental systems, due more to the location of the areas within the urban fabric than to a lack of planning. Only some cases, just as the Spina Centrale of Turin or some of the systems included in the Urban Development Plan of Rome arose from the location of careful transformations within systems or strategic routes so as to ensure that every piece built with the transformation, including green areas, should contribute to the construction of the entire system. But overall the precision and centrality of the transformations of this period did not allow green areas to assume a more marked aspect within the network.

Now, there are various aspects in terms of planning that have to be taken into account, addressing the issue of transformation within a regional context and considering the urban value of the regional transformations that are being studied.

No doubt the composition of the project of transformation has to take into account a different conception of green areas, one that is a mesh and capable of becoming a continuous connecting element within the areas. In addition to the consistency of a park, compact and united also so that the areas that make it up can express their natural value, the plan has to view green areas through a potentially hierarchical network design within the area, capable of spreading the presence of green into every corner of the area and, even more, capable of grasping the external elements and reconnecting them. In this way what is defined is a system
where green areas are on a par with roads and pedestrian routes and present in every corner of the design area. Thus, the section of the streets allows the project to really compose an important green network, replete with trees, green parterre, green parking areas, the design of car parks, the availability within built spaces of private green areas connected with the public system (even if not accessible) and the consideration of the natural behaviour of this green network.

The main strategic aspect remains the connection between the green network of the single area with the environmental systems on at least urban but preferably regional level. If, in fact, it is the capability of certain transformation areas to render themselves “regional” and to activate, thanks to their transformation, relationships on a wider scale, the capability to connect the green system with existing regional systems has to be made to count. Mindful of the role that green areas had in examples of famous designs from the past (think of Frankfurt and the Nidda Valley and the continuity that green spaces in front of houses were able to bring in terms of the regional green system along the valley), we think that each area can rightly express its own urban role even more if the green network, although constructed as mentioned above, connects with larger urban and regional systems. All the more so by addressing areas whose non-central position allows them to connect to the external open systems, demonstrating in this case too their strategic importance and allowing the areas of the project to build a piece of that regional green area.

Finally, insofar as green areas may assume, in their design, the main value of an element of the composition of the urban system, it is its naturalistic behaviour that the project must consider. The design cultures of Northern Europe have for some time begun thinking that green areas in urban compositions should be able to take on a truly ecological value. Undoubtedly regarding it as a network element increases the ecological capacity of all its parts, but at the same the naturalness has to be able to express itself in the behaviour that the green areas assume together and in relation to the built space. I do not believe it is right to overemphasise this aspect: there are cases and experiences in Northern Europe where the green is so pervasive as to obscure the urban appearance of the built and its other functions. I believe, though, that it is right that the green, as an element of urban composition, should behave correctly, not sacrificing its naturalistic capacities, but expressing them within the urban system, rather than at its expense. For this reason, I maintain that the project of the open space should be interpreted as a ground project, capable of defining a space of relationship between objects, individuals and social groups. The urban-planning project deals with the ground, its characteristics, biological and physical, its symbolic depth and its ability to offer itself as a platform for support and reflection for all the functions and built uses in the city and in the system of transformations. If we retrace the concept of
ground project in the Italian tradition and we return to the teachings of Bernardo Secchi, we cannot but rediscover a number of considerations especially in relation to the fullness of this concept referring to the structuring of the European and, in particular, Italian city. The ground project, in transformations, seems to increasingly assume the character of a map of the shape of the spaces, whether they be green, paved, open, with water or with other elements of urban design. The map of the shape of the spaces allows us to better understand a design that no longer corresponds to what fellow architects from all around the world seemed to want to give us until a few years ago. The free space of the built not only moves
up and down, uncovering the underground and constructing uppers that are only artificial, but it enters into buildings and confuses public and private space. The design of this mesh should also has to increasingly consider the interior of the buildings, because the interior increasingly makes up the exterior and houses its uses and functions. If we refer to the construction of a map of the shape of the spaces as an element capable of regulating its design and construction, it will be no longer possible to distinguish between inside and outside, and between public and private, by referring to the mapping of relationships and uses which give shape, or different shapes, to spaces themselves; although not necessarily external and not even necessarily freed from buildings given the increasingly frequent use of naturalistic roofs (green roofs) or to accommodate functions that in other eras were at the foot of buildings (restaurants, outdoor areas).

The construction of this map allows the inclusion of rules and forms to be given to the space not occupied by buildings. Given the strategic nature of the transformation we are interested in, and given the relationships that this transformation brings with it to the urban scale, the preparation of this map makes it possible to understand how the ground, even in the complexity that can now be attributed to it, is capable of allowing relationships on the urban or merely local level. The connection with transport systems, the shape paths and walkways take, the arrangement of the functions and the way in which relationships are allowed permits special provisions in which even the weather, as a fundamental variable if related to the use of space, plays a key role and leads to conceiving anything that is at the foot of the buildings not as a grey, motionless space, but as a structured system of spaces, which, like an open hand, has to connect as much as possible with all the spaces that refer to it.

4.7 Urban design elements

In current practice there seems to be a tendency to consider the elements of urban design exclusively in applying design to open spaces, street furniture design and the way in which the open space along with its fittings and shape form the network the city, give meaning to its spaces and articulating episodes which are more or less beautiful, monumental or otherwise, capable or not of expressing the sense of the contemporary city.

We have already reconsidered in the previous reflection the role of the design of open space and we referred, more aggressively, to the need to think of maps, and therefore rules and implementing elements better able to interpret the shapes that the relationships of the contemporary city establish. Thinking of the contribution that urban design brings to the practice of designing areas
called on to consolidate the city-region should prompt us to formulate it differently, and in a deeper way than thinking exclusively of the design of the open space, squares, street lamps and benches.

Through the elements that urban design has always dealt with, it is possible to give shape to space, that minute and readily noticeable form which can be seen living the space, inhabiting it or using it for various functions it expresses. However, because the transformations to which we refer have the task of expressing urbanity in non-urban settings, or activating urban uses and behaviour in contexts that have not lived this way prior to the transformation, it is through the composition of the design elements that it should be possible to define the image of transformation: in other words, the principle governing the composition of the space through which the project is articulated. This is a particularly important issue, because it allows us to create an order with respect to certain stimuli to which the planning of transformations appears to have been exposed for a few years now. It is evident too, from an entirely normal analysis that any of us might carry out using books, journals and websites, that the word masterplan brings with it a certain composition and a certain urban “form”. The roads are more or less sinuous, the impact of the map is more or less green, the squares and open spaces are more or less well designed; but years of practice have led to a kind of standardisation of the product which only the attempt to astonish, alas, with the innovative forms of certain recent proposals tries to change. However, the overall composition, as well as following the principles of composition that are somewhat trivial and repetitive (the square in the middle, the boulevard that arrives there, more or less connected subdivisions along the side) precisely because it is called on to express urban forms in regional contexts, has to express a compositional principle of a wider scope and relate to a higher image of transformation. What therefore needs to be investigated is what urban form a large region might conceive of: not the over-local fallback of small squares, narrow streets, small open-space systems in a village style, but rather the succession of spaces whose articulation (and not shape) is such as to connote urban relationships and intensity. Design, in its search for the proper image around which to propose the transformation, cannot simply limit itself to controlling the shape of what is being created, be it open or built. It has to govern precisely the background image that presides over the transformation. Thanks to the background image it may thus be possible to maintain control over certain particular dimensions, which we list here.

Among the most significant contributions to the design of contemporary environments and which are able to express their urbanity, the increasing complexity of the way in which the ground space is articulated is of particular interest also and especially in terms of urban design. Proving that it is no longer
true that urban design is applied only to the design of urban ground, urban ground itself has become articulated. The subsoil has become an integral part of the composition and articulation of urban functions: if enclosed inside buildings, in the form of malls or passageways, it still assumes the shapes and finishings of the building to which it belongs, not those of the urban space it claims to extend. Above all, it is rarely open and connected with the outdoors while, when it is, the composition of space becomes innovative and allows the creation of compositions in which the walls, for the lower floors, form protection against the opening to the sky. The increase of built surfaces (for commerce or services) often justifies this solution, but it is evident that the increase of ground space provides a powerful element of urbanity to the transformations which employ its principles. Similarly, as in more urban contexts, there is a multiplication of the functions that utilise the upper parts of the buildings; thus many transformation projects, specifically in continuing with the creation of additional ground space, discover an “above” that was traditionally used for private functions. The tops of buildings are part of the urban composition: whether given over to green and the creation of parks and roof gardens, whether intended for recreational uses (such as bars and restaurants), it is part of the new way of understanding the intermingling of private spaces and spaces accessible by the public, even if not at street level. Clearly, the articulation of space in new elements, above and below, leads urban design to have to deal with the way in which ascending and descending are organised. Vertical paths thus connect the new ground and fall within the distinctive elements of the city.

The street, the basic and organising element of the space of all cities, always and everywhere, is clearly the element that is most involved in the planning of space in the transformations. Precisely because of its being a central element, essential and capable of ordering both public and private space, open space and the built, and again accessible space and that intended only for certain categories of users, the street takes on particular importance in thinking about urban transformations in the region. It does not appear that the most recent urban compositions and transformations have abandoned the street as an ordering principle, also of the transformation of space, and this demonstrates its strength: it is always a linear space, longitudinal to sometimes taking on the characteristics of an equipped spinal column, sometimes the nature of the urban street of villages, sometimes the form of boulevards and promenades. It is always, however, the alignment of buildings and functions and the longitudinal development that organises the space. However it seems that in cases of transformations of greater regional scope and ambition the street needs to behave in a different way. Because of its nature, the street as an ordering
principle can work on its most interesting feature, that of being permeable. It is not just a matter of ensuring connections and crossings, but of opening up constantly and frequently to welcoming relationships and connections with what surrounds the street. While retaining its character as a longitudinal organising principle of space, the street at the same time opens its wall and can accommodate all the relationships that surround it, opening up to include spaces, buildings, functions and uses. In this, it can become a system, made up of various elements, and, as such, dialogue at the territorial level with other systems, and structure a relationship on a larger scale, while maintaining its
role of being one of the most obvious elements of the urban. There have been well-known cases where the street has assumed this characteristic and has thus guided the development of various transformations, but it is even more important to note how certain recent episodes of transformation conceive their linear street system as a moment capable of aggregating a larger element that is able to dialogue with a greater scale. Conceived in this manner, the street also takes on particular roles in relation to its use by means of transport. Some recent transformations show how at present a significant weakening is underway of the street as a large-capacity transport system: the transformation from highway to boulevard is one of the more recent phenomena of transformation within urban systems in demonstration of the fact that the street is increasingly seen less as a traffic connector and increasingly as an urban element, capable of organising space around itself. We would like to think, however, that it might assume more contemporary forms and connotations along with more historical references. The vital street of a number of rationalist compositions, understood as a linear space alongside which could be placed various functions, public and private, but representative of the urban degree and level of the composition, has always been a space, more than a road, capable of maintaining the function of

73. San Francisco, CA. The double-decker Central Freeway in 1959, cutting through the hearth of Hayes Valley and crossing Market Street
longitudinal connection, of hosting some traffic components, but, above all, of organising the layout of buildings in a creative form around itself, also because of the choice to not always and necessarily use typologies lined up along the street but free-standing buildings, towers, more open compositions that are less constrained by the alignment.

So does there exist a question of “style” in the compositions of contemporary transformations? Is it possible to think that, just as the major structural changes which cities are undergoing are so significant as to change relationships and weights in regional geography, in the same way a style of composition is spreading, so as to be able to recognise recurring and connoting elements of precisely these transformations?

This is the basic question that this research seeks to understand, from various points of view. If the areas of transformation and the processes of transformation are the instrument through which metropolitan areas appear to increase the density of certain nodes, in relation to the presence of new infrastructure systems, and if at the same time (as in the case of Detroit) the strategic nature itself of some transformations allows a rereading of the metropolitan dimension, reducing it, concentrating it and increasing density in certain parts subject to transformation, is there a recurring style, i.e. is there a recurring way of composing the transformations, assembling their components, designing the space and relating to the metropolitan dimension to the point of becoming elements of new urbanity? Regardless of architectural style, the areas whose purpose is to bring new urbanity to contexts where it was lacking, seem to follow certain particular compositional conditions: tending to the construction of a highly urban environment, first of all, they tend to compose an urban space made of buildings, open spaces, green spaces and spaces of relationship. That is, the composition making use of a masterplan as an implementation tool and thanks to the tension of producing elements of an urban design, aims firmly at building very strongly urban types and objects. Regardless of the style: it is not the references to a classical or traditional style as in the case of The Woodlands in the Houston metropolitan area or the more contemporary trends of areas of London or many other places. What matters is that it is precisely because of their relentless drive to demonstrate the urban component of the transformation, these areas are all composed by aggregating urban elements, and density plays a key role in this aggregation, the division into different areas, more or less dense, always recognising a central, main system, the pervasiveness of the green space and pedestrian systems as a fundamental connective. Certainly, the architectonic style has a particular relevance not because we believe that the level of transformations with “urbanising” ambitions in relation to built
regions necessarily has to use some languages and not others, but because through the architectonic style the same force that produces these transformations seem to assign them a particular connotation.

In the United States especially what appear are transformations strongly inspired by the principles of New Urbanism. The alignment of buildings along grids of streets that are rigidly orthogonal or, in any case, capable of designing regular blocks and alignments, the variety of types that is still able to recreate an urban environment of a past time (in which prevail arcades, “classically” composed facades, the use of stone and brick, arches, gables, etc.), the succession of classically designed open spaces, including pedestrian areas, highly regimented traffic lanes, sidewalks, flowerbeds, etc. All this creates an atmosphere of an “old” city whose purpose is to define a friendly place, capable of referring to the way in which in old cities relationships developed between people and to the sense of belonging that users and citizens were able to manifest in their dealings with that environment. From the point of view of the relationship between these changes and the regional system, it should be noted that only some are really able to establish new places of urbanity and with strong regional relationships. Most of the areas which in the North American context seem to refer to this style are actually placing a new product on the market, one that is isolated in the suburban system and not connected to networks except in cases in which it is the infrastructure programmes themselves that lie behind the birth of these areas (such as, for example, in Denver or Portland). It is not the densification of buildings or constructions within the point/setting that transforms it into something capable of giving meaning and organisation to the urban sprawl: it is merely an extra product, with a different image, inside that very widespread and non-urban system.

On the contrary, it seems we can say that precisely those contexts, in the United States, in which the construction of areas of transformation with a strong urban connotation derives from programmes of rebuilding infrastructure and coordinating the urban growth system through strategic regional planning instruments, which see the birth of transformations whose language is already different: while still able to replicate the minutiae of historic cities, the composition, the architectonic choices, the building types lean strongly to expressing the architecture of the node, the hub and the central destination, accessible and meaningful from an urban point of view. These products come very close to the European way of thinking about areas of transformation with a strong urban connotation, made up of combinations of typologies in which the use of contemporary architecture gives life at the same time to attempts to compose equally contemporary open spaces and relationships. The same language and the same use of certain forms of architecture leads back to
the expression of a certain connotation of urbanity. Thus from Mockingbird Station in Dallas to new, large hubs under construction in many parts of the US (we can also mention the episodes of very strong concentration and densification that have changed the face of some parts of Los Angeles⁵), the style of the transformation takes on a different connotation, one that is also more urban in the forms and way in which the elements are aggregated. Together, these transformations attempt to compose a system of new urban centres, connected by fast and public transportation systems, able together to build a macro mesh, which overlaps the slower meshes, less dense and less relational with the existing city “below”, thanks to the speed of its relationships, links, exchanges and connections.

Certainly, the connotations of greater urbanity seem to be expressed in larger areas, whose transformation is born from strategic planning tools, on a regional scale. These are the hubs that allow the metropolitan area to be “attached” to different transformational paths, linked to infrastructure and capable of aggregating suburban life, diffuse and dispersed in different forms. In these areas, whose geography often also starts from central systems of transformation (see, for example, the renovation of the Union Station area in Denver⁶), the style of the composition is evident. The use of contemporary architecture allows the construction of types of very high density space, the image of which expresses concentration and density. The multiplication of levels, the arrangement of buildings capable of crossing the boundary between private and public space by mixing functions for multiple users in a single container, the construction of open and innovative systems of relationship (as seen in the CityLife project in Milan for the design of the pedestrian system linked to the commercial part of the area), are all elements that define a particular way of expressing centrality. In reading these areas, and in inferring training for design, it is necessary to understand how these nodes are able to communicate with the surrounding areas and to trigger processes of “re-stitching” and “re-meshing” with the existing city. The main risk that these examples run is precisely this in a way, that of connoting episodes with powerful centrality and centralisation, unable to renovate the tissue around them.
The Spina Centrale of Turin is the 13 km stretch of railway that starts at Corso Rosselli in the south and runs to Corso Grosseto north of the city, and which takes in the present-day railway stations of Porta Susa, Dora and Rebadeungo. The abandonment of many businesses and industries has left Turin with a patrimony of areas to be rethought and redesigned, an area of about 11 sq. km, and it is with the urban development plan conceived by Vittorio Gregotti and Augusto Cagnardi that the derelict area acquires the status of a planned system and once again becomes a new pole for the development and transformation of the city. Green areas connect all the transformations, divided into four large sections.

I refer here, above all, to the contribution of Bernardo Secchi on this theme in his plans from Siena to Bergamo. The dimension ground design was expressed in those contexts as attention to the design and planning of all the elements that compose that “platform” and that “zero” level that is, in fact, the ground. In reality, with contemporary planning we have learned to pierce the earth, uncovering what lies below and to raise the earth, bringing it to the surface. That is, we have learned to make the earth more complex and many recent transformations show us how on this more complex mesh built space now applies its functions and relations, no longer on a single slat area to be designed, but on an articulated system of many more dimensions.

There are few cases in which subterranean space open to the above connect there directly. Think of Rotterdam and the central space of the Lijnbaan system, with the more modern additions of the Koopgoot capable of connecting the low level with the upper space, opening up a road on various levels. In this case it is nice to think that a space that could have been completely buried and covered, in reality digs out a level and articulates the commercial areas amidst the patent-ly fake rock walls. The urban level increases and redoubles and urban design provides the elements of the climb, the cantilevers, the fittings in forms that are less rigid than the nearby Lijnbaan. An analogous example of the treatment of the levels of space will be visible in the new commercial building at the foot of the three towers, in the Citylife project in Milan. Invisible in the plan, in reality the open space is articulated on various levels that increase the availability of spaces at the foot of the buildings.

In Los Angeles, Wilshire Boulevard of the ‘30s was envisioned as the city’s “main street” even though it passed through multiple jurisdictions on its way from downtown to the ocean. Some imagined Wilshire could become Los Angeles’s Park Avenue or 5th Avenue. Today in the Wilshire corridor and downtown, residential and mixed-use projects are being built on commercial and industrial parcels that allow high-density housing and are increasingly transit-related. This intensification is also reasonably popular, as most of these developments do not directly impact existing residential neighbourhoods. The key to all of this is that there is pent-up demand for multi-family apartments and condos with street-level retail in walkable settings, fuelled in part by the urban experience of new generations of immigrants. As perhaps envisioned by planner Hamilton, incremental development has actually happened consistently over time, forming a series of dense urban “nodes” with names known to all, like Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and of course, Hollywood.

These urban centres have recently been mapped showing that the “centres” are becoming similar to the mix of uses found in Manhattan or the Loop, but in Los Angeles they are much larger geographically and accessible by car, bus and in part, by subway – an example of LA’s unique urbanism. In this view, the city’s “core” now extends from east of downtown to the Pacific, and is now rich in business, religious and cultural amenities as well as a broadened mix of residential options.

One of the largest of its kind in the United States, the redevelopment of the former railyards at Denver Union Station is a case study of the power of transit-oriented urban design. This substantial public investment has catalysed an unprecedented wave of private-sector activity. Sensitive to its historic location, but fundamentally forward-looking in its technical sophistication and city-building spirit, Denver Union Station sets the standard for 21st-century intermodal hubs.
SECTION TWO
An inseparable relationship has always existed between architecture and the city, one which is rooted in their social nature and which reflects their face at the same time. Architecture, on the one hand, describes a spatial condition; on the other, it composes and determines the city, the backdrop to human action: together they represent the mirror of a society and its time, although today the possibility of grasping this is no longer so immediate. Beyond the multiplicity of issues involved in the city-phenomenon itself, in reality, the invisible web of networks that form a part of it has become increasingly dense and the degree of complexity it possesses ties the focus of city life on the quantity and variety of exchanges it has with other cities. For this reason, today more than ever, we refer to the city as an open system, affected by a dual motion of activities, the centripetal one of local networks, which guarantee its existence, and the centrifugal one that transcends its location to attach to a larger system, which includes more or less different areas of the planet. “These two movements, centrifugal and centripetal, are not mutually exclusive insofar as their simultaneous and seemingly contradictory development provides the dialectic that ensures the best performance of these two sets of functions, which are then the raison d’être of the city.”

If, on the one hand, the city ends up coinciding with a node in a global network, on the other, it is based on networks that develop internally – local networks – and from the interdependence of the two systems follows the character of life, traceable and recognisable to a specific place.

All moments of historical-social evolution followed as specificities that have gradually permeated the cultural atmosphere, indicating in some way its key theme. If today the fundamental issues of the city are related to a division – the same networks that cross it are divided into material and immaterial, infrastructure and “thininfrastructure” – it is essential to understand that it is also innervated by different speeds and that it is these that sanction new spatial determinations in which the city unfolds and takes shape. Each type of speed is intrinsically linked not only to the amplitude of the system of which it is part or the means with which it circulates its own specific flow, but also to the will of the city dwellers.
“It is they who, by teaming up with each other, can transform the city from a simple aggregate of things and people more or less related to each other into a collective player that operates intentionally to achieve certain objectives shared by the individual players, insofar as they are considered to be beneficial to all.”

In addition, to understand the reasons behind the progress of contemporary urban regions, in the era of “mature economic globalisation”, it is essential to understand how economic growth, upgrading infrastructure and urban regeneration processes are three parallel forces that nourish each other. Starting from the phenomenon of economic globalisation, the need was established for territories to compete with each other on the basis of resources, to which can be applied a financial, cultural and knowledge value. Thus a local network of individuals who recognise in themselves the same territorial identity assumes the task of creating new value for the city, combining local resources, which cannot be reproduced elsewhere – that is, the urban milieu – with the resources that derive from global networks: in this sense we also talk of innovative milieu.

These factors introduce the idea of how urban geography is also no longer relevant only in its typical morphological or quantitative aspects, but has to take account of the invisible modifications that make its new forms complex. These forms are also made up of virtual spaces, in which the dynamics of expansion and shrinkage of time necessarily mark the reflection on the urban project. The key issue addressed in this chapter thus moves against the backdrop of a conception of restructured time and space, where the first regulates the second, blurs the semantic perspective and expands it. The communications revolution has made us accustomed to an instant global reality, where the barriers of distance give way and the interaction of peoples, once markedly dissimilar, intensifies. Single bodies become cities, temporal coordinates are transformed into spatial coordinates, maps are replaced by scenarios: the traditional territorial identity systems break down and reform, outlining territorial regions, made up of solid parts, where the engines that allow them to progress are gathering, along with softer, seemingly shapeless parts.

This is the central theme of this reflection, about understanding a process of reorganising urban geography at a regional level through new infrastructure. It speaks to us about structural growth decisions taken by the Greater London Authority and its two (of four) functional organs, TfL (Transport for London) and the LDA (London Development Agency), through the 118 km of the Crossrail project (the new rail link). The way in which this is going to change urban weights and dynamics, solidifying and making denser urban parentheses, bringing out new neighbourhoods-landmarks on brownfield sites; it is linked to the image of the infrastructure, which, almost geo-morphologically pushes up, hardens and transforms land uses, pursuing the stratification of the functional
mix. These operations of urban surgery generate an implosive motion, an agent in the direction opposite to that of the explosive fragmentation of the city, densifying in a way that is selective and hybridising. “Among the physical features of the cityscape that are critical to the success of public transit, urban densities are the most important. Simply stated, mass transit needs “mass”, or density.”

The scenario is that of the articulation of the density used to compose mixed-use urban areas, connected to an advanced public-transport system that establishes a non-conflictual relationship with the suburban clusters.

Focusing on the articulation of the process taking place, it has to be observed that London has chosen the path of a strong architectural response, one that is aggressive and does not shy away from conflictual issues as a reaction to the fluidity of the flow of economic, cultural and physical forces that shape the contemporary city. It is about “discovering new potential in existing conditions” (Kwinter), going beyond the rules, and often beyond what is reassuring. London in this way corresponds to the characteristics of the regional agglomeration of the “Generic City” of Koolhaas, the one that can be described and represented as an organism dominated by “motion, time and event” in which the process is more important than the place. Public space and infrastructure, which together build the skeleton for tough new parentheses of the urban region, requiring a common rethinking, in order to avoid returning nostalgically to the compact city made of urban fabric and scene, while also not accepting as unavoidable the pulverisation of the city. “If there really has to be a “New Urbanism” it will certainly not be based on the ideals of order and omnipotence; but it will prefer the organisation of uncertainty; it will no longer be obsessed with the creation of more or less permanent objects, but with the irrigation and the injection of [regional] territories with high potential. It will no longer obsessed by the city, but by the manipulation of infrastructures aimed at endless intensification, diversification and redistribution.” (Koolhaas 1995: 969).

What emerges from the scene described is the key role of infrastructure, aimed obviously at imitating the immediate speed of virtual flows, updating and reforming itself. “This is how the idea of new infrastructure (real and virtual) is no longer tied to the path, destined in time to be increasingly compressed and finally to disappear, but to the network nodes, to the various departure-arrival points, to stations and airports, which become the true temples of transport, magical points where passengers “disappear” and then “reappear” thousands of kilometres away at another magic point.”

Among the concepts that can “bring innovations” highlighted by De Sola Morales in Territori, the first in particular encloses the sense of the second chapter, on the Integrated Station City Development of Tokyo, high-density fragments with very high functional concentration. It is that of “bigness, an original
word, difficult to translate, which places a primary focus on the new scale of urban problems and architectures as well. Large containers, large infrastructure and transport terminals constitute – in a culture of mass consumption – a sort of artefact for which conventional architecture does not seem to have any particularly appropriate proposals. This change of scale is qualitative. It concerns the very way of designing, making and operating, and places architecture in front of previously unimaginable processes, revealing for the current city, the endless and sprawling metropolis, a kind of relationship between architecture and the city that is very different from that of Grosstadt tradition.” (De Sola Morales).

Vertical nodes, real “machine-layers”, off-the-scale maxi architectures, which articulate the conception of the station as a point of arrival/departure and take the nodal value of these new organisms to the maximum levels.

Instantaneous speed versus slow speed. Time today has a weight such as to be a further element for shaping space. How? Through infrastructure. Infrastructure related to the pivotal theme of change. “Society is advanced society the more it is easier for the individuals who compose it to understand the time of the city and feel at ease” (Edward Glaeser). It is the third chapter, that of the “return” to the masterplan in a European style which re-focuses the individual’s scale, albeit in a node that functions on a global scale. King’s Cross. The planning of the Greater London Authority has distanced itself from the logic of zoning and orients its development strategy on the combination of infrastructural accessibility-functional mix, focusing on the CAZ (Central Active Zone), Opportunity Areas and Areas for Intensification. At King’s Cross, the first transport hub in Europe, the process was begun by attractors with the aim of defining a concentration of functional mix (culture, technology, medical research...) on a global scale. It is representative of the need to set to one side the “traditional critical problems” with which we analyse the value of the node and its character of suspension between local marginalities and its supra-local role, by virtue of the fact that mobility wins. Another concept of De Sola Morales comes into play here: “The concept of the generic as an antidote to the obsession for the specific, the local, the picturesque. It is a way of recalling attention to the importance of the structural decisions, of the underlying challenges, of the metaprojects for which the specific, in any case, will be produced subsequently, with different processes, like a kind of saprophytic life grafted onto the main organism.”

If the object under study began from concepts of density, infrastructure, the role of agglomeration in the regeneration processes, it has been pretty clear from the outset that this had to be the means and not the end, to allow the shift in focus with which conceptual contemporaneity thinks of the city. The thesis has therefore become a selection of processes that enable the fixing of the translation: from proximity to connectivity, from history to adaptivity, from masterplan to master programme. However, if this theoretical shift already took place 20 years
ago, what we are called on to investigate today is the move “from rhetoric to practice”. The contents now are 20 years old: what they are actually producing? What will they leave to the city of tomorrow?

5.1 Density at the basis of urban regeneration

Crossrail represents today the greatest infrastructural effort and urban rail link project in Europe, with the completion by now of AlpTransit in Switzerland. It is the railway link that will serve Greater London, bringing fast and efficient rail accessibility to the West End, the City and Canary Wharf, the three largest employment clusters, and connecting Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east, and Heathrow Airport and Maidenhead in the west, for a total length of 118 km. In terms of mobility, it will ensure better services for rail users, reducing crowding and journey times and introducing new travel options, at the same time as facilitating the interchange between different modes of movement (London Underground, National Rail, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway and London Bus services). The project involves the construction of eight new main stations (Paddington, Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon, Liverpool Street, Whitechapel, Canary Wharf and Woolwich) designed to meet the increased capacity of possible interchange with the existing network. In addition to the construction of 42 km of tunnels beneath the busy streets of Central London, the project involves the improvement and transformation of numerous abandoned or under-used stations and railway lines in the metropolitan area. There are three key objectives that the project is intended to meet:

1 To support the “sustainability” of economic development and population growth through the enhancement of the functionality and capabilities of the transport systems, resulting in a significant reduction of congestion on the roads network, and rethinking the role of the road in the urban development of the city;

2 To improve the connectivity of the transport network through the reduction of travel times;

3 To bring general benefits to the urban region, with implications that go far beyond mere “mobility”: the increase in accessibility in a broad sense (including significant improvements for those living in areas with “limited mobility”); therefore including people’s access to employment, schools and other facilities; with implications for transport security (less crowding, reducing road congestion and the number of accidents), and significant environmental implications, with the reduction of CO2 emissions.

The Crossrail project aims to achieve these objectives:

1 By directing and supporting the problems of the inadequacy of the two major
transport systems: the national railways (National Rail) and underground network (London Underground);

2 By bringing or significantly improving accessibility to the regeneration areas identified in the London Plan (2004), thus connecting urban regeneration to the creation of the transport backbone.

Providing a new infrastructural backbone for the growth of London, Crossrail is essential for the implementation of the strategic objectives of the London Plan (2004), especially with regard to the awareness that there will no longer be urban transformations aimed at growth without an appropriate programme of infrastructural support. It has long been proven to be necessary by the growth policies of European cities, including London, to aim for the arrest of land use beyond the current city limits, and the railway link is strategic specifically
because it is able to trigger internal processes of urban regeneration and the creation of new places to live, encouraging the diversification of the centres that form the urban geography. Crossrail is a vital lesson for Europe, because it has been addressed as an active response to the 21st-century challenges which cities have been called on to face: to provide concrete responses to the sustainability of urban growth by adopting anti-sprawl policies. The theme applied on a large scale in Greater London with the new railway link is the spatially integrated use of developments with the new form of mobility introduced, which is feasible only through the coordination of the transit system with a rethinking of the related land-use. The integration of mobility with land-use is considered to be a valid approach for structuring sustainable urban forms. Above all, Crossrail was conceived, for the first time, in the form of infrastructure with a strong urban character (a rail line, with frequent stations) but in a regional dimension; the interchanges are considered areas of urban densification, wherever they are,
along the line. In this sense, the project defines for the first time a backbone of densification with a strongly urban character, but for a very large urban region. For strategic planning aimed at the integration of urban renewal and transport to be successful it has to be tied to the institutional capacity to conceive a long-term vision of the urban forms that are desirable and those which are models that ought to be abandoned. This vision has the task of moving from the “visualisation” of mobility to that of the places: the dimension of the displacement, in the physical and figurative sense, of a transit system makes sense as an aim. And this is the conceptual leap that planners have to make: connecting two or more points involves connecting people to places, which is why it is linked to the planning of parts of the city that have to be first and foremost places in which to live, work, have fun, learn and interact. In this sense, the approach adopted by the Greater London Authority for Crossrail represents an example of planning and “visualisation” of desirable urban forms (mostly related to densification), and the integration of land uses means that investments in transport move from being a mobility project to a project that guides and redefines future development for a desirable city. A dual role, then, both city-shaping and community-serving. This shift in conception involves a different kind of attention: there is a need to focus on the places and how people live those places, and new accessibility is only part of the picture which should include liveability, socio-economic improvements and social inclusiveness.

Having a vision is required to bring about a real coordination of urban growth towards urban forms that are positive in the medium and long term. It is equally important that the vision can be communicated to the “public” component. The ability to “transfer” a multi-sector and highly complex operation involving the transformations of urban amenities to people is another reason to look at Crossrail: citizens must understand and relate to this type of transformation, and not only because for years they will perceive its daily “interference”. Plans that have positively engaged public attention, such as the “Finger Plan” in Copenhagen or the “Star Plan” in Singapore, have used metaphor to deliver the content of the long-term vision in a simplified and understandable way. We might talk about a marketing plan, and in terms of communication the Anglophone model should be taken as an example in terms of involvement in the transformations; years in advance citizens know exactly what the results of the works will be, when and how they are proceeding, and how they will have an effect locally.

The project made use of the creation of institutional frameworks. The creation of an institutional framework has to be at the basis of the transformations. It is necessary that there be a very close communication between the bodies involved that control land-use and those that deal with infrastructure, and that they continue for the duration of the process to have a role of reciprocal control.
The institutional framework has to hold together the government planning of the new infrastructure, the aims of the city and local interests. In Human Transit, Walker (2011) dissects the complex nature of the planning process in three dimensions, three levels that have to intersect and complement each other: the plan of land-use and investment in transport, the plan of the project that needs to constantly relate the short to the long term, and the size of the different levels of the entities concerned. The role of the local planning authority is fundamental in the process, insofar as it is closest to the local context, as well as the best placed to express preferences on land-use, with its understanding of what are the desirable or avoidable local consequences, and capable of gathering the opinions of the community. Various bodies were involved in the project, and in particular: The London Development Agency, a body which is part of the GLA (Greater London Authority), was commissioned to address the sustainable growth of the metropolitan region, and played a key role in addressing and defining the policies to be pursued and in forming relationships with partners and investors. The first of these players is Crossrail Ltd, the company entrusted in 2008 with the design and construction of the infrastructure, wholly owned by Transport for London. The Crossrail project is in fact entirely financed by the union of the Department for Transport and Transport for London. The second key player is Transport for London (TfL), the body responsible for public transport in Greater London, a co-sponsor of the project with the task, according to the GLA Act of 1999 to “develop and implement policies to promote and encourage safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within London”. In particular, TfL’s Interchange Team was instrumental in the planning phase for the development of a flexible and balanced approach that would place first the needs of users and the attainment of the highest degree of intermodality and connections with the existing network, evaluating in particular the potential impact around the 6 major interchange nodes, present land use and potential. Finally, the role of the London Boroughs is decisive, the local planning authorities who have the role of coordinating and controlling all the processes of growth related to infrastructure, the approval of the development, land-use changes, planning the strategy of economic and employment support capable of incorporating the benefits brought by the new infrastructure.

5.2 Sustaining growth and transformation through mobility

The public transport network in Central London is currently saturated. In particular, the greatest pressure is exerted by the radial routes on the three economic hubs (the West End, the City and the Isle of Dogs). The growth in employment
highlighted by the London Plan in these three areas exceeds 500,000 new jobs by 2026. The result is an estimated growth of 40% in the demand for public transport during rush hour, bearing in mind that at present the situation is one of passenger flows beyond the supported limit. The growth of congestion on the rail network is one of the elements flagged up in the Mayor’s Economic Development Strategy in contrast to the growth of employment and the economy. Transporting 200,000 passengers daily between 7 and 10 in the morning, Crossrail greatly reduces the crowding indexes for the underground network (variably, depending on the line, by between 20% and 50%), as well as National Rail (in particular the central stations of Liverpool Street, Paddington, Fenchurch Street, Charing Cross and Cannon Street).

Investments in the transit system have an effect on mobility and accessibility; in parallel they increase the value of land close to the corridors and stations. It was therefore necessary for local authorities to consider effective measures to prevent the decline of social housing in the areas reached by the new system of mobility. The approach used by the London Boroughs involves coordination between the programmes of subsidised housing and transit development, building real “social housing programmes with public transit” in order to create the essential condition that those who make use of subsidised rent should benefit from increased mobility. In this way mobility is the main factor that supports the idea that, in the long term, the presence of a diverse but socially “inclusive” community, will be capable of improving human capital, increasing economic vitality and creating better urban places.

Crossrail thus acts on two levels: firstly with the strengthening and intensification of the economic heart, secondly with the regeneration of the suburbs.

Outside of the centre, it responds to the substantial demand for new spaces for living by acting on regeneration and intensification opportunities, both to the east and west. To identify areas to be considered as priority and strategic, evaluation instruments were used: the first is a critical reading of the geography of cases of Deprivation and Inequality, the second is going to serve as many cases of Market Opportunity as possible through the new infrastructure.

On the one hand, it is essential that the public sector invests and intervenes in areas characterised by economic exclusion and extreme social marginalisation (almost always related to poor infrastructure) because, being able to benefit from the new infrastructure will reverse the tendency to exclusion. On the other hand, it is essential to intercept the areas marked by the London Plan as market opportunities in order to balance the operation economically. The parameters to identify them are: reduction in journey times, floorspace available around the stations, still undeveloped planning permission (residential or not), retail turnover, proximity to brownfields and/or housing strategic land.
CROSSRAIL AND TRAVEL TIMES REDUCTION

Crossrail project expected travel time reduction and expanded building capacity in some nodes.

Sources of information:
- Travel time reduction: Transport for London (TfL)
- Floor space amount for location: Mayor of London Town Centre Health Check. Includes retail and leisure floorspace only.
- West End (Central London), with 1.639 million of square meters is shown on a different scale considering that at the same scale it should be ten times larger than Ronford.
CROSSRAIL and BROWNFIELDS AVAILABILITY

The map shows the reduction of travel times to Central London (considering Farrington as destination), thanks to CrossRail. The strong reduction is more evident in East London. Abbey Wood commuters will save approximately 40 minutes, changing completely its level of accessibility and its potentialities as development area for tertiary and residential uses.

CROSSRAIL and STRATEGIC LAND FOR HOUSING AREAS

The map shows the increase of development opportunities for Town Centre on Crossrail line. It shows the amount of strategic development areas as for residential uses, considering 1 and 2 miles radius from station. The largest potentialities are on East London as understood by the London Plan in 2004.
The map shows the economic potentialities for retail location on the Crossrail line. **High turnover** in the retail industry could be reflective of a booming economy. In this environment, retailers may become more competitive and offer increasingly attractive compensation to employees. Individuals might change jobs more often in order to obtain new challenges, and subsequently retail turnover, whether in the discount or high-end arena, may rise.

The map shows the amount of development areas for which planning permissions have been already issued, for residential and non-residential uses. Woolwich, Ilford e Canary Wharf are the areas with highest potential development, within the strategies of the London Plan.

The Crossrail project and new economic development opportunities on the route

**Source:** Mayor of London Town Centre Health Check
Overall, the whole urban geography along the route will absorb positive effects resulting from the construction of Crossrail. The strategic identification of priority areas does not subtract effectiveness from the global effects that will be felt by each location, because of the specific role of these assets within the city. The speed with which the city implements the infrastructure is a key issue in reading the degree of maturity and effectiveness of the planning. Infrastructure is planned and, at the same time, the transformations are planned, interventions begin on the public space and on the improvement of accessibility to the new nodes. The city of tomorrow is visualised, so that local authorities can orient/change directions.

The Confederation of British Industries underlines how the financial sector prefers London as a venue for business and investment to other world urban contexts. The efficiency of the transport sector in relation to “international accessibility” however represents one of the main reservations. The strong demand for investment in transport from the FBS sector (finance and business service) has been recognised as valid by the analyses and reports of various Government departments. One of these is the HM Treasury 2006 report “Financial Services in London: Global opportunities and challenges” which states: “The quality of the urban environment understood both in terms of inhabitability and as a working environment is a determining factor in global-scale location decisions for financial services firms. The government has acknowledged in the past the lack of infrastructure investments in the capital, and is committed to raising the quality of life by investing in the transport sector to compensate for the current weaknesses.”

Edward Glaeser, in his investigation into “how urban spaces make us human” in “The Triumph of the City” focuses on a key point (and answers the question “Is London a luxury resort?”):

“Whereas the typical nineteenth-century city was located in a place where factories had an edge in production, the typical twenty-first-century city is more likely to be the place where workers have an edge in consumption. A century ago, firms were tied to spots like Liverpool or Pittsburgh because of natural attributes like harbors and coal mines. The global decline in transport costs means that companies are now footloose, free to locate where people want to live. In some cases, that freedom has led to suburbia or the Sunbelt, but increasingly, attractive cities like London also entice enterprises and entrepreneurs by their quality of life.”

The economist “of the cities” emphasises the point: just as they benefit “from the urban ability to magnify human creativity”, physical and social mobility should be nourished by the city: “More people will choose their locations on the basis of pleasure as well as productivity. To understand why cities are succeeding and whether they will continue to thrive in the future, we must understand how urban amenities work and how consumer cities succeed.”

These considerations, however, should not look like a digression for the purposes
of “understanding the process”. The relevance of the matter is demonstrated by the emphasis placed by the London Plan, the technical papers, the reports and the economic analyses that deal with Crossrail and its strategic role in maintaining London’s current position as a globally attractive city.

5.3 The economic planning of the investment. Regional transformation as a motor for economic development

For the first time, with the case of CrossRail, conventional approaches for the economic evaluation of the operation and the new construction (using the parameters outlined by the Department for Transport DfT) were joined by non-conventional evaluation tools (“wider economic benefits”) in which parameters not covered by strictly economic evaluations of impact, such as, for example, the introduction of the “value of time” in economic terms, were considered in the estimates for the evaluation of the impact that Crossrail would have on urban growth, on employment, on productivity in the region and, in general, on the ability of the region to transform itself into a compact and dense urban context, and not a sprawling, disconnected metropolis.

It is interesting to note that in the broader context of evaluations, if in economic...
matters they are included while keeping them separate from traditional parameters, these appear extremely relevant to understanding the relationship between infrastructure and urban growth, densification processes, processes of renewal and transformations and, above all, processes of agglomeration around the stations and urban nodes. “The same forces that cause cities to exist – agglomeration benefits – provide additional effects that should be included in urban transport appraisal. Estimating their exact size remains the subject of future work, but to ignore them is surely to miss one of the benefits of urban transportation improvements.”

At the base of economic evaluations applied to investment on transport is the
comparison of the net cost of the scheme with user benefits, resulting from its implementation and entry into service. The economic amounts referred to are in millions of pounds at 2002 value; over a period covering 60 years from the year of entry into operation of the new transport line. In the Statement of Expense approved by the UK Parliament, in the Crossrail Bill of February 2005, the estimated costs for completion of the work amounted to £13,902 million, including capital costs, maintenance and operating costs. After the costs, the benefits that Crossrail might bring to its users are listed, in particular considering the following parameters:

- Time savings
- Cost savings from the reduction of motorway traffic, including the reduction of the costs resulting from accidents;
- Increasing the comfort and quality of journeys, including a reduction of crowding on other rail systems;
- Increased accessibility to public transport for the disabled, who are often excluded from the labour market

The “time-saving” parameter, resulting from faster journeys, a reduction in the need to break up trips with changes of line, a reducing in waiting times, is the item with the greatest weight for the economic considerations that will result (accounting for 65%). The significance of the parameter requires a differentiation in the analysis phase of the different “time value” associated with the various categories of users, introducing specifications in relation to the type of activity and use (between business users, commuters, tourists and ordinary citizens who are travelling for shopping or to use particular services). Estimates show that the value resulting from the entry into operation of Crossrail in terms of user benefits exceeds £16 billion.

There are three parameters that determine the overall assessment, i.e. moving from various other means of transport (especially considering car traffic) to and in favour of using Crossrail, change patterns trip resulting from the user benefits provided by Crossrail, and finally the development of business opportunities in the new agglomerations and new stations and onboard trains, in terms of the sales of new services. Like the costs, revenues are also subject to review and price adjustment according to DfT estimates. The comparison between the gross proceeds almost capable of entirely covering the project costs, and the reduction by transfer from other movements shows that 55% of revenues are transferred from other public transport operators, divided between the rail network (National Rail, 30%), underground (LUL, 21%), bus (3%) and light rail (DLR, 2%). Finally, the ratio of benefits to costs is calculated, assuming a very robust benefits-cost ratio (equal to 1.80:1) in favour therefore of the feasibility and sustainability of the operation.

The consultation documents and reports on the economic estimates provide
other parameters, not strictly conventional, but equally important, that link economy, urban morphology and degree of human interaction. They are based on the concept of the agglomeration and the increasing specialisation of the nodes in the network.

“The costs and benefits of transport investment go well beyond the direct user impacts and operator benefits traditionally considered in cost-benefit analysis. There has been significant interest in recent years in the wider economic benefits driven by the desire to understand the link between transport provision and economic performance.”

We refer to this sort of benefit as “wider” or “additional” insofar as outside traditional analytical approaches. For the purposes of understanding the dynamics at work in Greater London, in particular it is one of the “wider economic benefits” that attract the attention of this research, i.e. the agglomeration parameter. Agglomeration turns out to be much more than a parameter considered by the economic estimates, or one of the evaluation parameters for the work. It is in fact a critical issue of primary importance, which ties together three vital aspects of the metropolitan region: the agglomeration of driving services of the global economy, the urban structure and its level of density, and infrastructure investments. Above all, I like
to consider it an extremely physical matter and one linked to the urban form as an economic parameter that can be used for impact assessment and feasibility. The tendency of economic activities to build and organise themselves in clusters is defined precisely in urban economy as “agglomeration” with significant spatial implications in urban situations. Transportation, as noted above, plays a central role in supporting the benefits of agglomeration and in the mitigation of its costs for the benefit of improving the urban structure and the economy. One of the key objectives of building Crossrail, outlined by the Greater London Authority, is that of being the infrastructural backbone for the continued growth of the financial heart of the city, in terms of Finance and Business Services (FBS), to the extent that the path of the link connects the three major FBS “employment clusters” of Greater London: the West End, the City of London and the Isle of Dogs. The strategy set out in the London Plan in fact foresees the new infrastructure and the reduction of travel times resulting in an extended but unified polycentric financial core, as a vital part, or the most vital and productive part, of the Central Activity Zone (CAZ) with the highest employment density in the country. It is worth briefly considering the setting of the London Plan, the coordination and implementation of which, of course, will be significantly assisted by the construction of Crossrail.
The London Plan policies (2004) are at the basis of all reasoning on the relationship between urban growth, planning, new infrastructure, and population and economic growth. It provides, among its indications, the creation of 636,000 new jobs thanks solely to the entry into operation of CrossRail, concentrated largely in Finance and Business Services. In the dynamics of the city, this will involve a significant concentration in the three FBS areas, in addition to the growing demand for new housing, but, above all, leading to a considerable domination by the FBS sector in the urban geography with significant implications for the transport sector and on the shape of urban density.

“Growth will be focused within those areas that are served by the most congested parts of the rail network and that growth will be almost entirely dependent on public transport (no additional highway capacity is planned and even before congestion charging, commuting by car into the central area was declining”11. This also confirms the centrality of Crossrail for the future growth of the three FBS areas in relation to the global competition (putting London alongside New York and Tokyo in the global challenge of the most productive cities/regions). It is not surprising then that the analytical models that deal with the quantification of the relationship between “employment clustering”, economic productivity and transport over the last 10 years have become increasingly accurate and timely. “The UK appraisal framework for incorporating wider economic benefits into the investment appraisal process provided the first well thought out approach. This approach was used to estimate the wider economic benefits for the Crossrail project in London. The impact the project would have on productivity and Central London growth helped the project secure government funding”12. One of the first economic appraisals for CrossRail was still structured according to traditional models (with the considerations of benefits for users, saving time, reducing crowding) and generated a significant increase in capacity and accessibility to Central London. However, the ratio of investment and gain, expressed by the parameter of benefits-cost ratio (BCR) did not demonstrate enough benefits and, above all, did not allow the project to secure the Government funding needed to build it. It was realised that traditional analyses were not able to consider the benefits in terms of impact on urban growth in regional and innovative forms, nor the impact that the work would have on the economic structure of the region and the way in which the regional economy would react. For this reason, Buchanan (2007) develops an approach that is capable of evaluating the impact of new infrastructure on the growth of Central London and the whole of the Greater London region, evaluating the changes in terms of productivity, considering above all the parameters outlined in the London Plan. The key question contained in the new approach lies therefore in calculating how much of the “growth potential” would be restricted and damaged by the limited capacity of the transportation system.
and the macro disincentive constituted by overcrowding (in the global market) for passengers who refuse to travel on inadequate or poorly served routes. The result of the new study and the new approach seems to be significant. The wider economic benefits that are placed alongside the traditional estimates add “welfare benefits” for £22 billion, coming to £29 billion in the long term.

The importance of the growth of the most central and already more dense areas in strategic planning is linked to planning considerations and also surprisingly practical aspects. The central densely populated parts are home to the highest economic productivity and degree of specialisation not only of Greater London but of the entire global system; this derives from the benefits that the agglomeration itself is able to provide, with the growth in terms of efficiency that each job experiences by being inserted in a context of high employment density. It is therefore possible to evaluate a parallel between the clusters that have sprung up around the FBS and industrial clusters. Both, in different ways, need agglomeration to optimise their organisation. At the base of both exists the need to be connected between each other and with supra-local networks. Both are principally large mostly mono-functional containers, albeit with recourse to the use of density as a basic parameter. The speed with which the processes of industrialisation have changed the face and relationships of the 19th-century city is perhaps comparable with the speed with which the strongest sectors of the economy shape the metropolises of the world such as London, Tokyo and New York. There is no doubt that the forces that push such disruptive modelling of urban areas like London also involve transformations that might be violent, and that the rate at which the urban region become “adaptive” in the construction of urban forms that can meet the demands of advanced contemporary capitalism cannot but base their structural choices on transport, thinking back to the typological choices, densifying the strategic areas, thus tying into its success and its ability to maintain its position relative to other cities in the world. So if the engine is the economy, the city responds through the economic benefits that derive from agglomeration.

It was Marshall who first highlighted that the main reason companies and businesses tend to agglomerate is the reduction of transport and movement costs (both of goods and of people and of information); in the 19th century it was expensive to move goods, and most cities developed and built denser urban forms around transport nodes, such as railway stations and ports, since accessibility to transport hubs was a prerogative through which to make the economy work. As Glaeser notes (2008), Midtown Manhattan demonstrates perfectly the concentration of activities around the first terminal of the central station and explains the unfolding of the (still today) productive district right in Midtown. Now, even if the benefits of reduced transportation costs for goods are at the
basis of the new models of economic-urban geography (Krugman, 1991), it is equally true that compared with the past the cost of transport in the agglomeration has become progressively less significant, this being “the era of the decline of the cost the physical transport of goods: during the 20th century the cost of moving a ton per kilometre was reduced by more than 90%” (Glaeser and Kolthhase, 2004). Today the agglomeration economy is increasingly less linked to the costs of handling and transferring goods, and increasingly linked to the reduction of travel time for both good and people. The same applies to the circulation of ideas. For this reason, the agglomeration continues to demonstrate its advantages, also in terms of a significant reduction not only in costs but, above all, in times that the movement of people and goods require.

The agglomeration is a fundamental factor in understanding how cities are increasingly oriented around services systems. Deal-making, facilitation of relationships and interactions, ease in attracting new skilled workers, the dissemination of ideas: face-to-face contact is becoming the force with the greatest weight in the performance of the economy of agglomerations (Storper and Venables, 2008). Thus, contemporary agglomeration appears not only correlated to the concentration of activity but also to quality and the level of specialisation. For skilled workers it is easier to move between different jobs, and for businesses it is easier to find skilled workers. Added to this is the exchange of ideas. Agglomerated companies can learn from each other, exchanging products, innovations, employees (skills above all), increasing the level of specialisation and innovation of the sectors to which they belong. An environment that increases the fluidity and ease of transition from one job to another is an environment that allows the dissemination of knowledge. What is important to emphasise is that a greater infrastructural support greatly increases the agglomeration, reducing the costs of travel and thus lowering the cost of interaction between the spatial economies. This growth, like that induced by CrossRail, not only results in greater productivity and increased employment density, but also in the modelling of the urban region, tending therefore to densification by parts, at certain specific points.

Not only permanence but growth and the concentration of high-productivity nuclei in central cities appears as an unexpected variable in the conception that regards the information production centres: these places being deeply immersed in the most advanced technologies (the so-called thinfrastructures) it was assumed at first that the direction they would take would have been towards dislocation in line with the endless possibilities offered by intangible communications networks, bypassing the high costs and congestion typical of large cities, above all historical and already compact. The picture and the prognosis had probably not taken into account the validity and added values of the agglomerations that cities can produce, in relation to being beside to a network of companies and products, services and resources.
5.4 Greater London as a palimpsest to be rewritten

Understanding the role of the new infrastructure within processes of urban regeneration and urban growth factor means simultaneously understanding the scope and nature of development being triggered in relation to Crossrail stations, underlining the trend of transformations in their temporal forecasts and according to their distance from the station. The phenomenon is of particular interest especially for the considerations made herein, in relation to construction processes in new regional spheres such as the restructuring and densification of the metropolitan transportation system. The growing trend regarding specific investments applied to public transportation, especially rail transportation, is often motivated by expectations for acceleration of the consolidation process in existing urban systems and the capacity of generating greater density within land use planning. The most effective arguments supporting this perspective are the results obtained within specific European and North American high-density contexts in terms of success of densification operations linked to the transit system. It is nevertheless necessary to underline how, while part of the investments on the transit system may significantly support and strengthen pre-existing urban growth trends, on the other hand they cannot spark these trends where they are not already present or where there is a lack of planning arguments supporting and stimulating them; while at the same time they may certainly invert the trend of spatial dispersion when conducted correctly and flanked by effective policies interrupting land consumption. Two positions in confrontation that can be found in literature and in the cases analysed for the present research.

The first position describes investments motivated by an urban-planning will to stop the dispersion trend and growing density reduction of urban forms; or, in alternative, creating greater density through developments. The second position, which coincides with the vision of the Crossrail by the Greater London Authority, demonstrates how the best moment (and perhaps the only truly determining one for important investments in the urban public transit system) is when one begins to record that forms of urban consolidation are already underway for reasons redeemed from transportation. As highlighted by Gakenheimer (1990) in comparing the two positions, there is no effective response to the fact that the investment universe of public transportation has arrested growths already addressed to lower density and to the car supported land use pattern, however “where the densification process is currently taking place, these investments may most certainly support and strengthen the ongoing process”. As clarified in the Crossrail Property Impact Study (October 2012), Crossrail is not the only element capable of catalysing ongoing or forecast regenerations.
On the contrary, encouraging results obtained in terms of processes envisaging renewal, development, investments, densifications and architectural quality of projects highlight how the synergy between large investments in public transportation and favourable economic market conditions (similarly to those at the basis of London growth) and demographic growth determine the operation’s success. This is supported by the fact that 41% (equal to 5,000,000 sqm of SLP) of the 324 planning applications orbiting around the Crossrails analysed between 2008 and 2013 have identified them as key in the regenerative impact, capacity for strengthening business opportunities and the real estate market as factors underlying investments.

In fact, Crossrail influence is not only represented by the capacity to strengthen ongoing market trends or inclinations. On the contrary, its greatest and most noticeable contribution lies in working in a transversal and “adaptive” way on urban dynamics in Greater London, as already a polycentric region, in the form
of strengthening an urban trajectory and system that around itself may aggregate and densify, limiting development in other contexts that are not as important, densified and equipped. The scope of this urban transformation influences countless urban values, supports the reorganization of a consolidated structure by encouraging the rewriting of city brackets, depositing within traces of contemporaneity. Since the territory is an eternal object under construction (André Corboz, “The Land as a Palimpsest”). The subject of the great infrastructure demonstrates the value of a place not as data, but as the result of condensation, allows one to consider how the city represents “the result of a very lengthy and very slow stratification which should be understood before acting”; and in the case of Crossrail this suggests interpreting density in order to understand the implications of transformation. For these reasons, some key regeneration themes may be identified in the metropolitan area and its transformation into urban region.

The greater amount (in number) of transformations is still concentrated in the business services districts in the city: West End, the City and Canary Wharf.

The greater amount (in number) of transformations is still concentrated in the business services districts in the city: West End, the City and Canary Wharf.
In these contexts, the adopted town-planning strategy is that of supporting the ongoing densification trend with infrastructures and the ensuing significant decongestion of urban and transportation systems, supporting a general increase in density and therefore of agglomeration phenomena. This certainly takes place through the establishment of new commercial areas (with the construction of new landmark towers and the timely replacement of parts of the city, even individual pieces, considered no longer congruent with ongoing processes); but the most significant trend registered in accordance with London Plan guidelines is a growing request for high-rise housing. For some time architecture and town-planning have been studying similar phenomena, searching for new types of urban dwellings, with a very strong inclination towards mixed-use development, pursuing vertical development and (integrating with the already dense and constructed fabric) therefore bridging the mono-functional dynamics of a time and energizing the working districts. This is happening elsewhere, for example in the United States with the revitalization of some Edge Cities (first and foremost one should think of Tysons Corner and the same in Italy with the densification, around trade hubs dating back to thirty years ago, of new residential functions (such as, for example, in the Assago Nord area in Milan). It must incidentally be said that for decades the subject of vertical housing in London has been only confined to the practice of social housing, suggesting a particular product that is certainly not a market objective or attractive. The growing globalization of images and what is attractive on the market, the continuous renewal of the social fabric in this sense have acted as catalysts in changing the dynamics. The model observed by London in this sense is similar to the one previously observed by Vancouver, Chicago, Sydney and undoubtedly New York – creating a very thick fabric that witnesses cohabitation of work districts and clusters, together with a solid residential fabric indispensable in creating “better places” according to forms and methods investigated herein.

Another wave of transformation projects is concentrated adjacent to the Central Active Zone (the greatest density of interventions is concentrated in Tottenham Court Road and Liverpool Street areas). Therefore the areas expecting a more significant impact of ongoing transformation are those that were once considered marginal compared to consolidated economic cores (such as Farringdon, Whitechapel, Tower Hamlets, Old Street, Shoredict). These have become the new economic hubs, whose growth is expected as the main direct impact of new infrastructuring potential. These forthcoming hubs themselves will be considered capable of satisfying the demand for new business areas. Two significant examples are the clustering of new professional workplaces (architecture,
design, real estate in the Old Street area) and offices in the information/technology sector (in the Shoredict area), all the way to setting up a kind of new tech-city. These sectors give structure to the agglomeration on a more minute scale, but actually construct strategies by attacking the local context and the physical component of transformation. The form is different compared to what occurs in Financial and Business Services, as they seek costs (rental fees) that are much lower and simultaneously build non-traditional settlement types. Therefore new accessibility recognizes the strategic and territorial importance of these sectors (responsible by 27% for the employment increase recorded in London during the past decade) and sets off transformations that, although being local, nonetheless refer to a larger regional scale. Hence the new schemes approved for Shoredict work on the marginal and damaged parts of the district are united by a will to capture the unique and vibrant character of the area, creating new urban spaces for living, working, spending one’s leisure time that are entirely organized around the public space – an essential meeting place for renewal of the social fabric.

In parallel with the “major regeneration focus areas”, the most significant trend triggered by Crossrail is the creation of master plans with strong mixed-uses, on a large scale, bound to the opportunity of regeneration deriving from brownfields. One can find precisely on these vast abandoned grounds intercepted by the new infrastructure the application of a planning approach that resorts to high residential density, however reported to the scope of creating a neighbourhood, according to the principles reported in Chapter X of this discussion. Opportunities for transformation linked to density outside the consolidated city are supported by different key factors: proximity to economic hubs, greater availability of land, and the opportunity of very strong “market-ability” for these episodes of urban regeneration at the marketing and communications level. Time, accessibility and new local identity activated on the historical connotation of these areas are the principles at the basis of regeneration in areas such as Abbey Wood, Woolwich, Southall and Maidenhead. Commuting speed and frequency allow barely considered areas from the development standpoint to become highly interesting as new areas for the intensification of urban or regeneration phenomena. In fact, compared to Central London, the most significant transformations are concentrated in areas with greater surfaces and actually with greater potential for rebirth. Town centres such as Maidenhead, Slough, Ilford and Romford are the subject of countless large-scale projects and master plans – some of which are already in the process of being constructed.

Thanks to the infrastructure, cognitive geography of Greater London changes
in an extremely rapid and dynamic manner. The newfound popularity of areas such as Woolwich, becoming part of appealing residential locations, is the most visible result of the transformation and illustrates the importance of Crossrail transformations. In this case allowing poorly connected urban realities to become closer to one another means changing the fate of whole areas and entire urban sectors. Woolwich’s potential for becoming a Metropolitan Town Centre has already been brought to light by the London Plan itself. In fact, areas such as Woolwich that have been inserted in the London Plan and identified as Areas for Intensification or as Opportunity Areas have subsequently been inserted in the 2012 Crossrail Property Impact Study; they are considered “places to watch” with the forecast of new significant impacts on the residential and business market, exclusively thanks to a drastic reduction in commuter travelling time (21 minutes less) towards downtown London and other economic hubs.

These three aspects are linked with two other themes that emerge from this transformation process. The influence of Crossrail extends well beyond strengthening of ongoing regeneration processes, exercising direct impact (opening up new market opportunities) on the transformation of former industrial sectors being arranged into new multifunctional neighbourhoods (the so-called art factories) envisaging the re-use and safeguarding of the industrial legacy. The master plan for the Old Vinyl Factory, a former vinyl factory located in Hayes (on the western branch of the Crossrail) involves construction of a mixed-use district envisaging 630 new houses with an emphasis on social housing, shops, a series of restaurants around the new squares and the new roads provided for by the plan. The industrial buildings will be converted into laboratories, offices, workshops – becoming a new centre for start-ups and for the art & music sector. In the second place, the second stage in the construction of Olympic Park is included in this logic. In fact, Crossrail will be the most significant infrastructural contribution for urban regeneration that is without a doubt the most widespread one over the last few decades in Greater London, namely start-up and implementation of the second stage in the master plan for the Olympics in Stratford. With its 20-year programme, the Olympic Legacy Corporation represents an enormous opportunity for the entire East London sector (characterized by the highest indices of deprivation in the entire urban region); it will be including 11,000 homes, schools, a new hospital, libraries, shopping malls, in addition to the Olympic Park and Olympic facilities, sustained and integrated in the new fabric of the new quarter. In this case Olympic facilities anticipated, through the choice of location and building methods, the potentials that Crossrail construction would have soon developed.
5.5 Liverpool Street Station: densification of the City

Interest for the Liverpool Street Station case is linked to the existing high level of urban stratification – from Roman walls to ongoing workyards – and to the heterogeneity of the urban landscape; fully representing a physical example of the ‘landscape as palimpsest’ concept expressed by Corboz, whose succession of traces from various periods has often favoured (in terms of architectural relations) a “jarring” approximation to traditional relations. The area is part of ‘St. Paul’s Strategic Views Consultation Area’ and mostly falls within the Conservation Area in Finsbury Circus and in New Broad Street. Finsbury Circus Gardens (above the Crossrail station) appear on the “Register of Parks
and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England” of the National Heritage List with countless listed buildings. Crossrail offers the City some substantial consolidation and densification opportunities, intervening for the decongestion of the transportation system serving the district (currently saturated) and fostering further growth and influx of workers. Moreover, in accordance with London Plan (2004) with the aim of ‘revitalizing’ the City by reconstructing a social fabric that has gone lost over the past 20 years, the increase in accessibility will be supporting affirmation of the Liverpool Street Station as cultural destination for residents and visitors alike. Among the contemporary City densification trends, it can be observed that collective residence assumes a role of primary importance. Since one of the characteristics
assumed by collective residence today represents the threshold between private and public, the challenge regards (on one hand) the issue of housing variation for the affirmation of individual identity; and on the other hand, re-appropriating the identity of the place and of its culture. It is no longer enough for the contemporary residence project to reflect upon the evolution of types, so that typology is suited to the times — as took place within the Modern Movement period — but there is a need for considerations in its regard meant as significant urban plan, in continuity with the fabric of which it becomes a part. A sort of continuity that inside the City assumes heterogeneous and extremely interesting connotations; an initial example of which is the substitution of towers from the 1980s with new landmarks that have been conceived as the latest protagonists of the London skyline. Works such as Leadenhall Building by Richard Rogers are united in the search for alleviating pressure spots at the road level and allow open-space entrance to the ground floor, in some way becoming an extension. It is a new urban emergence/attractor with the peculiarity of leaving grounds free without hindering traffic and, at the same time, presenting the community with a sheltered and dynamic place to stay. “The opportunity to build tall brings with it the possibility to create grand, 21st century public spaces. The taller the building, the greater our responsibility to provide an appropriate public gesture to the city at ground level.” (Graham Stirk, Partner, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners)

As an alternative to the high-density skyscraper, some new categories are being proposed for offices, also in substitution of previous buildings, perfectly illustrated by London Wall Place. The name itself refers to its implant on the Roman walls and, in fact, with a role of restoring connections with the block it insists upon. Of course there is not a lack of valid infill interventions such as Curtain Road designed by Duggan Morris Architects or Rothschild Bank Headquarters that was conducted by OMA with Allies and Morrison. These projects are part of re-stitching, completion and grafting operations entrusted with the redevelopment of an area through fragments that may produce transformations even of a structural nature, modifying an existing fabric due to episodic points or events. While the infill method is the most suitable one for the densification of existing situations (for example in historical centres where one can meet areas that have remained empty following collapses, war or natural calamities), it is also excellent when the necessity arises to diversify and fill the voids present inside an area, where the green area at the foot of a building is too large to be covered and too small to be redesigned as a park.

Finally, attention should be paid to architecture research for new vertical housing in line with London Plan policies for revitalizing an otherwise mono-functional city, of which projects for Heron Tower (adjacent to the Barbican) and for Manhattan Loft Garden are two good examples. Their lofty real estate value inevitably addresses them to a luxury residential market; but these projects are
85. London Wall Place. New office development for mq 64,145 and new retail development for mq 1,120.

86. Leadenhall Building. New development by Richard Rogers for additional mq 85,000 of office space.

87 Leadenhall Building, cross section of the development of the building.
always striking for their meticulous research in the field of vertical housing categories. In parallel with the development of very bright living quarters, envisaging high-rise flats presented as a theatre of life with their different and transparent sections, these operations entrust the subject of collective space to the variation of strong rules (in the horizontal or vertical section) including gardens and terraces that offer privileged views over the London townscape.

5.6 Woolwich Station: new Metropolitan Town Centres

Woolwich was identified by the 2012 Crossrail Property Impact study as a “place to watch”, with the forecast of significant impact on the residential and business market in the area, linked to the drastic reduction of commuter travelling time (21 minutes less). Outside the consolidated city, transformation opportunities linked to density are bound to different key elements such as the proximity to economic hubs, land availability (mainly inherent to the presence of brownfields) and the “saleability” at the level of marketing urban regeneration itself. Bernardo Secchi, regarding the value of urban voids, defined urban interruptions as a planning theme that cannot be easily traced back to conceptually simple solutions: to preserve, renovate, empty, reuse and advertise. The difficulties not only (or only) lie in finding suitable and proportionate functions, in an accurate exploration of the probable, as much as in the identification of their possible sense. The conduct envisaged by the Greater London Authority for strategic urban voids intercepted by the Crossrail is that of conferring them with the rank of Metropolitan Town Centre, allowing for
their vertical growth on the basis of high-quality urban planning. The new vertical elements have been designated as “new visual acceleration points” of the urban region. New development of these areas is equal, in the urban geography, to their emergence on the overall landscape, namely the townscape, meant as mirroring the high potential of ongoing regeneration processes. The newfound popularity of areas such as Woolwich that become a part of the urban geography as appealing residential locations is the most visible result (in the region) of the scope of Crossrail transformations: in this case bringing poorly connected urban realities closer together means transforming the destiny of an area. Flagship regeneration leading this transformation is the Royal Arsenal development, which pursues two strategies in parallel: the transformation of the old arsenal into a multi-functional quarter, associating it to an overall master plan organizing its residential high-rise growth. Going back to M. Facchinetti’s definition of Transit-oriented development, cases involving the regeneration of areas such as Woolwich completely comply with the characteristics of Transit Oriented Development practices, which in order to distinguish themselves for operations entailing the simple exploitation of the favourable position that the presence of a station might confer to the area in question, must be inserted within a large-scale planning scenario envisaging infrastructure corridors along which it can search for positions for stations and stops, in relation to the metropolitan scenario. In summary, TOD practices should at least comply with these essential components (quoting the definitions given by Dittmar-Ohland);
- construction of locations exploiting greater efficiency allowed by the presence of transportation lines, compared to other contexts not served by strong transportation lines (location efficiency);
- articulation of a mix of functions, both at the local level by increasing the functions installable in a single node, and at the regional metropolitan level by varying the general functions of single nodes (mix of choices);
- capacity of the constructed areas surrounding the node to be economically functioning, to the point of representing one of the funding items in the construction of transportation lines themselves, standing in competition with the traditional settlement areas for its own efficiency (value capture);
- planning of urban places, paying great attention to the design of public spaces, meeting places, pedestrian and bicycle connection networks, placing emphasis on the necessary recognition of the areas built around the nodes that increases the feeling of belonging on the part of local communities (place-making);
- articulation of projects carefully uniting the connotations of “node”, therefore linked to the infrastructural dimension, and the connotations of “place” therefore linked to the urban dimension, to the planning of constructed and open spaces (node vs. place).
90. Woolwich Station new riverfront development. A new metropolitan town center

91. Woolwich Station new metropolitan town center: urban new hot spot, open spaces and networks.
5.7 Isle of Dogs. The future of Canary Wharf is mixed-use

Isle of Dogs, occupying a strategic role in the London Plan as an opportunity area and vital contributor for London maintaining its role as global city (Mayor of London 2004: Policy 5C.1), today is undergoing a new period of transformation. The London Plan estimates 200,000 new jobs and 10,000 new houses by 2026, making the area responsible for the largest contribution of planned growth in the entire metropolitan area. What deserves to be considered in these premises is the substantial evolution in the transformation approach of the Docks between Canary Wharf of the 1970s and Canary Wharf of the future. There is no doubt that during the 1980s, with the arising of Canary Wharf and its contribution to the Isle of Dogs entailing one-million square metres of offices and correlated business functions, the fate of the peninsula has changed dramatically. For the first time design has not been considered as a barrier to innovation and an increase in investment costs, but as an instrument for creating an image and a “sense of place” that are saleable and attractive on the market (M. Carmona, 2011). This leads us into highlighting the first great difference between “yesterday” and “today”: most of the operation’s success was attributed to the capacity of creating a “niche” with a strongly urban, introspective and private character capable of eliminating every form of existing morphology in sharp contrast with the context on the physical, economic and social levels. The main reason for the establishment of the new financial district within the Docks was connected to two main issues: the impossibility of building towers with large ground areas in the City, and the reduced cost of the land. Not having to submit to any of the tools for the effective and concrete planning of the area, the market created one that mirrored its own needs. An economic slump was registered in the market during the early 1990s, causing the operation to
be flooded in debts. The 1990s correspond to the stage, a surprisingly late stage, with the awareness that infrastructures were necessary in order to give a future to the Isle of Dogs as they were practically non-existent until then. Hence the public sector stepped in. Initially connections to the City through the DLR (Docklands Light Railway), then with the underground (Jubilee Line Extension designed by Norman Foster and inaugurated in 1999) were the real catalysts of the area that (in parallel with market recovery) allowed Canary Wharf to re-emerge once again. This is the second macro-difference between “yesterday” and “today”: namely recognizing the essential role of the infrastructure backbone in plans for urban growth.

In fact through infrastructure support, from the mid-1990s onwards, the second transformation stage took place (Heron Quays) with remarkable quality improvement, architecture abandoned its formal language becoming more
93. London’s Canary Wharf new densification masterplan. The new accessibility and the new strategic perspective for the area within the London Plan changes the development rights of the area.
The evolution of Canary Wharf, from a business district into a city center. Mix of uses, new pedestrian paths and a new urban feeling help in the transformation of a business complex into a part of the city, but the secret is the strategic re-planning process made possible by the new increased regional accessibility and by London’s Plan vision.
“international and corporate” and the urban space distancing itself from inclusive and self-referential logics belonging to the first stage. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the combination of these components caused that “sense of place” (that they attempted to create during the 1970s by erasing every morphology) to be laboriously “constructed”. The goal that would still remain considerably distant was integration with the Isle of Dogs context, which continued to remain “marketed as isolated enclave development opportunities” location. In 1998, regeneration involving £8.7-billion in private funding resulted in 75,500 new jobs, more than 24,000 new houses (including 6,000 in social housing). But the great figures “of success” do not mirror the globalism of the urban reality inherent to the Isle of Dogs. In fact, during those same years, the Isle of Dogs Community Foundation highlighted the clear division of the island in two: the wealthy part, redeveloped with its very high living standards, separated from the part in which “social exclusion, alienation and bleakness” ruled by a canal. A significant contribution must moreover be recognized in the case of the Isle of Dogs, namely of being the forerunner in accepting higher density urban living based upon a high-quality urban plan – a vision seeped in the London Plan itself. With the onset of Crossrail (the station was completely built by Canary Wharf Limited) a new period of development began for the Isle of Dogs. The analysis of the planning application demonstrates that this second stage would have ultimately led to a third (the present cluster) interesting the northern strip of the present Canary Wharf and the portion of Docks to the east of Canary Wharf with the establishment of a new multi-functional district called Wood Wharf.

In describing the determining factors of urban renaissance, Colomb (Colomb, C.; 2007 Unpacking New Labour’s ‘Urban Renaissance’ agenda. Towards a socially sustainable reurbanization of British cities) identified four key concepts: the “construction” of a new urban setting, the development of a social mix as instrument and energy for cohesion, the presence of strong local communities, and (last but not least) the practice of good urban design as forerunner of civilization and citizenship. The vision of the new transformation/densification stage for Wood Wharf is imbued with these concepts. Wood Wharf represents a substantial opportunity for reconsidering components of the master plan, integrating the present Canary Wharf without “depending” upon them. Two directions have been taken: construction of the new generation of work spaces (no longer Corporate Offices) and the creation of a living environment, of a strongly urban nature and of high density. The reconsideration of work spaces is linked to the differentiation both of types and of contents; new economies are intercepted (hi-tech, media firms), creating a differentiated workplace that also includes local activities; whereas the residential area is linked to the waterfront that is revitalized by public parks and footpaths. Hence the future of Canary Wharf is no longer bound only to the Commercial
Office. Wood Wharf is a “high density mixed-use development” that includes business, residential and hotel environments organized around a public space and surrounded on three sides by water. The master plan developed by Allies and Morrison, presented to the Tower Hamlets Council in December 2013, includes 3,100 new houses (310,000 sqm), 185,000 sqm of offices and 25,000 sqm of business areas. The first stage of the plan involves five skyscrapers, three residential areas designed by Herzog & de Meuron and Stanton Williams, two office areas planned by Allies and Morrison.

5.8 The new landing thresholds of Greater London

Confirming the “dual role” of city-shaping and community-serving determined by the new railway link, two fundamental issues should be underlined. Crossrail,
for the first time in a railway-project at the regional scale, has conceived infrastructure planning in a way that is completely integrated with development above and around the station, together with the public space.

Architecture planning of 12 new central stations (with relative over-site development) and the public space therein has been integrated by the initial stages. In fact, between Paddington and Woolwich an overall amount of 280,000 sqm have been planned (only for that which regards over-station development), with most being for mixed-use. This integration process has travelled through all planning stages, up until the executive stage; it is continuing in the construction stage and has been producing significant slashes to the construction schedule. The second consideration regards quality standards for new stations. The Greater London Authority, being aware of the strength and importance of London’s “railway heritage”, attributes a key role to the architecture quality of the stations within the new infrastructure. According to Richard Rogers: “These stations should be treated in the same way as the early Tube stations. These are important public buildings, which millions will travel through. There has to be somebody who knows something about design looking at this. This is serious because it could scar a community that uses a station for a century or so”. So observing the civic and institutional worth of the great stations built during the Victorian Age, while presently planning with the highest contemporary architecture standards and keeping in mind the needs of twenty-first century mobility.

In the first instance, the entire project design approach has recognized that Crossrail passengers in the future will be judging the operation’s success not only with regards to the quality of services, but also for the travelling experience as a whole. Departure and arrival. No other infrastructure plan in Europe has ever included such an extensive urban improvement project. Outdoor public space integrates station space by defining those “new landing thresholds” for the polycentrism of Greater London.

As recognized by the same GLA, too often large-scale infrastructural interventions in the past considered the matter of mobility in a strict sense and (at a later date) its local impact as a mere consequence. The Jubilee Line Extension has put into place the first significant effort (in a timely and not extensive manner) for an integrated and coherent kind of station and public space planning.

In order to effectively obtain 12 “new gates” in Central London, according to the GLA, planning of the contemporary infrastructure must reverse the logic: from “planning transportation with subsequent impact on the locations” to “setting off from locations and from local impact (identity, diversity and character) in developing transportation planning”. In this sense, the combination of RAIL CAPACITY and QUALITY PLACES is an essential
condition towards turning Crossrail into the backbone of the future growth of London.

Planning of the public space for 31 stations was completed in March 2014, envisaging the transformation and improvement of 40 areas surrounding the railway stations (being in Central London, these are divided into east and west access), with a total area equal to 190,000 sqm: the equivalent of eight Trafalgar Squares or twenty-five football pitches. Since the Crossrail operation is a macro “working-in-partnership”, even the planning and revision of projects for the public space have included various items: Crossrail “surface section”, local authority, Transport for London and Network Rail.

In “The disappearance of technique” (Repishti F., “Scavo e sovrapposizione. La sparizione della tecnica” in Lotus International n.139, 2009), F. Repishti investigates the relation between infrastructure, technological ostentation and technical progress while underlining the contemporary trend of composing infrastructure architecture that is growingly less intelligible; with the result
of being particularly pertinent for those observing the general approach taken by developers and architects who have dealt with Crossrail over-site development. As shown by the following cases, there is a tendency of this contemporary architecture in making the infrastructural component “disappear”; whereas this becomes evident when observing its building sections. Repishti argues that: The first Machine Age sincerely and programmatically exhibited its materials and its parts made of structural nodes and joints. The techniques of today are growingly immaterial, sophisticated and miniaturized, skirting at the edge of a magical event, where everything seems to be made without effort and hides the long fatigue of its production. A “body subtraction” that denies us contact with the material that the object is made of and offers us an experience on the surface, which is common to the entire world of technology, with the objective of affirming dematerialization and disappearance.
5.9 Master plan, specialization, regeneration.
The case of King’s Cross Central

5.9.1 Introduction

The subject of urban regeneration linked to new infrastructures as a model of contemporary development for Greater London has been discussed in Chapter 1. Regeneration of the King’s Cross node, entailing the transformation of 26 hectares in brownfield land, is an opportunity for analysing a transformation that
portrays the complexity of the contemporary urban structure. More than other urban realities within the European context, London can be considered an experimental laboratory that is characterized by extremely diversified urban planning experiences while affirming its experimental and inclusive urban genetic code. Chapter 3 is the one “returning” to the master plan of European matrix that intercepts the global scale. King’s Cross. The hardening of an urban environment, which overturns zoning logic, starting from attractors in order to define a concentration of functional mix at the global level, describes a necessity to set aside those “traditional critical problems” used in analysing the value of the node and its character of suspension between local marginalities and a supra-local role, by virtue of the fact that mobility wins. Hard parts of the city are necessary. King’s Cross re-development represents one of the best case studies regarding integrated planning and partnership between private and public investors. In 2000, Argent Developing Company, London and Continental Railways and DHL joined together to give life to the King’s Cross Central Limited Partnership. The said partnership has spent ten years in creating an integrated master plan holding together mixed-use buildings, public space, infrastructures and transportation, commercial office space, residential areas and cultural institutions. The result is one of the largest and most interesting regeneration projects in the world, including first class companies such as Google, newspapers such as The Guardian and academic institutes such as the University of Arts, standing a walking distance from one another and especially close to an international transit hub such as St. Pancras Station. King’s Cross is an example of how public-private collaboration may lead to extremely positive results; and how the distribution of costs between public bodies and private investors may lead to the construction of a mixed-use quarter that aims (by reaching the highest architecture quality standards) at becoming a new and vibrant slice of the city. King’s Cross is a fundamental case for understanding the sense of close examination: regeneration of nodes in urban regions is no longer only dense episodes, the recognition of their role is not only linked to the high level of accessibility to mobility and consequently (as an attractive market opportunity) the triggering of speculations aimed at densification. It is an operation that entails building a new hyper-urban piece, beginning with the functions that will be hosted within, and for this reason must not only be interpreted as a densification operation; the development of a master plan that resorts to variable densities is only the defining instrument in the establishment of this master-programme. And what’s more, it is not a matter of identifying possibilities for the creation of a specific hub (technological, or creative-artistic, or institutional sector), but rather a collection of hubs of various vocations. Although the tool that physically produces the whole project is a master plan, what is being built in King’s Cross is the dilation of a threshold, the
99. King’s Cross regeneration and transformation project aerial view with master plan
“station square” that expands to occupy 26 hectares of land. Sectors such as culture, a medical research centre, technology, business offices, newspaper headquarters, first-class shops and even street food spots are gathered together. A new slice of the city is therefore born from this encounter of thresholds.

When introducing urban “generators of diversity” in 1969, Jane Jacobs stated that “classified telephone directories tell us the greatest single fact about cities” in describing a phenomenon that is the most important one, taken individually, among urban phenomena: the enormous number and variety of the parts that make up a city; today one should wonder whether consulting *time-tables* at St. Pancras and King’s Cross Station, with the relentless sequence of high-speed trains travelling towards principal European capitals, holding a map of the *Tube* with its 6 underground lines travelling through the station in hand, is enough to understand the significance of this ongoing transformation within the first international transportation hub in Europe. More than five decades have elapsed since Jane Jacob’s vivisection of exhausted bodies in American cities that highlighted the need to “…deal outright with combinations or mixtures of uses, not separate uses, as the essential phenomena” and the indispensability of the four conditions (neighbourhood realities, short blocks, buildings of various ages and states of repair, sufficiently high population density – especially of residents) coexisting together. The need for coexistence of these four conditions has been assimilated to the point of no longer constituting an “end” for a new sector of *Global London*, but as a basis for research in the field of architecture in order to build “physical forms” of relations between areas of the master plan.

According to Robert Evans, Executive Director of Argent, regeneration will turn King’s Cross into a new hub for art and technology, powerfully becoming one of the destinations in the urban geography, as already occurred with South Bank. He states that: “We all know how to build new buildings, but how do you build a new street in central London? There’s no script for that.” So this is where the capacity and energy that has been put into the regeneration processes for London should be observed as it is the feature intrinsic to its own urban genetic code. To the point of becoming an exceptional urban reality, according to Koolhaas, “London – its only identity a lack of clear identity – is perpetually becoming even less London, more open, less static”.

What determines the conditions for regeneration of King’s Cross:

**SPECIFIC CONDITIONS:** The value of the King’s Cross microcosm, extensively ignored by London development logic, has created the conditions for its being entirely reconsidered according to contemporary logic;

**Strategic importance of METROPOLITAN PLANNING LEVELS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:** strongly attractive functional mix and densification at the basis of urban development;
EVOLVING SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN DEVELOPERS AND ARCHITECTS in the London urban context;
THE “CONFLICTING” NATURE OF THE HUB: The hub dimension in the contemporary city between global centrality and local marginality

5.9.2 Specific conditions

During the second half of the 1980s, the London real estate market was experiencing one of the most important upswings of the century, a property boom whose speculative repercussions (principally aimed at the development of office spaces for banks and financial institutions) demolished and rebuilt parts of historic Central London with two types of thrusts: the first upwards, the second outwards (in the search for more space at a lower price), all the way to brushing up against the King’s Cross sector. King’s Cross was not involved in urban upheaval dating back to the 1980s, so its history was a poorly-defined one at length as it stood in the shadows of great processes going on in the City and in Canary Wharf. On one hand this was due to decades of under-investment in the railway system and the uncertainty of planning instruments; and on the other to its image as underprivileged area offering poor living conditions to which it was associated from the late 1900s. This contributed towards making King’s Cross the urban area that was least requested on the Central London market, with lowest office rents and a paltry number of transformations: businesses operating within continued to use facilities that actually remained unchanged since the 1800s, with minimum investments and minimum renovations/conversions. Twentieth-century construction principally involved social housing and public buildings – including the British Library designed by Colin St. John Wilson that was inaugurated in 1990. The King’s Cross case deserves to be analysed for its “value as a microcosm” (Edwards 1992), invested by great transformations at an economic and social level, even more than on the town-planning level. According to Edwards, it is more suitable to speak of “re-structuring” than regeneration, in the sense that all the principal characteristics of the social fabric that made up King’s Cross have been transformed.

During the second half of the 1980s British Rail (BR), under pressure as the railway authority was being pushed towards privatisation, signed highly profitable economic agreements for developments exploiting “air rights” over railway facilities in downtown London (including Charing Cross, Canon Street, Liverpool Street). The most emblematic case of ongoing dynamics is Broadgate Development in Liverpool Street Station, the station serving Stansted Airport and the one for which BR was planning renovation. The impressive development insisting on the station (today
experiencing a new transformation phase) was built through a public-private partnership and 400,000 sqm of office space – an operation that funded the new station and allowed the finances of British Railway to sigh in relief. BR plans also contained the idea of turning King’s Cross into an economic opportunity that was the most profitable to that moment, ascribing most of the developable area’s increase in value to the establishment of a new station designed for high-speed rail (initially King’s Cross Station and then St. Pancras). BR invited developers to participate in a design and financial competition for the right to become a partner of the operation. An agreement was reached with the company that had previously been a partner of Broadgate Development for Liverpool Street Station: namely Rosehaugh Stanhope. The London Regeneration Consortium (LRC), which included BR (first land-owner), National Freight Corporation (second land-owner) and Rosehaugh Stanhope, appointed Foster and Partners for the development of the master plan. Long negotiations and intense debates followed, from 1987 until 1990, between the local planning authority, Camden Council and LRC mainly concentrated on the public will to transfer the emphasis on “strong corporate office” to “large-scale affordable housing” in the master plan. Despite the debate and interventions did not lead to a communion of intentions by public organizations (including King’s Cross Railway Lands Group, a consortium committed from “the bottom” to rejecting speculation trends), in 1992 Camden Council was about to make a decision for granting planning permission to the master plan mainly for offices proposed by the LRC when determining external factors stepped in – causing the scheme to collapse. Among the decisive factors there was the collapse of the office market during the early 1990s and consequent zero requests for office space in the previously consolidated economic hubs (the City was operating at full capacity and Canary Wharf had commenced its activities) – leading many developers into bankruptcy or closing down their activities, Rosehaugh Stanhope included. Moreover, BR cancelled the infrastructural scheme for CTRL in the high-speed stretch of the tunnel from South East London to King’s Cross Station (underground level). Economy was on the rise again at the close of the 1990s and so the final decision was made to bring high-speed rail to the north of the Thames River. The route passes under the Thames all the way to the 19th century St. Pancras stop, with plans entailing the adaptation and expansion of the station and the elevation of the tracks to the final approach. The most important consequence of the new configuration was the reduction of developable soil: from 55 to 27 hectares. However the government, believing that the profits deriving from railway administration would not have turned the operation into a profitable one, deemed financial support from private parties as necessary and therefore resorted to privatisation: the private London and Continental Railways (LCR) consortium constituted and managed the new railway. Moreover, in order to reduce the “economic subsidiarity”
scale of the private sector within the operation, the consortium was allowed to develop air rights above the existing stations (King’s Cross-St. Pancras, Stratford and Ebbsfleet) as integral part of the agreement. Once hesitations were overcome regarding the fate of the infrastructure, a series of operations and development proposals in the area surrounding Railway land were set in motion; in the meanwhile, the London Plan (2004) identified it as an opportunity area. The prospect of enormous gains opened up to property owners in the adjacent areas thanks to soaring real estate values. This took place due to three key factors: the presence of the new International hub, the proposed media image (before-after mechanism), the proximity of the very new King’s Cross Central development by Argent.

5.9.3 The strategic importance of metropolitan planning levels

“The first tool is the “urban design framework”, a two dimensional map that describes how planning and design policies should be implemented in specific areas, where government feels there is a special need of the coordination of many forces and many actors, public and private. Those maps looks like strategic local maps, something in between a strategic scheme, specifying actions to be taken and local formal specifications; usually, the urban design frameworks included future infrastructure requirements or upgrading projects with new road, public spaces, public facilities and specifications over public areas and street networks. As a framework, these maps are supposed to orient and to guide the development of such actions and such policies, pushing them to take into consideration the total effect and the impact every change to the proposed action or policy could have on the designed environment.”

The institution for regional planning, namely the Greater London Authority (with the Mayor at top management), is committed to producing the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for regional development, formulated in the London Plan document. The London Plan (2004) identifies King’s Cross as the most significant Strategic Opportunity Area existing within the Central Active Zone (CAZ). Opportunity areas are encouraged by policies of the metropolitan region into making a highly efficient and sustainable use of the urban space, correlated with the growth and densification of the said areas. The London Plan localizes within the transformation of these areas and of the Areas for Intensification a substantial quantity of residential growth and increase in work places (“employment and housing growth”), underlining the need to maximize accessibility to public transportation. In particular, the London Plan makes reference to King’s Cross as a place where the growing demand for “world city activity” can be located. Central London is presently one of the greatest attractors, on a global scale, “of metropolitan, national and
international significance” activities. According to the definition in the London Plan: “Opportunity Areas are London’s major source of brownfield land with significant capacity for new housing, commercial and other development linked to existing or potential improvements to public transport accessibility. Typically they can accommodate at least 5,000 jobs or 2,500 new homes or a combination of the two, along with other supporting facilities and infrastructure.”

Two fundamental policies:
Policy 3B.5 Mixed-Use Development
"Within CAZ and the Opportunity Areas, wherever increases in office floorspace are proposed, they should contain a considerable amount of residential floorspace. The relevant proportions will be defined in sub-regional frameworks”

Policy 3B.26
“The policy will be developed in the sub-regional frameworks, taking into account the policy in Westminster’s UDP (based on 50% office and 50% housing) and allowing for certain exceptions. These exceptions will concentrate on areas where such a mix would demonstrably undermine the strategic policy for other developments, including parts of the City and the Isle of Dogs. In such areas, off-site provision of housing elsewhere on redundant employment or other land will be required as part of a planning agreement”.

“The second level of tools are the so-called development briefs, with the purpose to inform developers and other interested parties or stakeholders of the constraints and opportunities presented by specific development site and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies. The Briefs usually contain some indicative and flexible visions about future development form. The development briefs and the urban design frameworks are both produced by local governments, or by local private/public agencies in charge of the development of a specific site. This kind of documents are something close to operational maps, full of details, intended to drive private developers action within the frame of the general public planning process, and maybe this is the most relevant aspect they have. The development briefs are documents intended to help, to manage and control the way a master plan become reality in the building process.”

This second level corresponds to the Local Development Framework, a tool for local planning that includes spatial and policy strategies to pursue (delegated to the Councils of the individual Boroughs). LDF must necessarily be in general conformity with the London Plan, defining what may be constructed and using which methods, covering a fundamental role in the protection of the environment and
in terms of preserving existing buildings. LDF are made up of key documents including the Local Development Scheme (rough development plans), an annual monitoring document on the actual developments and effects of the LDF (Annual Monitoring Report) and the Statement of Community Involvement that explains how the community will be integrated by planned development. The most relevant document in these premises is, as anticipated, the Development Brief that is a tool for comparison between local planning authority and developers. In the King’s Cross case, with a surface involving two Councils (Camden and Islington), Joint Planning was drafted. It is important to note that this level, starting from the awareness that new developments will be characterized by density and building scales that are different from those intrinsic to neighbourhoods, defines the guidelines for relations between the new and the existing.

“The London Plan, Camden UDP (2003), draft Camden replacement UDP (2004) and the Joint Planning and Development Brief (Jan 2004) set out the strategic and detailed policies to achieve these aims and recognise that the area is expected to strengthen the role, character and diversity of Central London. It is against the policies in these documents that the scheme will be assessed. In addition the Community & Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy produced by the Local Strategic Partnership and the Kings Cross Neighbourhood Action Plans are also given due regard.”

“The third level is represented by master plans, considered as the final step, and the visualization moment for each proposal firstly included in the urban design framework and finally suggested by the briefs. According to regulations and requirements, master plans are intended as the final step in this process, and the only tools capable of taking into account the relationship between buildings, open spaces and public networks, the movement patterns, the relationship of physical form of the social, economic and cultural context. The integration of the proposed new development in the existing one is part of the general strategy of master plans. Master plans are more or less a three-dimensional representation of suggested transformations; master plans are developed following and considering codes, by far the most detailed document that the British process of planning has established, even taking them directly from master plans. Master plans set out the vision, maintaining design standards at the same level master plans have figured out. This process of planning has many good aspects, in particular there is a strong desire to keep things together: master plans, guidelines, codes look like an integrate approach to control the physical transformation of a place, and they look as tools to help or to drive developer actions avoiding unexpected or unplanned results. This complex process helps in keeping an eye over the evaluation process, maintaining a strong relationship between the starting process, or the starting proposal, and the consideration of the final results.”
5.9.4 Three themes in the master plan: Variable density, mixed-use, stratification

Mixed-use development: starting from attractors

And this is where one returns to the basic sense found in the path of the thesis: the capacity of the infrastructural hub to generate denser, more stratified and more articulated forms of urbanism in relation to the degree of local/international nature of the hub. Regeneration begins from the placement of attractors, whose contents should be highly bound to the value of mobility and the capacity of the same to provide a strong sense of “identity”, denoting a specific and unique urban context such as King’s Cross. The main ingredient of an education institute among the most outstanding at an international level in the sector, such as the College of Art; in companies working in technology sectors, such as Google; in a new international medical research centre and in a newspaper is (exactly as in urban success) human resources. It carries the essential concepts of attractiveness and cultural ferment that the best part of the city manages to offer. In particular, the city and academic institutes are complementary and fuel one another; for this reason, education policies are a vital ingredient in obtaining urban success. To say it as Edward Gleaser would: “…cities magnify humanity’s strength”. Cities constitute the very fabric of collaboration; a combined production of knowledge is especially the best creation of mankind: “No matter how...
101. King’s Cross before the regeneration

102. King’s Cross relations plan
This is not the same (according to the guidelines drafted by Argent) as an approach according to which the more a scheme is “mixed”, the better it works. The so-called “pick ‘n’ mix approach” has been avoided, in which land uses are mixed with one another in order to produce combinations, both in a vertical and in a horizontal sense. The strategy adopted begins with the creation of a “variety of areas and places” characterized by an identity and by its own sense of place; and by variations in pace and urbanism that these end up generating. As underlined by Argent: when we develop these ideas, we must be aware that mixed-use development might set off a series of conflicting issues. The foresight in designing these spaces, which are both meeting and interference places, is strongly linked to the success of regeneration, in making sure that the “perception of the mix” is extremely balanced and goes well beyond the a simplistic “ground floor experience”.

The density developed by King’s Cross Central can be compared to that of Central London and recapture its variability features. The type of location and its high accessibility to mobility networks are conditions supporting the development of high densities. King’s Cross location along one of the strategic visual binding screws of Greater London and the scale of the quarter are two determining factors for the composition of the master plan. For this reason high-density has been reached with a variable use of heights and alignments, making an efficient use of land coverage. High density does not necessarily mean “high-rise”. Vertical growth cannot be pursued when it interferes with the quality of urban space. Other factors step in, such as heritage building conservation, designation of Conservation Areas and protection of “Metropolitan Strategic Views”.

STRATIFICATION: Conservation as a structuring element
Conservation is a key theme for the master plan: the fact of not finding oneself in a piece of city cancelled and rewritten by the logic of speculation. Gasometers become dwellings, wheat silos stand in the heart of the university area, listed buildings on canals as workshops and houses. The beauty of the built space entirely depends upon how skilfully spatial and planning balance (typical of London) have been reached, somewhere between the contemporary and the historic. And so conserved buildings are no longer a ghost of the past, upkept but trivialized and deprived of their true sense; the master plan builds relations in an urban fabric. Stratification creating spaces, urban sequences, squares, pauses, relating the new with the old through spatial values of the consolidated city. Fine examples of the aforesaid are the new Ticket Hall in King’s Cross station and Central Saint Martins.
5.9.5 Evolving symbiosis between architects and developers

In parallel with the role of planning, it is necessary to introduce a condition that travels through the London contemporary reality. Namely what is defined as “the evolving symbiosis between architects and developers”.

Many of the most interesting international architecture firms are doing their best work for developers. Traditionally the latter have not enjoyed a good “reputation” in relation to architecture themes, attention towards urban relations or contexts or, in the very least, with the public opinion in general. But times have changed. At present there is a marked increase in developers who hire the best firms for planning their transformations, both for that regarding the so-called “urban wasteland” and for interventions in areas whose potential is already high and stable.

This new approach resorts to the value-added of architecture and high-quality urban planning; the professional role of architects in the London context is more and more identified as “natural collaborator”, “the creative yang to their commercial yin”. Peter Murray, President of New London Architecture (NLA), speaks of an “evolutionary shift”: “...most of the developers that we see here do recognise that they have a wider duty and generally see that good design is in their own best interests, as one of the principal conditions determining the success of an operation”.

Patrick Lynch, the architect behind the re-development of the very central Victoria Quarter (4,000 jobs and 1,000 new living quarters, combining a mix of social housing, luxury apartments, offices, restaurants, shops and a public library...), highlights the substantial evolution of relations between architects and property developers, concretely supported by the growing involvement of the various planning departments. “The whole history of London is speculative development”, he says. “What’s happening now is that good planners, developers and architects are ‘working intelligently together’, and maybe architects have facilitated this shift by taking a more pragmatic, less pretentious role – by presenting themselves as problem solvers rather than purveyors of “self expression”.

Today commercial developers seek the “cultural sector” component with a view of placemaking, intercepting the ability to confer “identity” to the places intrinsic to architecture. At the same time, it is a form of adaptation to market demands: in particular the creative and technology business sector (which impregnates King’s Cross regeneration) today is searching for high-profile architecture premises to which they might associate their image and where they might transfer their vision of working space. The importance for companies such as Google to set up their premises in the first European transportation hub is inseparable for the strategic choice of establishing one’s headquarters according to design criteria that completely comply with one’s needs (no longer anonymous office...
blocks) within a high-potential transformation context. In other words, being the first “players” of the transformation itself.

The viewpoint employed by Argent, the developer behind the transformation of King’s Cross Central, was to appoint a team of architects for the development of the master plan, assigning the design of single buildings to different architects in order to produce an architectural mix and variety intrinsic to the urban character in terms of architectural production. This was flanked by an important investment in the public space, holding together this extremely heterogeneous new urban reality. Complexities entailed in important operations that had always been shunned until recently (creating innovative mixed-use, public consultation previously considered a burden, involvement of areas such as universities, the creative sector and conservation itself) are now captured. The perspective is different: “What can we do that’s extraordinary? The only way that can begin is by being clever and collaborative and understanding people and the way they live, work and enjoy themselves. Good architects are at the absolute epicentre of that.” According to Argent: *In our role as developers, we have the opportunity of determining a positive impact (even a life-changing one) on the community; this identifies our responsibility in managing our impact on the environment. In our view, too much of the debate on sustainability and the environmental impact of buildings are concentrated on the energy standards of each single building. First and foremost, we believe the challenge lies in looking beyond the buildings, our gaze should be concentrated on the way in which places work together as one, on the consideration of overall individual and global behaviour. Through development on a King’s Cross scale, we observe the infrastructures, the systems and methods of mobility itself, our spatial models based upon consumption, how to influence and modify them. This is where our opportunity and our responsibility stand.*

5.9.6 The hub dimension in the contemporary city. 
Between global centrality and local marginality.

*The infrastructural hub, a fragment of the territory that primarily responds to the needs for specialization, where forms of local marginality and global centrality warranted by the interconnection of different networks are opposed, where the formal and symbolic qualities of the urban side are dissolved into functional technicalities on the railway side.*

For decades King’s Cross has suffered and tried to rid itself from the ambiguity of its past, being a place known for crime, drugs and prostitution. Observing King’s Cross means gradually appreciating the complexity of its human interactions and its streetscape, the jarring juxtaposition of beauty and ugliness, accompanied by
an awareness of being blatantly different from any other social context in London. The transformations that have travelled through the area, changing it incessantly, have led the social fabric into becoming less moralistic and hostile to change, sympathetic to the Dickensian way of life of many of its inhabitants. King’s Cross “belongs” to four worlds: to travellers, to residents (much social housing), to the coming and going of people during the night in search of a good time. The uniqueness of its existing social mix lies in its tradition for tolerating diversity. At the social level, the effect of the increase in real estate value and rents (in general, the power of gentrification) is the departure of the working class traditionally settled within (private rents have risen 10 times more than contracted rentals fees) and of small business activities. The subject of representation of the contemporary city requires different outlooks and multiple points-of-view: from architecture to urban planning, from restoration to history, the issue of the urban image is presently in fact the object of exploration through consolidated methods and emerging technologies. The
city, as result of the relation between concrete experience and collective vision, is here taken into consideration not only by authorized personnel but also by those who live there, experience it, come face-to-face with some key issues, such as the dynamics between downtown and suburban districts. 

Pondering the contradiction inherent to the nature of the hub, Paola Pucci in her “I nodi infrastrutturali: luoghi e non luoghi metropolitani”, writes: The search for a web of itineraries, the need to propose and experiment assessment tools able to interrelate different possibilities that have, within the infrastructural node, a “place” for confrontation and synthesis is, moreover, a reason to shy away from summarizing orientation schemes for the action and the legacy of a concept of hub as element simply functional for transportation purposes – something that still today can be encountered in different interventions made on railway constructions where the search for formal and architectural solutions, the attribution of high value-added functions translate the difficulty of measuring up with the complex identity of the object of study.

In relation to the contradictory nature of the hub, a central question is occupied by the nature of the public space. King’s Cross Central Development has structured the master plan around 20 new roads and 10 squares. It is nonetheless necessary to ask oneself how public the “public space” actually is. In fact, there is a sort of tangible hypocrisy in public-private urban spaces (a subject that is very close to the city of London) where the space has, by all effects, physical characteristics of the public space but is owned by corporations. Behind the ease with which (too often during the last decade) Councils have sold land to private developers to cash in on capital, there is a real danger of damage and erosion of social freedom. The role that the public space has in the quality and structural definition of the city constitutes a necessary condition for rendering those conditions of liveability and usability that currently are hardly present, particularly in London. All that makes our cities unique and vibrant environments is drained (its only direction is consumption-oriented); replaced by 2D footage filmed by security cameras. No other example is more explicative than the case of City Hall (designed by Foster and Partners), premises of the Greater London Authority and “home” of the Mayor. In the collective opinion it is a rampart of the public space. Wrong. City Hall, open spaces, pathways along the Thames, similarly to all the office buildings are owned by More London, an off-shore investment company that rents “City Hall” of the British capital to its Mayor. One can typically notice security – obviously private security – stopping cyclists, shooing away skateboarders and keeping the area “safe for everyone”. For everyone, or better yet, for those whose presence has been approved.

Getting back to us, in fact only recently has pressure from the local community
received greater scope and support by the planning authority – insisting so that new streets, squares and green areas in King’s Cross Central be adopted as public spaces and therefore subjected to the management of normal police authority rather than private security control.

“Given the scale of the development, Islington Council could not support the majority of the streets and squares being retained in private control. The effective privatisation of space of such a large part of central London would do little to further connectivity and foster a seamless extension to the existing urban fabric. Islington Council is therefore pleased that the developer has agreed that the key highways will be dedicated/adopted as public highway.”

However, no attempts have been made on the part of public authorities to transfer legal or effective ownership (even only in part) of the land or transfers to municipal control by resorting to mechanisms such as land trust, already implemented in other virtuous cases of participated London planning (such as Coin St Development, in Waterloo).

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13 As noted by Marshall (1890), “… good work is rightly appreciated, inventions and improvements in machinery, in process and the general organisation of the business have their merits promptly discussed: if one man starts a new idea, it is taken up by others and combined with suggestions of their own; and thus becomes the source of future new ideas”
16 “The Evolving Symbiosis Between Architects & Developers in the UK” in “Blueprint Magazine” 8 May 2014
17 Pucci P., I nodi infrastrutturali: luoghi e non luoghi metropolitani, FrancoAngeli, 1996
18 Pucci P., I nodi infrastrutturali: luoghi e non luoghi metropolitani, FrancoAngeli, 1996
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6. A different perspective and a case study. Detroit, de-urbanizing and re-urbanizing a city

6.1 Introduction: Cities and the economic crisis

Considering the 2011 Mc Kinsey report (2010), more than half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced in the entire world during 2007 has been generated by the economies of 600 cities, where approximately 22% of world population lives. The first 100 world cities in 2007 have produced the 38% of the world GDP; projections over 2025 contained in the same report assumed that more than 25% of world population would be concentrated in those 600 cities, engines of the entire economy, raising to 60% the share of the world GDP they would produce. During 2007, and more evidently during 2008, a large, sprawled financial and economic crisis has produced significant changes, as well as, the projections over the future and the paths of growths assumed for the future of the urban economies. From many points of view, the global economic crisis exploded in 2007 created a reduction of jobs and wealth in 7 out of 8 cities of the OECD countries. according to the GLOBALMETRO MONITOR 2011 Report (2010), (written by the Brookings Institute in cooperation with the “Cities Programme” sponsored by the London School of Economics), less than half of the examined 200 metropolitan areas increased their economic conditions if compared to the data before the crisis began.

The economic crisis that hit the world started from a financial crisis and it boomed when this latter touched the real estate market, first and above all the residential real estate market, something evidently connected to the idea of urban development in the last century. In fact since the beginning of the new century, many urban areas and systems around the world have pushed the local economy, supporting with low interests mortgages and huge public investments the transformation and growth of many urban environments, confirming to many national economies that urban areas and cities were able to boost the economy of the whole country. After the beginning of the crisis, this system began to be under pressure; the effects are now evident in several cities, deeply affecting their processes of growth and development.
The recent international literature has started reflecting upon the role that cities have played and are now playing during the financial crisis. At least, two points of view emerge: for many scholars urban development and growth are still the only possible answers to economic and financial crisis and the city is destined to play a key role in the economic recovering (Glaeser); on the opposite side, for many others authors urban development and many contemporary urban environments are responsible for the size of the crisis and cities are required to rethink their role accordingly to a different development model (Harvey, 2008). In both cases cities are central again, even if regarded as problems or solutions (Donzelot, 2008).

If the crisis generated different effects and different reactions in the western world urban environments, at the same time, also the answers and the solutions urban planning and planning policies gave to the crisis have been different. In any case it can be stated in this perspective, that not only cities have been questioned and stressed by the crisis, but also urban planning is being questioned. Considering all the differences, it is possible to say that several fundamental pillars of contemporary urban planning are challenged by the current economical crisis: among those, we could consider, just as an example, the mechanisms and tools of public–private partnership. Lack of resources from the public sectors on the one side, involved in investing its limited resources to assist emergent social troubles, and lack of convenience on the other in investing in urban development processes from the entrepreneurs’ point of view, together with a general reduction of the possibilities to borrow money, put into crisis this XX century mechanism. This sufferance is blocking many urban regeneration or redevelopment projects and shelved many sectors of the constructions processes, showing even in this case how weak was the world of contractors and builders, pushed to grow in the precedent lucky period but too weak to bear the new crisis. All the factors that helped the building sector to be one of the main actor on stage of the previous period of urban growth are now in sufferance, and the engine of urban development slowed its run, putting urban environments in a new condition of projects stalled, stopped, abandoned.

Simultaneously, therefore a new big pressure over urban planning started: urban planning is supposed, much more than in the recent past, to be able to address, if not to solve the problems, and find a way out the crisis. On the one side, as in previous crisis, public works are seen as a way-out of the crisis: on the other side planning can be considere a way to produce new courses of action and new common frameworks against uncertainties, both for public and private actors, both for citizens and economic actors.

Nevertheless, planning is not at ease in this situation, since some of the tools on which it has based its approach to urban problems in the last decades can no more be taken for granted; at the same time the crisis is producing further effects on some of the most relevant and well-known problems of contemporary
city (growing dualisation, for example), paradoxically lowering down others (the environmental dimension, or traffic congestion). This opens up the possibility, as in every crisis, to reverse the perspective and produce important innovations. As a matter of fact, if 1929 crisis has fostered the introduction of social welfare in developed countries, and the 1973 crisis fostered a renewed attention to environmental issues, we could expect that the current crisis could offer new space for innovation. Under which perspective it’s hard to say: nevertheless we could try to contribute to this moment challenges, adopting a challenging perspective towards the contemporary urban question (Secchi, 2011, 2010) and the role planning and public policies can play.

In order to do that the report selects a case study, which is considered interesting under many respects, even if not exemplar or exhaustive, because of its specificities.
The city of Detroit is in fact the object of this chapter. The city has been at the centre of many attentions since many years under a more general perspective of investigation on urban crisis; as such it is considered since quite a long time as the symbol of urban decay and urban crisis in American literature. Already in bad economic conditions since the sixties, the city suffered even more from 2008 and for the global crisis, that speeded up the process of abandoning homes and neighbourhoods, whose mortgages in many cases were no more affordable for residents. The focus of the chapter is twofold: on the one side the first paragraph presents reflections concerning the process of downsizing of the city, which has naturally occurred in the last decades and has been assumed as a general aim of the new urban policies of the Mayor Bing. The demographic size of the city has in fact been consistently changing in the last decades, producing a process of physical shrinking that is leaving many parts of the city without any kind of use; from an industrial metropolis to a strange discontinuous combination of CBD and suburbs, the physical downsizing of the city has become a central slogan for the preparation of the new plan. Actually “downsizing” Detroit, means at the same time reshaping the city, redefining its form and role: thinking the city form and the urban space and organization in a new way for a different population and for different uses from the consolidated ones. But how can a city like Detroit can be reshaped? If “downsizing” in fact can be more simple to be achieved, bulldozing entire neighbourhoods abandoned by people and activities reshaping the city is a hard task. Not only in terms of the form of the built environment, but also in terms of the entire urban organization.

In order to “reshape” Detroit a process of revision of the urban plan has been seen as the right solution to address the problems of the city. Actually two years
after the decision to produce a new plan to reshape the city, taken by the mayor Bing, it became clear that in order to reshape the city (and not just to downsize it) a normal plan process could not be effective and a reshaping of planning itself was necessary. Also in order to address some of the long-term problems that the city has accumulated during the century, which have to do, not only with the economical crisis, but with the way in which the city has developed during the last century in relation with the urban region it is part of. As it is demonstrated by the fact, that, while the economic seems to be recovering, the city is now still living a very dramatic moment.

6.2 The recent past: a city too big for its population

In the last 50 years, Detroit has lost more or less one million of residents, about 57% of its population before the trend started. Many other Northern US cities have lost population during the last 50 years, as a national trend of residents moving from the historic cities to the suburbs, or to more economical and fiscal attractive cities. Many cities have seen numbers declining, and people moving out to find new jobs, new urban environments or new opportunities, but Detroit’s trend cannot be seen, studied and considered as part of a national trend. Its exception is easily analyzable: the increase of population loss has been so evident in the last 10 years, that the recent Major Bing question: “who will live here?” has been the most justified question at the beginning of his job in 2010. Not considering here the trends of population mobility and population transformations, the most relevant aspect of this change has been the physical transformation of the city: when residents left, they left their homes and their neighborhoods so empty that more than 40 squares miles of urbanized and urban lands where considered in 2010 completely empty and no more lived by anybody. A size as large as San Francisco urban area². In the two years between 2010 and 2012, these completely empty urban lands generated a big loss of employments, with more than 24% of unemployment rate, a number particularly high if compared to the national level of 9% of unemployment during the same years.

The crisis that hit the city comes from the very specific way in which the last 100 years have pumped it up very quickly, and then, as quickly as before, history has deflated it. Together with the fast growth of the automobile industry and its related world, Detroit grew and flourished maybe more than many other cities in the US, becoming the symbol of a town able to grow at the same pace than the main industries that shaped its urban environment. A well designed city center, a rationalized system of neighborhoods in between the city center and the industrial belt, a world-known designer for its major park, made the city of
Detroit a symbol of how an industrial town can be attractive and economically very productive.

After few years, considering how long is human settlements history, and more or less in 30 years, Detroit became a different symbol, absorbing all the bad of economic changes that affected western world during the passage from fordist to post-fordist economy. The book “Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit” (Sugrue, T.J., 1996) focused on what was already happening more that 15 years ago and it is considered nowadays as one of the most brilliant and evident study about the so called “narrative of failures”, addressing in particular urban policies failure. So, after having been a symbol of economic growth, with the same evocative power, Detroit has been described already more that 15 years ago as the symbol of a failure and today we can easily say that the image of Detroit is the example of Northern American urban policies failure. The urban crisis began to hit the Central Business District, and it became worldly renowned for its being able to close historic buildings, to leave abandoned masterpieces of past architecture and to keep value away from the most central and prestigious part of the central city and its downtown areas. Above all, many people, in a typical American way of facing troubles, considered first of all the city as a economic environment, and they judged it so unable to regain its past position to look for a different future without it, leaving it and searching for applications and jobs elsewhere.

6.3 The present: a shrinking city

This crisis in fact generated, soon after the reduction of the central city values, the continuous loss of population in the suburbs: it became thus evident that the entire city of Detroit was on the center of a stronger catastrophic phenomenon. All the urban aspects of the city are now under a particular attack: no people enough to populate commercial and recreational activities, no more city dwellers enough to live in the built up spaces, no more citizens enough to use public facilities and services or to claim the use of them. Once again, many North American cities have lived such a dramatic change: from the rusty belt to upper New York State, the effect of economic changes has hit the central business district first and the inner residential city soon after. Cities like Albany, NY, Buffalo, NY, Rochester, NY, Cleveland, OH, Toledo, OH, even Chicago, IL have seen a decline of population in the city center and soon after in the first residential belts around it, seeing at the same time new suburbs flourishing as a different place to live and work. In Detroit, for the first time in the urban American history, the city showed
106. Agriculture and food production as new uses in the changing and shrinking city

107. Detroit Creative Corridor. The re birth of Mid town as new regional hot spot
that even the suburbs were affected by the same problems and processes of abandon. Residents and users left the suburbs, the highways, the shopping complexes and the industrial areas. For the first time, Detroit showed that the crisis was so deep that even the physical result of the American Dream wasn’t strong enough to resist, and the combination of residential suburbs, highways and commercial strips was about to surrender to the crisis.

We can easily argue that this aspect was not the core of the crisis, but only one of its aspects. The core of the crisis, clear in the way it emptied suburbs and highways, was the failure of the public policies of urban renewal mainly focused on the regeneration of urban central areas. Detroit and its crisis showed clearly that the crisis was able to hit an urban and territorial typology such as the suburbs at the same speed that was revealed when the suburbs were planned and built. The loss of population left abandoned the sprawled city keeping away very quickly the fragile sense underneath the origin of suburbs themselves.

In this way, and under these forces, the city began to shrink.

It is not the first time in human history, and in the history of cities, that a shrinking of the whole size of the city happens: European medieval cities were smaller than Roman Empire towns and villages; Colonial South American establishments were more than half of the pre Colombian cities. But the shrinking forces that affected Detroit showed for the first time in the US history that a modern city can be smaller instead of being larger; that suburbs can be the most awful
places to be instead the epitomes of the American Dream; that urban renewal policies cannot be effective by default, resulting otherwise in a huge waste of money and time, that traditional planning is not able to cope with such a situation; in general that a certain kind of reasoning, adopted by a city (people, as well as politicians and economic actors) cannot address similar processes of change without a changed perspective.

At the beginning of 2010 the situation of the city was evident, well known and already so studied to be able to produce graphics, data, images, analysis absolutely clear: the economic change that affected the way productive processes re organized themselves during the 80’s and the 90’s generated huge changes in the economic organization of Detroit industrial economy, first of all reducing the first and most important product the Detroit engine was able to produce, automobile. And bringing together down to the paths of crisis the specific urban environment created by that world, suburbs and generally speaking, sprawled city.

In “Leaner, greened Detroit” (American Institute of Architects, Sustainable Design Assessment Team, 2008) this situation was already well described and evident, even if with a strange feeling, considering Detroit’ situation as something that could always happen and as something a city can avoid easily, investing in its fundamentals and in its DNA’s aspects. Detroit population in 2008 was around 800,000 residents, already less than half its 1950 population; 40 squares miles in the city were already without meaning, and something between 3000
and 5000 buildings set empty. Urban decay was the word used to describe the situation, in the 2008 report.

Describing the fast change from a sprawled city growth to a spotted city fast decline, the 2008 report introduced clearly the race matter and the struggle between white and blacks communities. By the 1950’s, the movement of more affluent families to the suburbs had already begun, but the riots of 1967 turned that movement into full-fledged “white flight”, changing the destiny of the central parts of the city and the history of the inner part of the city. From 1950 to 2000 Detroit population plummeted, as factory after factory closed, and its economic condition steadily worsened; and as white-collar employment moved to the suburbs along with large parts of the city’s middle class, the population who remained in the city center and in the inner city, before the sprawled areas of the white suburbs, was poorer, and more highly dependent on public services. But the city, without enough affluent people paying taxes, could no longer afford to provide just those services. So, from the early stages of recent history to 2008, the fast changes of Detroit urban geography can hardly be separated from race’s struggles and race’s geography. In 2008, over 80% of Detroit’s population was African American, with approximately 666,000 residents, plus a large part of population belonging to the Latino southwestern triangle. More or less, the same geography of 1970, showing that while white American population had the opportunity to leave the crisis and the declining city, the poorest part of population couldn’t, and it became the largest part of its residents.

The 2008 AIA report turned to be very optimistic about the way Detroit could save its future and change its decline into a challenge, and it is from these years’ perspective that Detroit has been seen as a “shrinking city”. The report focused
Wayne University is one of the leading changes in Midtown Detroit. The urban campus reshaped its areas to host a more compact urban life.
on the challenges of the city, many of them, after 4 more years today, still persisting, but considered at that time as central elements of a renewal strategy: the architectural heritage, history, legacy and physical assets, with a well recognizable CDB with a value in architectural, artistic and historic legacy is still to be reclaimed to a contemporary beauty and prosperity; the power and cultural diversity of neighborhoods is still a problem, today, rather than being that opportunity able to glue together parts so different in the same urban environment; even the matter of the size of the city, that for the first time appeared during those years, is still a problem rather than being an opportunity to re-imagine the urban condition, and the city has been very close to bankruptcy, due to the relations between general, administrative size, number of taxes collected in that cluster and costs for maintaining everything the original size required. The recent history and the last 5 years have in fact shown the deep relation between loss of population, economic crisis, tax collection reduction and territorial assets’ troubles. When residents have left the city, in many cases they left the buildings where they used to live; without any customer and any dweller aiming at buying them, the buildings remained abandoned; the first self help for people already left, trying to balance the cost of owning an apartment or a building and not being able to sell it and to gain a rent from it, has been to stop paying taxes to the city. This way, the municipality of Detroit began to collect
properties instead of taxes, finding itself as owner of more than 67,000 units, left abandoned, without taxes paid for years, and expropriated to relief the loss of tax gains. This policy, more or less natural for a municipality, brought to the situation we see today, with the municipal budget below zero and a huge concentration of derelict building without any possibility to produce any profit. In this respect the city council has acted in deep isolation from both the state and the county, behaving as a singular and individual actor on the institutional and political scene. In this sense the focus on the traditional urban renewal tools and objects, on the one side, on the other the isolation from the larger urban region and the institutional framework, as a result also of the contraposition between the black city and the white-state provoked a collapse larger than ever expected.

6.4 The future: downsizing Detroit or reshaping Detroit

From 2008, the real challenge began to be evident. With a very pragmatic way of doing, from many voices the main suggestion was the reduction of the size of the physical area of the city. Even in the 2008 AIA report, and in many studies that followed, the reduction of the size was considered the best receipt not only to solve the problems of a urban dimension that didn’t represent anymore the
real demographic and social geography of the city, but also the way to copy with a more sustainable way of thinking and planning the city.

The emphasis on the size came to be evident. And the main question started to change: Detroit began to be a smaller city and the question was whether a smaller city, and a smaller Detroit, could become a stronger, healthier and more sustainable city. From many points of view, even without investing in the way such a change could have been reached, local policies, expert studies started considering enthusiastically Detroit as a test to show that the shrink of a city was an opportunity to reclaim urban lands to agricultural uses and to reduce the need of public money to make a urban environment work.

Under this cultural umbrella, the new mayor David Bing called an already awarded US planner, Toni Griffin, professor of urban planning at Harvard University. The aim of the mayor was great: considering what he found when he became mayor, a city declining, a continuous reduction of taxes, jobs and population, David Bing decided to invest in a new general urban project, but with a different aspect. Without considering the opportunity to start a new, comprehensive structural plan for the re-birth of the city, the project called for a 12/18 months perspective called “Detroit Works Project”, aimed at producing “an effort to map the city’s future” following what Prof. Griffin said in one of the first interviews after she has been called to Detroit. “This leadership saw now as the opportunity to create a shared vision for the city, across sectors, and inclusive of broad civic engagement. I was asked to join the mayor’s team to assemble and manage a team to create the vision with members of his staff”.

The first idea, calling Professor Griffin, was ambitious: even if the possibility to generate a comprehensive plan has always been seen as very hard, in the first stages there was a general curiosity and expectation toward the production of a long term strategy which could save the city. After several months, however, with the worsening of the economical crisis, the idea of such a plan, based on certain datasets, and able to find a solution to the variety of troubles the city was living, was abandoned, even after many critics.

It is important to say that many of the critics, and one of the reasons for which the plan didn’t work, were underlining an evident disconnection between the idea of the plan and the size of the maps it was considering, and the real city that was changing within the plan and within the city limits. Local associations and local organizations in December 2010 contested very hardly the idea of plan the mayor was working at, and they showed the deepness of this disconnection, above all showing how more important were experiences gained on the ground, day by day, by the spontaneous effort of local associations rather then data, technical points of view, academic solutions. Reading the reports of the public meetings held during 2010 a growing concern about the effort of the mayor is
evident, and a general disaffection over its aims. During these public meetings, the disconnection between plan, tools and the real situation of the city gave the possibility to contest also the democracy of the process, with a mayor representing even less population day after day, considered in charge of planning a city that was no longer existing.

This criticism paved the way to a period of confusion, and to a systematic announcement of a new plan, full of solutions and above all able to plan the downsizing of the city, the concentration of the population still living in the city in few neighborhoods and the general, planned shrinking of the city. The question then shortly became evident: no plan would be enough well planned to plan for a city whose destiny was to disappear; if the choice was the reduction of the city and the reduction of the urban area, the idea of a urban plan was in strong, evident opposition, so strong that for many months the option “no plan” became to be one of the most realistic, as well as feared.

Mayor Bing began to face a totally new, but at the end evident situation: Detroit as a traditional city was no more existing. Population was declining, jobs were flying away, economy was not recovering even if US were experiencing a general change over the previous economic crisis, the size of the cancer that was emptying many neighborhoods was even growing and the number of houses and buildings abandoned was so high that entire neighborhoods were now empty and without anything that could assure them to be part of a urban environment. The fiscal crisis of the municipality brought the city to a collapse on April 2012: no more money to spend, no more urban facilities able to operate, no more services assured for population.

But beside these facts, a different geography was still enough strong to be evident, in this derelict atmosphere: local communities, small efforts to change the destiny to some few, small, groups of blocks, the city Hospital and the Wayne University city campus able to support very limited but evident processes of urban renewal on the one side, plus some spontaneous phenomena of people getting back to the city on the other, were the facts that pushed mayor Bing to change his perspective and start a different process of planning, more tailored to this new urban geography.

As a result of this, the idea of a plan was changed into the idea of a process of planning, helping the city in developing a mid-term strategy by July 2012. While in the previous period dedicated to the elaboration of a plan at the same time the municipality had started the demolition of 10,000 houses in the city suburbs, starting a process of physical shrinking of the urban areas, the new season is characterized by a new process of public dialogue and outreach. Enhancing and supporting even more the public debate, the municipality started investing into a two levels strategy: from one side trying to keep alive a city commission
for the new plan, even if without assuring money enough to make it run, in order to produce at the end a vision for the future, in the form of a new plan, on the other side concentrating some special projects over three different neighborhoods of the city, developed with the help of the citizens, listening and learning from the lesson cities such as Cleveland were showing to US cities trying to fight urban decline.

Also at the federal level, within Obama administration, with the Strong Cities program, many things were learned from the Detroit case: if the city itself change its physical, human, economic and cultural reason and size, urban policies should change and they should come back in the agenda of all levels, from municipal to federal. A group of target cities has been selected by the federal level, even if it was not clear how the help of the federal level could work together the local municipal policies and in coordination with the state level policies; this aspect has been particularly evident in Detroit where the opposition between municipal and state level policies was very strong, from all the points of view. In this situation, the strategy of the city changed completely: a two level approach is now evident, with a first, locally based approach to urban policies, focused on three sectors of the city and a second, long term strategy, rather then plan, able to work even sighing but following the time and the pace of the city. Downsizing Detroit had its first evident result: the re-sizing of the approach to the way the city should be thought and planned.

From this new approach, a new awareness emerged, maybe in a really pragmatic way of approaching the urban phenomenon. The crisis of the urban environment is still very strong, and it is affecting also the small cities around Detroit (The title “Hyatt is leaving Dearborne” shows how the crisis is affecting also the industrial, established Ford’s city headquarter). The idea of shrinking the city became to be really the only one available, and once again the American Institute of Architects developed a strategy to organize the city investing in its urban core and in few, established urban villages around it, leaving the space in between empty, with greenbelts and banked lands. And in many ways, the shrinking of the city and the new geography of a multi polar local organization gave the possibility to think to a new land use for the vacant lands: agriculture. As a result the size of the city seems to change once again. From the urban prairie as it has been described to a real prairie, where agriculture becomes one of the land uses in the new land use plan; Detroit soils seem to have all the characteristics to help this process: there is open land, fertile soil, ample water, willing labor, and a desperate demand for decent food. And there is plenty of community will behind the idea of turning the capital of American industry into an agrarian paradise, with many communities aspiring to change Detroit into the first one hundred percent food self-sufficient city of the world. And today,
Detroit is already producing more food inside its borders than any other traditional American city: about five hundred small plots have been converted and created by an international organization called Urban Farming, founded by the songwriter Taja Sevelle. Realizing that Detroit was the most agricultural promising of the fourteen cities in the five countries where Urban Farming now exists, Sevelle moved herself and her organization’s headquarters there in the last years. The goal is to triple the amount of land under cultivation in Detroit each year. The different size of the city created room also for other locally based phenomena, able to change step by step and little by little the geography of the city. Raising while the incapacity of the official efforts was evident, a movement of people buying houses at ridiculous prices began to be evident. Toby Barlow wrote in a New York Times article about people buying up $100 houses, moving to Detroit and doing all sorts of interesting things with them. Artists and architects, painters and inventors are buying some derelict plots and houses investing few money and trying to transform them in a local workshop of new ideas. Local, very small things such as “Heidelberg Project” or “Ancient Evenings Project” began to happen in the interstices of the declining city, filling them with new, little forms of urban life. Many other cities, such as Buffalo, NY and Cleveland, OH or Cincinnati, OH have invested just on these small, local efforts to invent something new so strongly that nowadays those cities are seen as the new “Rust Belt Chic”.

6.5 Conclusions

Alongside a series of significant contributions in the field of economic studies (see especially Glaeser, but also Landry and Florida, Trigilia, Kurz) that quantify the current financial crisis and explore its economic reasons and relationship with the ‘city’, in order to come to a general conclusion of this paper, a series of reflections coming directly from the world of urban studies shall be taken into consideration, which focus on the challenges that the crisis is proposing to planning. Particularly useful in this sense is to consider the section edited by Soureli and Youn of Critical Planning and dedicated in 2009 to discuss “urban restructuring” processes in progress as the result of processes induced by the crisis, but also as the actions of individual agents and collective response to the crisis, among which, we could say also the responses of planning. That multi-voiced debate between Neil Brenner, John Friedmann, Margit Mayer, J. Allen Scott and Edward Soja, in fact presented already a general reflection on the crisis of the city and its urban implications and challenges in the field of planning, policy and action. It was argued that the crisis has introduced
elements of turbulence in society and in cities and urban regions, which require not only a greater ability to analyze precisely the effects on the city, but to address some theoretical questions that have to do with the conceptualization of the city and related approaches to planning.

According to Brenner in fact, first, the current crisis shakes the city processes of urban restructuring and questions the “city-ness of cities”, i.e. what has made the city such a thing; secondly the city, involved in the crisis, appears, even more than we have hitherto refused to acknowledge, grappling with problems of trans-scale governance, crossing global and local (Friedman) and spatial and social effects of particular relevance in forms different from those to which we are accustomed to name and map (Mayer). Nevertheless, thirdly, cities, as nodes of cognitive-cultural economy, are again at the centre of important tensions: in fact the materials that have fuelled the contemporary city can reveal to be highly fragile in terms of crisis response (Scott). As a result, fourthly, the condition of transition to a different economic and social model carries with it a transition to new urban models, such as what Soja defines a metropolitan post-transition, where cities have become spaces of high volatility and mutability, rather than elements of permanence and stability.

On this base, as the Detroit’s case seems to show, it is necessary to change deeply the conceptual frameworks that have so far been used to study the processes of urban restructuring generated by the crisis. The challenges in the field of planning, appear equally relevant. In fact, the crisis not only calls into question a revision of the mechanisms of urban development linked to a neo-liberal season (Brenner) but also pushes to sight the possibility of producing a vision antagonistic to the forms of regulation and planning that we have developed in this perspective. At the same time, according to Friedman, there is the need for a new “progressive view” of planning, one linked to the necessity to accept the idea of a finite world adopting a perspective of sustainability for the city, to avoid a process of commodification of everyday life adopting the reference to a friendly city, capable of nourishing the spirit and restore a sense of civic obligation, and where there is an economic accounting system capable of taking in count both system use values and exchange values. In spatial terms, finally, Soja, proposes also to work on new urban models (community-based regionalism) and multi-scalar coalitions that shall take more seriously into account new emerging urban issues, responding to a renewed request of “right to the city”.

The case of Detroit, presents traces of these challenges and provides materials to be studied in order to reflect upon them. The changing size and form of the city is in fact deeply affecting on the one side the city-ness of this city; at the same time it is challenging the role that planning can play in similar conditions, showing its limits, but also the symbolic power it is still asked to play.
This contribution was written with Valeria Fedeli and presented to the 26th AESOP Annual Congress 11-15 July 2012 at METU, Ankara.

Cleveland started some processes of urban renewal investing in the neighborhoods and trying to find new energy from the revitalization of their economic and social environments. The Cleveland Neighborhoods Development Coalition (http://www.cndc2.org/) was created in 1982 and still working to focus urban planning attention on urban neighborhoods. From this experience and others, the city published the new 2020 perspective plan, Connecting Cleveland, aimed at creating a stronger link between communities.

Strong Cities is a pilot initiative, sponsored by Obama administration, to strengthen local capacity and spark economic growth in local communities while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used wisely and efficiently. To accomplish this, federal agencies are providing experienced staff to work directly with six cities: Chester, PA; Cleveland, OH; Detroit, MI; Fresno, CA; Memphis, TN; and New Orleans, LA. These teams are working with local governments, the private sector, and other institutions to leverage federal dollars and support the work being done at the local level to encourage economic growth and community development.

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2 www.detroitworkprojects.com
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6 http://www.detroitblog.org/?p=287
8 http://www.heidelberg.org/
7. Research is still open

The research illustrated herein sought to understand, even through the use of case studies, evolutions being proposed by contemporary cities using an operational viewpoint and one that is capable of presenting (at least with the intention of doing so) some new basic assumptions.

The contemporary city that has been analyzed is a city of transformations, from the violent ones suffered during the 1960s and 1970s, to the central important ones and re-established a certain way of considering the city during the 1980s (which I have summarized using the expression Tres Grand Traveaux). From transformations capable of defining new town-planning categories of spaces recurring in various cities (with waterfronts, pedestrian downtown areas, concentration of functions and uses around and above stations) to widespread transformations, capable of modifying the urban fabric one piece at a time – beyond systematic strategies and policies, only by complying with the market and to some modified plan regulations. The city that is the subject of these considerations is therefore the city which, through recent history, considers its form as the result of an ongoing process of transformation and evolution - one envisaging the construction and reconstruction of spaces, buildings, districts and interiors. Subsequently, in parallel, the city taken into consideration is the one that has continued its rush towards the outside for decades (depending upon the national, cultural and town-planning context to which it belongs).

The American city (and not only in North America) grows while increasing its occupied urban space – adding suburbs, stretching out its infrastructures and continuing to build according to a “natural” growth and expansion process. One where space seems infinite, as if every new construction could be sold, as if what lies behind (namely the constructed city) is always so full and so well-functioning as to need (as its only alternative) new parts where its growth could continue. The European city, albeit with all its differences and despite its inclination towards the same expansion phenomena related to American cities (in more ways than one), has pondered a great deal over its internal and external transformation processes. But while expanding (due to the
particular urban geography of the continent), it has growingly also branched, structured and consolidated its relations with nearby cities, with adjacent contexts, blending what once used to be into a region of different paces. While the American city model tends to produce huge megalopolis through this continuous growth and where different dimensions compared to the past are its most prominent feature, the European city produces different forms and models (even with the transformation of brownfield sites, of railway areas and in general of all areas that no longer conduct their original function) that naturally contribute towards reconsidering the city by points, by its most important parts, by its catalysts and attractors. This research has attempted to understand which and how much town-planning is contained in these attractors and what kind of town-planning is actually involved. We have thus realized that even in relation to changing behaviours, we are always in the presence of new phenomena envisaging town-planning demands; or, on the contrary, we are in the presence of behaviour inspired by and quickly moving towards urban characters. These phenomena have invested non-central places, or at least not central according to the old way of conceiving the city – made up of interiors and exteriors. New urbanity undoubtedly invades spaces that are not
only inside the city, but also outwards to the region; space that, at different
densities, surrounds the city and makes up its extended geography. Hence
(according to that circulation of ideas and practices that have always distin-
guished our discipline) for decades the American city has resumed reasoning
about its own shape, about relations between its different parts, reconsidering
its regions that have naturally continued to grow. While not aiming at the end
and the interruption of this growth, the practice has pushed towards finding
in some places, in some nodes, support to a structure this time of a regional
nature, based upon new infrastructural relations (for the construction of a
new network and a new service of public transportation), or on “reorganiz-
tional” policies and programmes – for example linked to green networks
and to the regional system of connecting parks and green belts. In this long
tale, we have observed that this way of reconsidering the city has produced
changes in the themes where town-planning is concerned, in its behaviour, in
the tools and Agendas for establishing town-planning; and at the same time
we have realized that the way in which the city relates itself to the region has
changed.
All while having a fundamental goal in mind: creating a relation, a kind of
method, between analyses that deal with interpreting the phenomena that have
been established and the current practice of performing town-planning. There
is a conviction at the basis of this attempt. The phenomena studied by analysis
and essays are produced by performing daily town-planning, that of administra-
tions and of small transformations. It means performing town-planning through
plans and projects modifying the physical dimension of the city, it means on-
going processes whose rights derive from the thousands of rivulets intrinsic to
performing town-planning, ones that change the dimensions and the relations.
What has been conveyed by the advancement of analysis and studies, that have
fully realized what is happening to the region and to the city, in practice and in
the manner of conceiving, constructing and thinking of a plan? Above all (and
already answering this question) we have understood that very little has been
conveyed and most planning processes are still linked to municipal adminis-
trative structures in charge of producing plans. But the city no longer evolves
according to its administrative boundaries. Therefore, the relation between city
and region is much more profound, involving much broader and vaster con-
siderations. In the operational sense, I believe that these considerations might
open up an important issue: it is necessary to steer the way of considering plans
in relation to administrative boundaries in a different way. Regarding this topic,
and belonging to a country such as Italy where one cannot affirm that regional,
provincial and large plans have given shape to an urban system, entirely pul-
verized in its being the result of local planning – there is nothing more to say,
with the awareness of how essential it is to develop plans capable of intersecting different administrative boundaries. However, the key for reflections and the topic of this research is that the relation between a city that has transferred to the region its capacity of producing remarkable and central sites is the reconsideration of systems at the territorial level that are capable of regrouping within their continuity (not necessarily physical) the actual appearance of remarkable places of strong urban connotation.

7.1 One more look at the systems?

The system that more than any other has been emerging for years for its simplicity, one that has already demonstrated its capacity for gathering new episodes of town-planning around itself, is the transportation system. In turn it generates TOD (Transit Oriented Development) practices and perhaps, even to a greater degree, that way of considering densification and re-signification of parts of the city precisely thanks to a new and different transportation offer. London is used in this story as it represents something new compared to the construction systems of TOD sites that have been extensively studied in the United States and in Europe for other aspects. Thanks to CrossRail, London demonstrates the regionalization of a transportation system of very strong urban connotations; it demonstrates its realization that not only has the scale changed, but so has the development of urban locations – using the urban scale as sole reference. The new aggregation of urbanity production through the transportation line, and its becoming regional, demonstrates the capacity intrinsic to a system of connecting and giving meaning to the production of these new locations. But transportation is not the only one. A new way of also conceiving nature, more and more meant as a continuous system at the regional level, is emerging. The cases that this story has dealt with demonstrate the potential that green systems have at a regional scale in containing episodes of strong transformation, in addition to the ecological value of being able to denote a continuous green system. German tradition has worked extensively on this topic and we know that German plans, and their way of conceiving the ecological value of urban areas, aims at maximizing the benefits that nature (as a system) produces in an area of regional significance.

The third system, in addition to infrastructures and green areas, is the connection system. It would be a good idea to delve into this topic, especially in relation to the reasoning that this research has conducted and the openings it leads to. Today there are physical and non-physical connections, and the exchange guaranteed by connections not only regards services but also
information. The services system, that envisages supplying a part compared to another through connections, contributes towards defining the urban aspects of a place. Phenomena of a more urban nature seem to especially emerge where there exists a supply of services that is greater and better organized (for the wellbeing of people, for saving energy, the efficient disposal of waste, etc.) and at the same time undoubtedly more urban conduct is determined at the centre of information flows: connection systems guarantee the access to information and to all that physical world (generically) housed on the Web. So these three systems, beginning with the most traditional of the three (connected to the physical displacement of persons and things), to the most innovative one (linked to the displacement of services and information) guarantee a shifting of flows in the urbanized system. Of people, things, goods, support services, information and relations. Reinterpreted as such, in relation to the exchange intrinsic to flows, these systems must be not only capable of grasping places and areas of transformation along their development (and this already occurs), but to give shape to transformations themselves in a dynamic, open and non-rigid manner. For this reason, research and reflections propose a substantial reconsideration of the way in which forms of transformation are conceived, abandoning the traditional manner of considering the form of transformation and opening up to a more decisive composition of flows and exchanges.

So the model that one can gain inspiration from is better defined: systems sustaining flow exchange can kindle relevant issues, hot spots and remarkable nodes belonging to the systems - deriving from the systems the flow that the system brings with it. Upon this they articulate a new form of urbanity, which is based upon these characteristics (and not on the search for a village and a small pedestrian town from the past, that has nothing to do with the present). Examples and cases have been studied, and this has been found in the case of London with the construction of CrossRail, one of the phenomena that best describes this potential reorganization (between displacement of flows, connections to the project with the economic reorganization of the region and attention towards the behaviour of citizens and users).

7.2 From systems to relations: government and management

The relations between city and region in these terms (in addition to opening up to questions observed by this research) pose a relevant theme that on one hand is bound to forms of government that a body of this nature must be able to predict, and on the other hand more detailed forms of management in all of its parts and its systems. Discussions and debates have been going
Urban regional structure evolution. From polycentric metropolis to multipolar regions. A new structure seems to emerge, on a higher level. Urban transformations adding urbanity to the region are connected by different relations, at a higher level. A new region of space seems to call the ordinary spaces and places. Some of them are able to change and to join the urban region. Some other will remain down, at a suburban sprawled level. Behaviors will follow the change, deciding to stay at a higher more connected and quicker level or to stay within the slower, sprawled suburban region. The evolution is evident. This new structure is changing the city and moving it towards the region. But not all the areas are on the same page and not all the parts of the city are able to join this new trend. The region become multipolar with different intensities of relations.
on for years regarding the fact that, precisely the explosion of the city in its
region, the shrinking of borders and distances between parts of the city and
the loss of boundaries between municipalities involved in these growth phe-
nomena must bring a different project into the field and open up towards
different town-planning instruments. The establishment and evolution of the
city region undoubtedly imposes a revision of the instruments upon which
town-planning itself is based. After all, one of the assumptions of this re-
search lies in the search for relations between analysis and studies that care-
fully interpret ongoing phenomena and the creation of town-planning where
assumptions partially dwell elsewhere. Yet should there be the chance for
redefining the model of what happened in the city and more widely in the
regions in the form of a model where flow systems establish intensity of re-
lations such as to kindle hot-spots of urbanity, then there perhaps exists the
opportunity of abandoning the construction of a plan or (on the contrary) the
search for a vision. In order to evolve towards a different model. It must be
understood how one can activate forecasting and management instruments
for systems strongly interrelated to the point of grasping, on one hand, the
connections between different systems while governing development by the
characteristics and necessities of the system itself. The flexibility of this way
of interpreting the establishment of town-planning, in relation to the model
that seems to emerge, allows one to recover and overcome the division or
contrast between plan/vision. If interpreted thus by systematic parts, flexible
and capable of recomposing themselves according to the ways that planning
themes fit into one another, then the city deserves both the plans and the vi-
sions. The latter are capable of grasping the evolution of ongoing phenomena,
of posing objectives and addressing government systems towards attainment
of the said objectives. The former are capable of considering management in
terms of system efficiency, of their functioning (from the supply of goods to
waste disposal), of their utmost efficiency even in relation to subjects (envi-
ronmental) regarding the finiteness of resources and the ecological impact of
ensuing actions) and the impact that cities (meant as such) may attain within
their everyday order. Not all of the city/region may benefit from this kind of
setting. I am convinced that there are parts and systems and relations that
more than others are capable of rising up and activating a model of this kind,
above and while the rest of the city/region remains at different paces and
levels. The suburban system, the geometry of the widespread city and region
where space “is wide and not concentrated” will continue its reason for being,
at least for the moment and in the time projection that can correctly be consid-
ered. Sprawl not only constitutes a market alternative that is far from dead for
a vast category of users/citizens, but it is again and still the effect of policies

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and plans that still foresee the same in very many parts of the world. And it is above this region that the combination of exchange systems and transportation flows and the kindling within these systems of timely elements of strong urbanism that draw lifeblood for vital urbanism from belonging to the same systems, hence create a new model, a macro-region of space that overlaps itself, that imposes itself to what normally continues to flow. The two of them do not exclude one another: the systems function and are so much more attractive when their government is capable of always including more pieces and tear them away from banality and the unsustainability of the sprawl. The urban parts that are kindled by the systems work when their management is effective and contains its impact, contrary to the way in which the rest of the widespread city/region seems to work.

Proposing a scheme of this sort means maintaining both the vision and the plan at a correct and pertinent level, in addition to the government and management – depending upon the themes they deal with. But more than anything, it means affirming that both parties and both dimensions contribute towards the design of the city and of the region. A design that both the plans and the visions, that both the management and the government must always consider as a founding element for their actions. The present research comes to a conclusion with these open hypotheses, opening up to new future developments and opening up to comparisons that everyday practices on one hand and the analysis of what is happening on the other may provide.
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