

Abstracts

Large dimensions: in and out of proportion, *Remo Dorigati* (p. 9)

The 'mega structure' just refers to itself and its dimensions are simply related to the relationship between economical and technological issues, while its vitality is supported by mobility flows. The large scale, both on the physical and on the conceptual side, asks to reflect about the traditional paradigms of urban and architectural design, but most of all about the new relationship occurring between planning strategies and architecture. Large size buildings are mainly located in the urban sprawl areas, with efficient infrastructures and weak urban fabric, where integration is quite difficult. Mega structures have always existed – monuments, public buildings or infrastructures – as every culture has raised its own monuments as a demonstration of power through an impressive possibility of dominion on nature, a continuous challenge of man.

Urban transport megastructures: mutations and permanence, *Corinne Tiry* (p. 14)

This article offers a definition of 'megastructure' that gives the term's more significant characteristics (flexibility, multifunctionality, generalised interconnection) borrowed from theorists in the 1950s and 1960s and from experimentation by Yona Friedman, Cedric Price, Fumihiko Maki and Peter Cook. Among the various types of megastructure that have supplanted each other over the years, the article examines large airports, interpreted here as both local and international transport hubs and as sites for many types of activity. This is what makes them contemporary urban megastructures, because they are complex 'objects' not unlike a small town or city with a strong impact on an area.

Megastructures. What is really the point?, *Álvaro Domingues* (p. 21)

The article explores megastructures in relation to their impact on local transport networks and nodes. The area examined is Portugal, where the recent construction of giant shopping malls, industrial estates and logistics centres has in turn led to large-scale infrastructures that have been superimposed on a settlement pattern consisting, in many cases, of urban agglomerations serviced by rural roads. The resulting

landscape reveals a juxtaposition of completely different elements in terms of both scale and impact, often the outcome of urban zoning projects intruding on fragmented urbanisation. The resulting image is one of scattered settlement patterns. Behind these phenomena one can see the effects of splintering urbanism. The difficulty in coordinating, in time and space, the decisions made and actions taken by a wide variety of individuals and institutions is becoming increasingly more complex.

Interpretive readings of areas of production and consumption in the urban region of Barcelona, *Lorena Vecslir, Antonio Font* (p. 28)

The article discusses the findings of in-depth research into the reorganisation of settlements in the urban region of Barcelona following the construction of new transport infrastructures. The study, which combines geographical readings with a detailed functional and morphological analysis of several 'fragments' of the area, focuses mostly on the system for locating shopping centres and industrial estates, both of which have played key innovative roles in the recent local transformations. In the case of the shopping centres one is dealing with new forms of organised distribution, while as regards industrial estates it is the development of cutting-edge technology that holds sway. The construction of these large-scale complexes is inseparable from the formation of new centres, some of which are characterised by functional specialisation, others by the synergy between compatible activities that exploit their spatial proximity in terms of capacity to attract and rational use of common services.

Large interregional trade and leisure centres in the Po Valley, *Corinna Morandi* (p. 35)

Large shopping centres, which are often integrated in out-of-town complexes with sports or leisure activities (i.e. theme parks or multiplexes) constitute a type of megastructure which involves high land use, both directly occupied by the buildings and for roads and car parks. A prerequisite for the existence and profitability of these commercial megastructures is, in fact, the size of their 'catchment basin', which in turn is dependent on the efficiency of transport infrastructures. This article highlights the problems relating to the relation-

ship between large shopping centres on the one hand and land use on the other, raising questions over how to go beyond settlement models based exclusively on road transport, on the self-referential nature architectural and micro urban systems and on predominance given to the locally-based location decisions against the management of externalities on a supra-local scale.

‘Megastructures’: settlement geographies and evolving forms, Paola Pucci (p. 42)

High land use megastructures are specialist places, enclosed and/or built-on with highly specific functions. However, they can also be public spaces, a sequence of places used for a wide variety of purposes. The suffix ‘mega’ is a good introduction to the complex nature of these multifunctional and multimodal phenomena. Their design requires an effective combination of planning restrictions and land use with measures to improve the context in which they are set. The article discusses a densification programme for the area around the new Mediopadana high-speed train station in Reggio Emilia and the need to ensure its flexibility, multifunctionality and generalised interconnection.

Experiments in the design of complex platforms: ideas for discussion, Andrea Rolando (p. 51)

Complex platforms raise a number of issues, concerning above all problems related to urban and regional planning. These are dealt with in the framework of disciplines that tend more and more to focus on the management of regulative and procedural processes to the detriment of traditional planning practices that place greater emphasis on architectural, urban and landscape design. Hence in order to understand the role that ‘megastructures’ take on in the composition of contemporary landscapes, more attention needs to be paid to the design side of things and to the development of innovative skills and know-how. In this regard, the increasingly close interaction between what has traditionally been considered ‘free time’ and time given over to shopping (an activity carried out in artificial places situated outside city centres but in areas of landscape interest) is proof solid of how it has now become indispensable to initiate a virtuous process that will reconcile functional needs with higher standards of spatial and environmental quality.

Novaring: an innovative model for service areas in multimodal corridors, Andrea Virano (p. 56)

Novara is a rare example of potential accessibility in transport and strategic terms. The presence of the new Ferrovie Nord Milano railway line to Malpensa airport alongside the axis on which the Turin-Milan A4 motorway (with the Novara-Est tollgate) and the high-capacity railway line of Corridor 5 of the TransEuropean Network (Ten) run, and their coexistence with the adjacent area of the Intermodal Goods Centre and, crucially, with the nearby historical centre, has given rise to a significant demand for routes and services which in turn has occasioned a plurality of measures to meet

the individual requests put forward. This has led to a parceling out of works which prevents the development of ‘critical mass’ in both transport and settlement projects. The *Progetto Novaring* emerged out of this specific concrete situation in an endeavour to design new types of areas of service which, rather than focus solely on motorway traffic, would also tackle the issue of passenger intermodality.

The landscape of megastructures, Nuno Portas (p. 60)

The theme of mega structures is associated in the article to the relationship between inner city and suburbs. Large buildings and the infrastructures which connect them – through the nodes – to the transport networks, ask for a new approach to the project of public space, often reduced to fragments difficult to practice, and to the project of landscape: the aim is to understand better the characters of the contemporary city. Two main elements are supposed to be taken in account to enhance urban design approach: the scale of projects and its coherence with context; the long time necessary for decisions, related to the various actors involved, especially in the case of mega infrastructures, and to the difficulty to coordinate them.

‘In-between’ public fragments: a resource for urban design, Fabrizio Zanni (p. 62)

We are all too familiar with the failure to appreciate urban public spaces and the splintering of the latter that has resulted as the cities have spread outwards. There are many conceptual implications of this type of interstitial space. The notion of ‘in-between’ has been treated from to a wide range of perspectives. From an initial meaning of *terrain vague*, i.e. an abandoned but not necessarily barren area, one moves on to an interesting cultural approach which interprets these peripheral zones as a new wilderness, a ‘dirty’ second or third level reality that goes hand in hand with the concept of urban ‘pore’ or ‘porosity’, understood not only in the physical-settlement sense, but also in sociological terms (Lévesque, 2001-2003). A further related concept is that of liminal space (Paredes, 2005), an ‘interstitial passage’ between ‘fixed identities’ (Heidegger, 1950). Finally, the ‘space of flows’ character of this particular spatial category has been noted by various commentators and has been linked, both in architecture and urban planning, with hybridity and/or hybridisation.

From ‘between’ to ‘in-between’. An archetype ‘between’ mystic and architectural space, Lorenzo Giacomini (p. 70)

The simple preposition ‘between’ has always fuelled the mystic and ontological imagination. In the book *Tree of Life* compiled by the cabalist Hayyim Vital, a prototype of this tradition is the idea of divine ‘contraction’, the first act of God that left space for the creation of the worlds. Similar concepts can be found in the ontology of Heidegger, where one of the closest words to ‘being’ is ‘between’, the median line marking the difference between ‘entity’ and ‘being’, between ‘world’ and ‘thing’. For Norberg-Schulz, ‘between’ is also the point where Heidegger and Kahn meet. It will be

remembered that the latter saw the origin of all inspiration in the 'threshold between silence and light'. However, even the material poetic of Kahn was informed by this archetype, as can be seen from his buildings and from the many 'failed masterpieces' from which a paradigm of architectural space emerges. In the Meeting House of the Salk Institute or in the Hurva Synagogue, the space in-between becomes the primary core of meaning. Another theoretician of the in-between hypothesis is Kurokawa, whose 'philosophy of symbiosis' unravels in an essentially intermediate cultural and architectural space.

Towards an interstitial approach to urban landscape, *Luc Lévesque* (p. 77)

The history of western landscape can be conceived as the conquering of 'non-places', by which is meant above all unknown lands with a reputation of being 'horrendous' or uninhabitable, that are gradually brought under control, assigned a cultural value and subsequently transformed into 'places' and landscapes. These are generic spaces without any clear history or identity. Airports, intersections and shopping centres, as well as the residual spaces associated with these, are just some examples of environments that Augé refers to as 'non-places'. In order to breach this impasse, it becomes necessary to relinquish a privileged relationship that links one's living environment with an image of protection, the latter being associated in turn with archetypal places. By the same token, one must resist the temptation to classify an area as a 'place' or 'non-place' without prior examination or analysis. Various methods capable of altering our perception of urban areas can be used to set this process in motion.

The Milan Expo 2015 Forum, *Valeria Erba, ed.* (p. 83)

The Forum for debate and observations on the forthcoming Expo in Milan proceeds apace with the publication of talks given at the international convention titled *Grandi eventi: effetti territoriali a confronto per una riflessione su Expo Milano 2015* (Major Events: A comparative study of their effects on local areas and communities for a reflection on the Milan Expo 2015). The conference, which took place at the Milan Polytechnic on 24 October 2008 and was promoted by staff and students of the doctoral degree course in 'Urban and Environmental Planning', sought to assess the possible after-effects of Expo 2015. Several local experts evaluated the results of four similar cases. The first of these were Valencia and Zaragoza in Spain, the former having been the location of three major events which leave speaker Fernando Gaja i Diaz somewhat dumbfounded, while the latter, which played host to Expo 2008, is judged positively by Javier Monclús. We can add to these Turin (Winter Olympics 2006) and Genoa (a number of important events between 1992 and 2004), both of which come in for praise from Chito Guala and Francesco Gastaldi, who underline the positive results of urban regeneration and local upgrading. These considerations provide the basis on which the debate on the opportunities and risks of the Milan Expo can be reopened.

The opportunities and risks of a great event, *Valeria Erba* (p. 84)

The opportunities that Expo 2015 needs to provide in order to ensure its long-lasting success in Milan and Lombardy require that the organisers conceive the initiative in a strategic mindset. This must encompass upgrading of local services, beginning with the new high-speed train station in the Expo area and subsequently taking in the entire public transport and commuter system. A further opportunity is the transformation of the districts into two grand urban projects that could house between 12,000 and 15,000 people with adequate services and supra-municipal urban centres, in this way sparing the land in the most prized agricultural areas. Finally, all agricultural zones could be assessed in terms of their relation to Expo, not only for their productive potential and to safeguard the environment, but also for the social benefits they could provide in terms of leisure time and the development of educational and recreational functions, including museums.

Great events, great projects: a high odds bet, *Fernando Gaja i Díaz* (p. 91)

Major events, and the projects associated with them, are a high-risk affair, with the state bearing the costs out of its own coffers and the profits going to private investors. Valencia provides an example of how 'betting' on grand events and projects is more or less rigged in favour of the building industry which reaps the benefits of high-level, risk-free contracts independent of bottom line profitability. The very same betting system also has its guaranteed losers, namely, the users of social services that are reduced and go downhill, the general public that looks on astonished and amazed at the spectacle as it unfolds, and, finally, towns and town planning, the biggest victims of the changes wrought locally.

Zaragoza: from Expo 2008 to the grand urban projects associated with it, *Javier Monclús* (p. 98)

The development of a number of strategic projects is determining a substantial renewal of the urban landscape of Zaragoza. The decision to risk organising an event such as Expo 2008 needs to be understood in the context of its being a pretext for implementing projects that were already on the table as well as those which had been maturing over the previous few years. The plans for the Zaragoza Expo can be interpreted as a strategic urban project of greater importance in terms of both time and space than the one established by the Bureau of International Expositions (Bie).

Turin: the XX Winter Olympics and the season of mega events, *Chito Guala* (p. 103)

The history of the Olympics, like that of the great World Expos, reveals a long list of successes and failures that involves no so much the athletic competitions or exhibitions as the 'fallout' once the event closes. This is precisely the problem currently facing Turin, where the use to which the various Olympic facilities are to be put has been decided on only in

part. However, Turin is an excellent example of urban regeneration having been effectively implemented for the 2006 Winter Olympics, as seen in the numerous works successfully brought to completion and in the measures taken against risks in the city centre, in the mountains and on the ski slopes. Internationally, the case of Turin is providing a peculiar case in point of just how important it is to hold such events in cities that have a lot to offer in terms of culture and tourism. It is not, therefore, merely a question of sport, but also of providing quality cultural events and making available an increasing number of new facilities to visitors.

Genoa, from the 'Colombiane' to European Capital of Culture. Major events and processes of urban regeneration, *Francesco Gastaldi* (p. 110)

Major events have played a crucial role in the urban transformations that have taken place in Genoa over the past 15 years, both for the huge investments they require and for the way they have redefined the city's image. Urban transformation, upgrading and maintenance, all of which have affected the historical centre and the waterfront, have contributed decisively to the reversing of the process of physical, economic and social degradation which had been devouring many parts of the city centre. 2004 was the year Genoa became European Capital of Culture and this was a turning point in the endeavour to relaunch and consolidate the role of the city in the tourist and cultural panorama of both Italy and Europe.

The Expo 2015 area: an opportunity to plan the future, *Luisa Pedrazzini* (p. 115)

Contractors queuing up and a local area undergoing continuous development are what characterise the design and planning phases of Expo 2015. As for the contents and inheritance that the event will bequeath to Milan, to the local area and to residents, all of this is placed on the back burner. The land on which the Expo site will be situated is at the centre of attention, but a potentially much vaster area needs to be assessed and exploited more fully. In this broader perspective, the area involved is that of the waterways and the historical 'Asse Sempione', understood in a wider sense as 'Quadrante ovest Lombardia', the pivotal junction for traffic circulation in Lombardy and for access to southern Europe. Eyes need to zoom in selectively on procedures already underway. A few strategic measures should be singled out for special attention and skills and know-how should be supervised in a coordinated manner. In this way word can be more easily spread about the added value that the area has to offer, and an 'immaterial', barrier-free Expo accessible to the largest possible number of visitors can be fostered.

'Centres' of the Milanese urban region in the light of Expo 2015, *Alessandro Bianchi* (p. 119)

Can we today use symbolism to govern a city whose localities can no longer be distinguished? The city has become polycentric and needs symbols to make its decentred landmarks

recognisable once again. Zoning was completed some time ago (at least on paper, and certainly not in the minds of local and national administrators), but it is still not altogether clear what is meant by upgrading of the run-down suburbs. Are these notions that await concretisation in laws from which quality architecture will then flow? Or, rather, should the plan go back to being informed primarily by a design which has yet to be regulated by law? These days it seems like community services are redesigning the city in the likeness of a printed circuit board. Indeed, development of the entire area is fuelled by responses to demands for better transport, communications, goods, housing, jobs and leisure facilities, or at least this is how it appears to those who believe in this contemporary paradigm. However, men and women do not identify with public services. They simply use them. Let us therefore avoid the temptation to turn a means into an end.

Strategic planning from an Italian republican perspective, *Luigi Mazza* (p. 124)

In order for it to be complete, a planning system cannot be limited to local considerations. A higher level of conceptualisation is required, though very often this is lacking or else is present only formally, hence without any tangible consequences. In the debate of the last few decades, commentators have reached consensus over the fact that strategic planning should be seen not only as being on a higher level than local planning, but above all as a different way of planning. The present article explores the discontent that for several years has been a constant companion of this type of planning and traces the reasons for this in three main issues, all of which boil down to excessive expectations in strategic plans. The piece concludes by arguing that it is possible to design and implement a complete planning system only in a republican perspective, by which is meant using a spirit of 'constitutional patriotism' as the foundation on which to rebuild an authoritative role for the state in the context of legality accompanied by a renewed sense of responsibility vis-à-vis planning.

The first Gpp of Greece. The paradox of the promotion of 'compact' city's principle at all levels of urbanization, *Nicolas Mitzalis* (p. 133)

The new Gpp action plan, the first of its kind in Greece, is late in coming and takes place in a somewhat unstable, unsustainable and unregulated development context undergoing rapid suburbanisation. This is especially true of the big cities where green areas are few and far between (Athens has only 3 sqm/person) and where industry is negatively impinging on the quality of life. Athens is expanding as the focal point of services and jobs, while the suburbs try to get by almost exclusively on tourism and waning agriculture. The scope of the plan should have been regional and environmental restoration, but instead it legalises unauthorised dwellings that in many cases have been built on protected green areas. Greece, indeed, is the only European country where the erection of buildings that do

not comply with the benchmark criteria of town plans is actually permitted by law. The plan thus falls back on an outdated model of development which envisages the transformation of Greece into a 'node' of international, commercial and energy transport.

VIII Doctoral Conference: Turin, October 2008; Florence, April 2009, *Alessio Campi, Mina Di Marino, Anita Napoleone, Marcella Samakovlija* (p. 138)

The first part of the 8th National Doctoral Network Conference took place in October 2008 in Turin. The congress provided doctoral students from a large number of Italian universities with an arena in which to compare and discuss ideas.

The Network gave a facelift to the traditional format by dividing the conference into two parts, the second of which took place in Florence on 3-4 April 2009, where participants examined ways to build and consolidate a new, more interactive and critical approach to scientific brainstorming. In Turin, talks and sessions were of various types, all high quality, though for practical reasons we have given space only to those which, in our view, are directly linked, in terms of issues and affinity, to our own research interests. The Doctoral Network has set itself the task of coordinating doctoral degree courses in Urban Studies and Planning and puts itself forward as a type of 'institute' where meetings and discussions can be held with the aim of bringing to the fore the specific issues and problems associated with doctoral training.