

Difficult balances and impossible partners. The implementation local plan for San Giovanni a Teduccio in Naples.

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ABSTRACT

This article is about the processes involved in preparing the preliminary draft of the implementation local plan (ILP) of the San Giovanni a Teduccio district of Naples (2008). The plan, drawn up during the activities of the Innovative programme in the urban field (PIAU) financed by the Ministry of Infrastructure in 2004, aims to integrate a series of initiatives, already in progress or planned in the district for the designing of public space, by giving special attention to the redevelopment of the waterfront and the strengthening of its relationships with the city. In the given conditions, the solutions proposed by the plan represent the most advanced point of balance between different visions which general urban planning and subsequent programme agreements can bring about. Finally, ILP's work is subjected to a persistent contradiction, a structural incompatibility between the activities of the commercial port and the renovation of the waterfront: port and city generate a dialectic which, at present, is not conducive either to economic development based on the logistics or to urban renovation. Why don't we look for other options rather than this unfruitful incompatibility?

INTRODUCTION

This article is about the preliminary draft of the implementation local plan regarding a part of the Naples' coastline that is centred on the San Giovanni a Teduccio district. The preliminary draft of the plan, prepared by the Office in charge organized by the City of Naples for the *Innovative programme in the urban field* (PIAU), was approved by the City Council in 2008. Since then, while the technical activities of the plan's preparation are continuing, initiatives have been going on regardless of the preliminary town planning proposals, thus largely thwarting the difficult balance achieved in the preliminary draft of the plan.

The *Innovative programme*, financed by the Ministry of the Infrastructures in 2004, is part of a National research characterized by:

1. the integration between infrastructure planning, urban planning and urban design (including public works design) for the improvement of the relations between cities and infrastructures (in particular, ports and stations);
2. the coordination of different public operators working in the same territorial context, with the establishment of regional technical design and roundtables (in this case the proactive partners of the programme are: the City of Naples, the Italian railway network – RFI – and the Port Authority of Naples);
3. the establishment of “innovative” public offices that can reform the Italian bureaucratic system, which is traditionally organized into areas of competence (town planning, public works, infrastructure, street furniture, etc.), towards a more functional “vertical” model, organized into projects. In Naples an *Interdepartmental project unit* has been set up whose staff come from different City offices and is strictly dedicated to the project activities under the programme¹.

1 The office in charge, managed by Enzo Mendicino, is responsible to the Department of Urban Planning of the City (its coordination, formerly managed by Roberto Gianni, is now entrusted to Giovanni Dispoto).

I had been working in this office from December 2006 to August 2008, dealing in particular with the urban design and the drafting of the preliminary plan of the implementation development plan of the San Giovanni a Teduccio area.

This "public design laboratory" has been located for several years in the railway station of San Giovanni and has been attended by other public and private institutions operating in the sector, such as citizens called from time to time for the many participating planning activities organized by the working group, engineers of the State Railways and the Port Authority.



Figure 1 – Public design laboratory at work (railway station of San Giovanni, 2006)

1. CONTEXTS

San Giovanni a Teduccio is a post-industrial district for which the General Town Planning Scheme (GTPS) in force has set very ambitious reforming targets. This district, located at the beginning of what was called the "Miglio d'Oro", had been an independent farm until the beginning of the twentieth century. It then became the heart of one of the first industrial districts of southern Italy, but is now affected by phenomena of production disinvestment and working-class population increase with rising crime levels.

Since the early nineteenth century San Giovanni has had several industries in different fields such as food (e.g. Cirio), metal (e.g. Corradini), and "power" (power stations and oil depots). These production facilities are contemporary to the first Italian railroad, the Naples-Portici (opened in 1838), whose track, still in operation, is a significant dividing line between the village and the sea. Since the seventies, the working-class housing district suffered some changes because many productive activities were abandoned and the related areas remained unused. A large number of public residential areas were included in the *Special residential housing programme* (PSER) launched by the Town Administration after the earthquake in 1980. Also the Port Authority is planning the expansion of the port areas as far as the Pietrarsa

train depot, including in its scope the entire coastline of San Giovanni.

The General Town Planning Scheme promoted by Vezio De Lucia, town planning councillor from 1993 to 1997, and entirely adopted in 2001, sets out important elements of reform for San Giovanni a Teduccio:

1. the protection of settlements and buildings, including the disused industrial buildings, with a historical and environmental importance;
2. the conversion of abandoned factories to social and public uses;
3. the principle of a "vision" in which the district "re-conquers" its coastline, in particular, by blocking the expansion of the port to the east (as proposed by the Port Authority), by ordering the relocation of the Vigliena power plant to the "city of youth", and by the construction of a new university campus in the disused Corradini and Cirio factories, which belong to the City.

De Lucia left the Department of the City at the end of the first term of the Bassolino's administration (1997). There were then a series of *Policy agreements* derogating the town planning instruments which undermined the vision proposed by the General Town Planning Scheme (GTPS) concerning the area of study:

1. the negotiation with the Port Authority for the construction of a huge container terminal, overwhelming the "Eastern Dock", which moves the eastward enlargement towards the sea, contrary to the GTPS;
2. withdrawal of the relocation of the power plant that, instead, is to be modernized and put back in full production by converting it from coal combustion gases, which, since it is less polluting, does not even require a proper Environmental Impact Assessment;
3. part of the Corradini's site, granted to private developers for building – through a project finance – of a marina that, due to its size and morphology, jeopardizes the desired re-establishment of public access to the shoreline.

The construction works of the university are having a difficult start, the "campus" has been finally located on a site abandoned by Cirios which is rather remote from the main context, along the Corso San Giovanni, which is without any connection to the coastline.

Finally, there had been a series of private developments of a poor urban quality both for their essential characteristics and for their lack of connection

between public spaces and new settlement morphologies.

The most important interventions tend to set up "introverted" settlements in different ways:

1. in the case of the port facilities and of the power plant, for reasons related to their functions;
2. in the case of the marina, for the tendency of the promoters to design an almost protected island which, rather than providing opportunities to the surrounding neighbourhood, is likely to create just another gap, even though the terms of the approval of the project were supposed to avert these risks since the project finance has been approved with a set of "requirements";
3. in the case of the new station and transport infrastructures, since the preparation of the project solutions occurred regardless of the renovation processes that were being developed for this area; this is also a risk in the case of the new university campus, in the former Cirio buildings, which tends to be weakly connected by the Corso San Giovanni.

These interventions are typical of a situation in which the individual operators, both public and private, act like pioneers in a territory that's not entirely friendly and for which they think they have to adopt adequate protection strategies to achieve their own individual goals.

2. METHODOLOGY, TRAINING PROCEDURES AND TARGETS

This scenario includes the ministerial funding of the PIAU (*Innovative programme in the urban field*) and the creation of the urban planning and coordination public office. Obviously, this process begins when many decisions have already been taken and may seem to be irreversible.

The efforts pursued in preparing the urban plan for this area, therefore moves right into the interstices between these projects, trying to "soften" the separatist logic of certain decisions, in particular regarding the container terminals, the marine and the power plant. The objective of the urban plan is to create a continuous network of public spaces by acting on the "soft" edges of sites and projects, in a sort of re-composition of individual initiatives, in a dialogue with operators who are little interested in the quality and the urban

dimension of their intentions.

There is also an attempt to identify where private initiatives the area, that were allowed by the General Town Planning Scheme, but have not been subject to thorough formal supervision and may conflict with the emerging plan.

A process of refinement has been undertaken, based not only on the dialogue with the institutional partners of the Programme (the City, the Port Authority and the Italian railway network) but also on a continuous exchange of opinions with all the key parties currently operating in San Giovanni: the "Porto Fiorito" company, the developers of the marina, the "Tirreno Power" company that was making the conversion of the Vigliena power plant (now operational), the University Federico II, which is building a new headquarters in the abandoned buildings of the "Cirio" factory, and the many private individuals whose development plans are under investigation or have required building permits for individual structures (both planned actions in the implementation of the GTPS).

The plan making is attempting a reassembling that, through a patient process of redefinition, starting from the basic level of the distance between the building items (already existing or planned) and based its findings on the "floor plan" and the functional interrelationships of the various elements existing in the area².

The work is based on the relation between materials and actions that have heterogeneous natures and origins: parts of a historic city, industrial archaeology, small operating or decommissioned manufacturing plants, clusters of post-seismic public buildings, important current or planned initiatives, which are usually started and developed independently from each other.

Thus the physical and conceptual "distance" between all the parties becomes very important: the gap, the imprecise margin, a weak programme: these are "median spaces", long neglected by the urban planning project, from which the quest for new meanings must start³. So that the road, the square, the field

2 On this subject see in particular: Secchi, B.: *Un progetto per l'urbanistica*, ed. Einaudi, Turin, 1989; "Un'urbanistica di spazi aperti", in *Casabella* 597-598, 1993; "Progetto di suolo 2", in Aymonino A., Mosco V.P., *Spazi pubblici contemporanei. Architettura a volume zero*, ed. Skira, Milan, 2006.

3 See Russo, M., *Città mosaico*, Clean, Naples, 2011; Russo, M., Formato, E., "Urbanistica dello spazio aperto", in: *Proceedings of the Public Space Biennial* organized by the INU in Rome, May 2011.

and the hedge become the building stones of a town planning that returns to consider the open spaces between things (fences, buildings) as spaces to form a new urban condition.

The activities of town planning participation and consultation with local communities, that have been carried on in this district since 2006⁴, have been fundamental to the definition of the project. These activities have been successfully supported and have substantially contributed to deciding some of the main "themes" of the town plan: the recovery of the relationship with the sea, through a new network of coastal paths and the connection of the district with the coast; consolidation of the existing or new public spaces and facilities, the town planning reconfiguration of some nodal areas, particularly the one affected by the interchange node of land-sea transport in the tramway depot (ANM) and the purification plant that must be dismantled.



Figure 2 – Planimetric and volumetric project

3. A DIFFICULT BALANCE. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT PLAN

The planning project includes a comprehensive set of interventions to create an uninterrupted system of areas, located along the coast and the railway axis from Vigliena, where there is the historic blockhouse of the Neapolitan

⁴ The urban planning participation was handled by the Department of the City (coordinated by Francesco Ceci) with the collaboration of "Avventura urbana" and Gilda Berruti.

Revolution in 1799, up to Pietrarsa, the eastern limit on the coast of the City of Naples, where there are the nineteenth-century exhibits in the national Railway Museum.

3.1. RE-ESTABLISHING ACCESS TO THE SEA

The research shows that access to the coast, especially through pedestrian access paths, must be created through a variety of solutions and interventions that could be even more effective than those suggested in the GTPS. In particular, it shows that the idea of an uninterrupted walkway along the whole coastline is possible, from Vigliena to Pietrarsa, which would connect new routes to the segment already built by the Municipality nearby the railway museum in Pietrarsa.

The overall image for these public pathways to the sea is to establish a "comb" structure, in which the horizontal axis (the "handle") is made by the promenade and the "teeth" are made by the paths which cross the rail barrier. The comb structure is typical of the historic settlements, which are open to the sea, such as the "Miglio d'Oro", although this has been partly erased by modern urbanization.

In the designed solution the "handle", about 3 km long, is made up of public pathways which are mostly cycle-pedestrian, partly on the coast itself and partly halfway down to the coast.

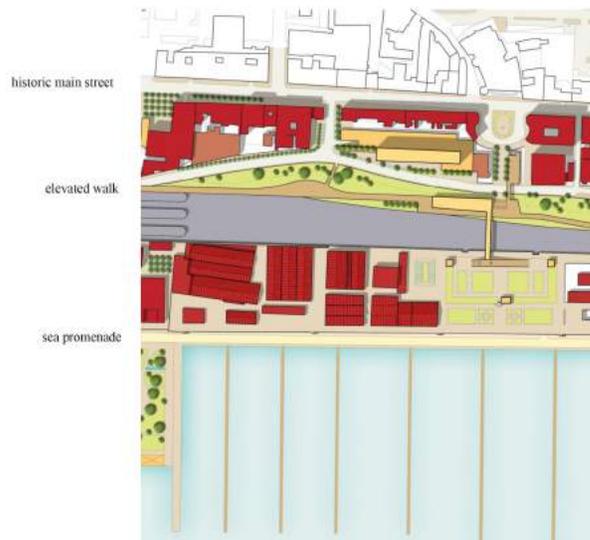
The characteristics of the coastal paths are related to the uses of the sea and of the facilities that face onto it: the marina "village", the public facilities to be implemented in place of the purification plant that is being closed down, the settlement of Pietrarsa that must be suitably open for public access and enjoyment.

There are two suggested paths halfway down to the coast. The first is between the customs wall that delimits the areas of the Port Authority and some settlements, some of them already existing and others new. This is a path with a strong urban character that integrates car access and pedestrian routes, using large tree-lined sidewalks. Renovation works here are meant to enhance the former Cirio monumental building, as a possible place of business connected with the Teatro San Carlo, located within the port area adjacent to the tree-lined avenue, by adopting appropriate solutions to ensure

a well-organized direct access to car and pedestrian circulation.

The second path halfway down to the coast is along the northern limit of the railway, at an elevation that is about the actual height of the boundary wall of the track, approximately 4 metre high. Its result is a panoramic promenade on a sloped structure that recalls the image of the bastion, like in the fortified walls of Lucca and Ferrara. The bastion, visible from Corso San Giovanni, is the largest part of the renovation works of public spaces to the north of the railway. It is an element of union, both mentally and functionally, between sea and inland, as well as a connective axis of the new system of public spaces, made up of squares on the main street and terraces down to the sea, on both sides of the railway line. Public car parks are planned to be built within the embankment which is meant to free the entire Corso San Giovanni and the open spaces next to it from parked cars.

In the old railway station square, the bastion is the connecting element to the sea: the building of the current station is intended to be replaced by a new structure that will allow the bypassing of the railway and the pedestrian connection with the belvedere-terrace included in the marina's design.



PIAU



Figure 3 – Public pedestrian ways: the “comb” structure

6.2. THE VILLAGE AND THE BLOCKHOUSE

Another important key point is the historic village of Vigliena. An historical reconstruction – cartographic and iconographic – of the area of Vigliena shows that this settlement had been, up to the development of the modern neighbouring areas, a sort of village, close to the sea and isolated in coastal vegetation, with the bulk of the fort standing out. The implementation plan aims, given the favourable conditions of the present context, to suggest a kind of territorial restoration of the area.

This operation can be carried out through the following actions:

1. elimination of modern structures built around the historic blockhouse on public land and the creation of an urban-archaeological park which recreates the relationship between the historic structure and its surroundings;
2. a town planning restructuring of the connecting link between the historic buildings and the new access boulevard to the marina with a complete reorganization of the public open space;
3. the building of a new driveway and pedestrian crossings of the railway line, to replace the present level crossing.

These works tend to gather the replacment buildings around the existing historical fragments, in order to consolidate the old town fabric and, at the same time, to strengthen the continuity between this fabric and the town areas on the edge, locating the main open public spaces in a key position between the ancient village and the modern city on the edge.

3.3. THE "CITY CENTRE"

The "City centre" is proposed to be built in the area including the former Corradini site and the present tramway depot. It is intended to be a set of integrated functions on the basis of a complex web of public spaces and public use: it is the focus of the railway overpass and of the new access paths to the sea from the Corso San Giovanni; it would be an inter-modal transport node, a nodal area with the relevant urban and territorial functions that will be able to make it a place of urban and metropolitan attraction and

exchanges. This project takes advantage of the planned conversion of the tramway depot (owned by the Municipality) that is located on Corso San Giovanni. It is possible to reconfigure the whole of this housing scheme, that overlooks public spaces reconfigured as a square, with the size and character similar to those of the historic squares of the "Miglio d'Oro". This scheme gives the terraced buildings glimpses of landscape to the nearby sea from the elevated promenade of the bastion, thus functionally reconnecting the historic town with the bastion and with the sea through a bridge structure. The large volume of the present depot, that is to be converted into new buildings or to be obtained as a result of the renovation of the existing sheds, would be reused for the construction of a facility with public or private areas destined for a collective use (trade).

On the coastal slope, where a part of the former Corradini site is still available to the City, the plan proposes the development of a settlement characterized by very attractive metropolitan and national scale features. The site is remarkable for the value of its historical industrial architecture and for its sea exposure. The idea is to combine leisure and cultural production activities, relying on an audience, both users and entrepreneurs of the planned activities, for the most part young people, more willing to consider a peripheral area for "downtown" uses. This proposal arose from the consultations held in January 2006, in a workshop day that was open to all the citizens of the district; the idea was discussed in subsequent meetings with the representatives of voluntary organizations, business activities and cultural associations, and, finally completed, in June 2008, in a workshop attended by experts, from different disciplines, competent in the field of culture organization and economics.



Figure 4 – The City centre

3.4. THE BEACH

On the eastern side of the coastal area that includes the marina which is now under construction, the beach and the reclamation of the San Giovanni's purification plant, the plan proposes a more direct public use of the shoreline, with beach works up to Pietrarsa and creating additional railway line crossings:

1. a pedestrian overpass connecting to the access to the marina;
2. a new, sloping square, passing under the railway behind the current public library, would be the convenient access to the beach and to the contiguous public facilities.

Also the planned closing down of the purification plant gives the possibility to clear a large area where community facilities - preferably related to the playground-sea area, the "water park", could be located. It would be nice that the citizens of San Giovanni, who crowd the beach during the summer months, could have a large pool of sea water to bathe in while waiting for

the sea to come in.

The scheme is completed to the east with the museum and educational concentration planned in the former warehouses of Pietrarsa, which is now the National Railway Museum: the continuation of the promenade on a portion of the public areas owned by the railways (as provided by the GTPS) will connect the Neapolitan promenade with the nearby Portici. This is a proposal which links from a district scale and extends to the entire geographical area of the Vesuvius coast.

4. IMPOSSIBLE PARTNERS. THE REASON WHY THE PIAU DOES NOT ALTER THE STATE OF THE SITES

The town planning innovative programme for San Giovanni with its preliminary draft Local plan, which is still the programme's most concrete outcome, adopts some political choices, that were considered to be non-negotiable, and on-going interventions: it pursues a difficult balance between the urban and public-recreational objective, outlined by General Town Planning Scheme, and the energy-productive initiatives determined by the policy agreement signed by the municipal administration in the early twenty-first century. The resulting urban design is probably the furthest point achieved in the pursuit of balance, which is benefited from the fact that the preliminary draft of the plan acknowledges a large number of "adjustments" – agreed with the other public and private parties – in the various on-going or planned projects in San Giovanni.

In short, the project pursues the following improvements: an increased access by the public to the marine areas, the relocation of the multilevel parking that will service the marina, thus restoring an ancient and attractive direct connection between the areas of the Troisi Park, Corso San Giovanni and the promenade on the new pier; the change of the morphology and for some areas to be included in several Local development plans, presented by private individuals; the "negotiation" with the Terna power company - culminating in a very modest setback of the fence of the plant which is to be converted to a gas plant – to include the new power plant in the local context.

According to the results of the PIAU and its local plan the railway areas to be divested should be sold to the municipality for the creation of the

"bastion" area, with public promenade and car parks, in exchange for the opportunity to build commercial areas and office buildings, complementing the railway station of the "City centre" planned in municipal areas in the place of the tram depot in the Corso San Giovanni.

Even in light of the delay with which the preliminary draft of the plan is turning into a working implementation plan, we cannot underestimate the opportunity to recognize the possible radical changes in the structure, before political decisions can become long term irreversible physical actions only. This is what happened for the renewal of the Vigliena power plant, whose cycle of depreciation postpones any second thoughts for at least several decades.

The point at issue - which really transcends the size of the district and involves the entire city and metropolitan area - is the following: is it really possible to imagine the coexistence between one of the most active commercial ports of Europe and such a dense and congested town as Naples?

Taking into consideration the scale of the San Giovanni district, the town planning work of the *Innovative programme* seems to demonstrate just this structural incompatibility: it is not possible to relate "hard" port activities involving freight, and for the most part containers, with urban renovation. Any action in favour of one party adversely affects the differing outcome of the other, even only for the dispute over the large areas required to deposit and stock the containers: it is not by accident that today many of the Naples' eastern areas, even those outside the port's perimeter, are used to deposit and store goods in transit through the seaport; nor is it by accident that any attempt made at the PIAU table to change the port expansion project has eventually been irrelevant; probably it was not "ill will" but an objective impossibility. The interests of the competitors were too far apart, with no margin for mediation as the Port of Naples involves a good deal of the air pollution detected in town⁵.

5 According to the latest report of the ISPRA (Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), on "Smog and urban environment quality" Naples is the Italian city with the highest impact of port activities on air quality. Its impact ranges from 25 to 40 percent of the total emissions.

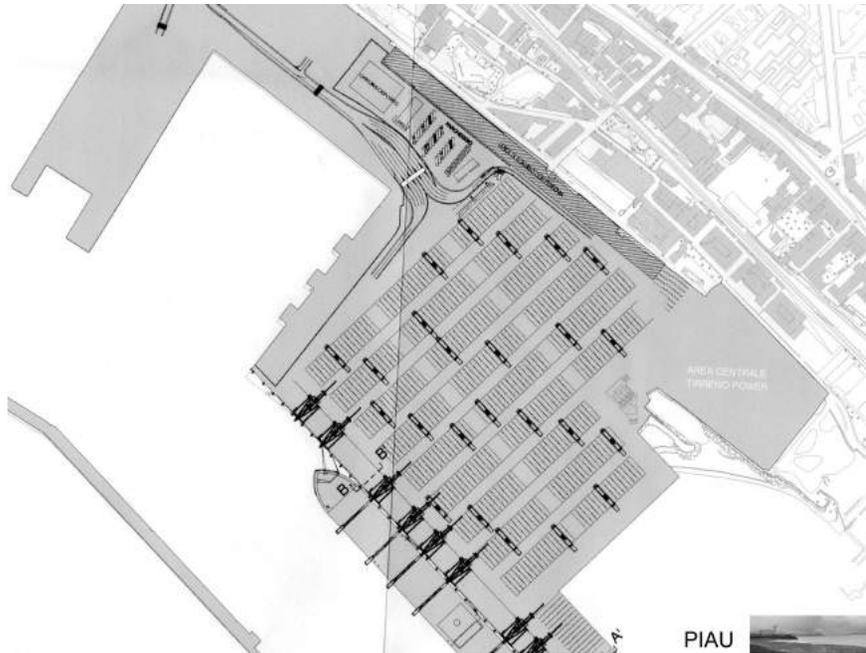


Figure 5 – Scheme of the commercial port

International experiences, from Baltimore to Barcelona (Jauhainen, 1995) show that urban renovation, with the recovery of the waterfront for public use and development of the port's commercial activities can be put into synergy only if the port activities are relocated to more suitable and less congested areas. This opportunity should be at the centre of the political and urban debate in Naples.

How was it that no one felt it necessary to analyse thoroughly these possibilities before working on the port development project? The enlargement of the Eastern Dock, besides being extremely damaging to the desired renovation of the historic city and to the targets of the General Town Planning Scheme, could become inadequate in just a few years because of the expected increase of the maritime freight.

Imagine instead all the options, in terms of quality of life and functional decongestion of traffic, that the recovery of the entire waterfront of Naples could bring about - to be allocated primarily to social and educational-recreational functions - maintaining and enhancing the passenger maritime terminals, both the local ones ("Metro of the sea") and those related to the

cruise circuit. The commercial port, instead of investing in costly expansions to the sea, could gradually move into already environmentally compromised areas, on the Domitian coast (near Castel Volturno), that are already well connected to the Nola Commercial Facility (CIS) and to the logistics infrastructure of Naples' metropolitan area. Even Luigi Cosenza's suggestion, that utilizes the Regi Lagni as a navigable canal to be used as an eco-friendly distribution channel, could be topical again⁶. But this is at another level of the matter. At a more detailed level, it would be good if at least the Port Authority is prevented from locating the railroad, that is to serve the new container terminal, only a few tens of centimetres from the neo-Gothic building of the Cirio's at Vigliena.

5. CONCLUSIONS. MORE PLANNING, LESS IDEOLOGY

In conclusion we can say that in the debate between urban renovation and the expansion of the commercial port there are not, and there will not be, winners in Naples; at least not in the sphere of interest of the public operators.

In the first instance, this is because none of the dispute's contestants nor any informed observers even think that the city's relationship with the port is a problem: there is neither a debate on this subject nor a public opinion. For one thing, the City of Naples simply continues to deal with the emergency deriving from fine particles pollution by adopting unlikely and generalized measures to reduce car traffic. The influence of the port activities on the city environment has been referred to: it is clear that the current municipal policies should not be marginal and ineffective. This is the most instructive example of how their vision is completely out of focus, and a dramatic cultural lag has turned into an ineffective and unrealistic administrative intervention.

The fact that the contestants do not even know that they are at war produces also a remarkable series of collateral damage:

1. the port's development activities are slowed down by the "stickiness" of the fabric of the city, by the circumstances and by the

⁶ The project was presented by Luigi Cosenza in a report for the Study Commission by the Neapolitan federation of the Communist Party in 1966. See Moccia, F.D., Luigi Cosenza. *Luigi Cosenza. Scritti e progetti di architettura*, Clean, Naples, 1994.

"bureaucracy" of the Municipality and of the Environmental Assets Superintendent that is always extremely reluctant to deal with some specific issues, without even having the chance to affect the overview of the coastline plan;

2. the GTPS implementation plans, that have been being prepared for years (the San Giovanni PIAU, the Mergellina PIAU, the Coastline Executive Plan), inexorably slow down their own administrative progress in a multitude of secondary issues: the Policy agreement and the public works, that are episodic but immediate, seem to be again the only solution to specific problems. The plan for the reconquest of access to the sea presented by the General Town Planning Scheme now in force proves to be purely ideological, as it impacts with sectional priorities that should be resolved at a higher scale, in the consideration of an overall reorganization of the metropolitan area.

Therefore, the issue must be reversed, with not "less" but "more" planning, beyond any possible slogans, which means undertaking a conceptual processing that should be able to get rid of the many strong stereotypes: first of all the belief that Naples is the centre of the Neapolitan metropolitan area and that its boundaries, as in its enlightened master plan, are untouchable. This is a necessary but not sufficient start: only by integrating a renewed large-scale vision with the patient refinement of public participation and design work at the urban scale and with new integrations of diverse kinds of knowledge, will it be possible in Naples, and in many other Italian cities, to recover from the delay and backwardness that have made town planning practice so marginal with regard to the domain of action and ideology.

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