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GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING THIRTY YEARS ON CONSIDERATIONS MADE IN THE MARGINS OF AN UNUSUAL BOOK

A recent book (2014) by Giovanni Crocioni, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Bologna until 2009, and a well-known and atypical figure in that particular professional field, has reawakened for me a distant and almost dormant debate. Thus, beyond the desire to encourage other geographers to discover this work both for its inherent value and because of my affinity with the author with whom I worked on several occasions, I am spurred to reconsider the debate concerning concepts and themes encompassed in both geography and urban planning such as city, territory, region and regionalization. I personally contributed to this debate, as did the extraordinary Pietro Mario Mura, a geographer at the then Faculty of Architecture of the University of Reggio Calabria (Landini and Mura, 1982).

At that time, both disciplines felt the need to review critically their own content and consequently to redefine their fields of action, starting from basic elements that were singly comparable. The emblematic stance of Rigotti (1947, pp. V-VI) cited in our article (Landini and Mura, 1982, p. 274), stated that rather than a «specific art and science» urban planning would develop as a «complex mix of arts and sciences», moving on «from the old definition of “the art of building a city” [...] to the new definition of “an organised complex of cities and territories”» therefore requiring the contribution of «scientists, artists, technicians, in all branches of knowledge». Thus, urban planners were required to possess «three specific characteristics: deep analytical qualities that would enable them to outline the essential elements [...] and classify them; the ability to synthesise in order to seek solutions based on the outcomes of their analysis; and finally and above all a good balance [...] a “common sense”, [...] that would add the eurhythmy, necessary to the best works of man, to such solutions».

The parallel with the multi-disciplinarity of Bertacchi (1927) and with the geographical synthesis of Toschi (1967, p. 8) seemed all too clear. It is striking how, many years later, Crocioni (2014) states «an urban planner must be able to tackle many issues professionally, without being a specialist in any of them» (p. 24). And further on, after recalling the «entirely empirical conception of urban planning» exhibited by his academic mentor, Fernando Clemente, he affirms «urban planning is not a discipline: the object itself is lacking, indeed always changing, elusive and ducking between disciplinary bodies that are overly static and consolidated» (p. 29).

In the meantime, geography underwent a real, theoretical and methodological revolution under the guidance of Adalberto Vallega (1976) focused around the holistic concept of regionalization, in turn a harbinger of great potential and interdisciplinary application. It is no coincidence that the essay by Landini and Mura, mentioned above, appeared in a special issue (No. 2, 1982) of the «Rivista Geografica Italiana» devoted to *Theories and methods of regionalization*. For a short time, it seemed the discipline might regroup on this paradigm, benefitting greatly both research and university teaching. Unfortunately, the moment was not destined to last and geography ended up spread across the trans-disciplinary universe that had undermined its identity. Even Vallega (2003) shifted to postmodernist positions that frankly inspired little or no consensus (Cerreti, 2003 ; Landini, 2005).

In turn, urban planning, due to its greater operative activity, lived a sort of compromise between professional activity and social commitment. Despite the ideological rejection of functionalism and, consequently, its systemic potential – a refusal significantly contradicted by the work of urban planners closer to regional science, especially Bernardo Secchi – there was no real effort to move beyond zoning.

Nor the method of participatory planning, which inevitably shrunk the dimension of the regional network, is able to interpret the general orientation of land management (Landini and Mura, 1982, p. 285).

The dualism between the professional figures – and consequently of the mental attitudes – of the architect who is more sensitive to aesthetic values, and the engineer who is more pragmatic, has also weighed on the epistemological and operational path of urban planning. Crocioni (2014, pp. 22-23), as an engineer, finds in urban planning «almost an escape route», and he is especially fascinated by the need to «tackle processes» along the time variable (a stance that is very close to the approach of diachronic geography). Moreover, he is appreciative of the necessity to have «critical apparatus» and «intellectual flexibility» even while acknowledging that his original training provided «a certain mental strength and resilience in the face of complex problems» and the ability to seek «effective solutions». Moreover, his book is not lacking in highly critical comments on what he calls «flag-waving plans» or, even worse, «ethical plans, that peddle “values” but are poor in content» (p. 21).

Planning is the theme that I intend to tackle in updating the debate. I mentioned above my experiences of working with Crocioni, which took place in the opening years of the twenty-first century, and all concerned a wide area¹, the scale on which geographers prefer to operate, and which highlighted our great affinity as regards the application of concepts and methods of regional analysis. In fact, in Crocioni's professional curriculum, spatial planning in its broadest sense, and in different sectors and with different tools (zoning of industrial hubs², feasibility studies for hospital networks³, infrastructure development plans⁴), occupies an important place.

I was thus expecting that ample space would be dedicated to these types of plans in his book. However, Crocioni hardly mentions them individually, but rather develops his discussion along the avowedly autobiographical line of the more classical urban planning, that of the Master Plan (Piano Regolatore Generale - PRG), where the geographer is not authorized to operate directly and has been called in do so only rarely with sectoral studies⁵. Crocioni's approach to the plan, however, is totally unconventional, starting from a consideration he makes at the outset (Crocioni, 2014, p. 9), of clear geo-economic importance: «I crossed above all the peripheral urban reality of the Country: medium-sized cities⁶, that almost always had a strong tradition [...] were often dynamic, active and always lively: the geographical periphery and its towns have long been the most lively and productive in Italy [...]. For fifty years I have been able to observe and live those cities from the inside [...], in an Italy that was changing: able thus to see them, and sometimes to understand them, as only one of their own citizens may». This attitude is very different from that of the zoning and planning standards that we were already criticizing thirty years ago (Landini and Mura, 1982, p. 278), stressing how it had become «the focus of planning, enhancing the compositional aspects at the expense of a broader spatial planning» and how «not wanting to read such a technical tool as an expression of the control exercised by the political and economic power on the social classes» was to be guilty at least «of abstraction, if not bad faith»: the disaster of urban growth especially in big cities, with the chronic failures of Master Plans, proves the point.

¹ Territorial Coordination Plan (PTCP, 2002) and the Territorial Plan for Productive Activities (PTAP, 2007) for the Province of Chieti; Inter-municipal Strategic Plan of the Lower Sangro (2008-2011) for the Municipalities of Atesa and Lanciano, also in the Province of Chieti.

² In this case too, in the region of Abruzzo: L'Aquila (1970-1972) and Sulmona (1976).

³ The case of the metropolitan area of Florence is significant (1989).

⁴ Note, especially, the Plan of Urban Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Territory (PRUSST) entitled *Sviluppo del Porto di Ravenna nel Corridoio Adriatico* (1998-2001).

⁵ In my personal experience, for example, as consultant in the economic sector of the Master Plan (PRG) for the Municipality of Giulianova (1992), in the province of Teramo, and for the settlement and socio-economic analysis of the area in support of General Variant to the Master Plan (PRG) for the Municipality of Montesilvano (1996-1997), in the province of Pescara.

⁶ As well as in the region of origin, Emilia-Romagna (Correggio, 1977; Bellaria-Igea Marina, 1979; Riccione, 1980; Argenta, 1981; Reggio Emilia, 1985; Cesena, 1988; Ravenna, 1993-1996), again in Abruzzo (Sulmona, 1974 and 2011-2015; Atesa, 1975; L'Aquila, 1975; Lanciano, 2007-2011); and, with interesting methodological innovations, in Veneto (Vicenza: Land Management Plan, 2006-2007) and in Calabria (Lamezia Terme: Structural Plan, 2008-2015).

In this regard, the position of Crocioni is clear: «urban planning is government of the land; [...] everything arises from that; [...] the rest [...] today is design, if not the illusion of design» (Crocioni, 2014, p. 12) and the city is the «synthesis between the market and language» (p. 13) so «the construction of the plan itself gives you a clear perception of the existing urban dynamics, and all of the essential features of the city; [...] this gives the real measure of the talent of an urban planner, his ability to interpret a city that is changing under the impulses of the plan, to react, to respond to those pressures» (p. 14). Such an undertaking is made even more difficult, in the Italian case, by a market that is largely imperfect, with low levels of competition and frequent oligopolistic conditions in the mode of governance of land plots and in general of urban structures, especially as regards the provision of public services (Crocioni again, 2014, p. 20).

On the other hand, the classification of international nomenclature that Astengo once proposed (1966, coll. 544-547) emphasises how the use of the term *urbanistica* – that became the standard use in Italy only in the late 1920s, replacing the former *urbanesimo* – can be considered the counterpart of the French *urbanisme* (early twentieth century) and the German *Städtebau* (late nineteenth century), and therefore focused attention mainly on the city, while in the Anglo-Saxon world the term *planning* (again, early twentieth century), in its various compounds (town-planning, city-planning, regional planning, town and country planning, city and regional planning), indicates a stronger focus on the overall problems of the area, expressed, especially after World War II, by the use of *pianificazione urbanistica* in Italy, or *aménagement régional du territoire*, in France and *Raumordnung* in Germany (Landini and Mura, 1982, pp. 275-276).

Moreover, although after the 1960s the concepts of *pianificazione integrata* (integrated planning), *sistemica* (systemic planning) and then *strategica* (strategic planning) were introduced to highlight its unitary and interdisciplinary character (Archibugi, 2007), planning remained each time *ambientale* (environmental), *paesistica* (landscape), *economica* (economic) and – above all – *urbanistica* (urban planning), emphasizing the separate nature of each discipline rather than resolving these distinctions.

It is well known that urban planning was among the first areas to be devolved from the State to the Regions in Italy (article 80 of Presidential Decree 616/1977, in implementation of the authorization under article 1 of Law 382/1975). The result was a planning legislation based on legal and procedural centrality that cascaded down through hierarchies of planning that were more or less rigid at the various levels (regional, provincial and municipal). Therefore, the regulatory framework of Italian urban planning remained that of Law 1150/1942, which still exists today. Yet, beyond this was the so-called *legge-ponte* or temporary law (so named because it was to lead a comprehensive reform that remains unfinished), Law 765/1967, which modified and integrated the former, introduced the mandatory nature of urban planning at the municipal level as well as private participation in the costs of urbanization, under rigid centralized control. This move was perceived as an imposition from above and produced the opposite effect to that intended, namely the spread of unauthorized construction almost in defence of local autonomy. It also protected, at least formally, the small land properties that were a pillar of Italian society and, as their value increased, accompanied the expansionary phase of urban transformation through successive economic cycles (Crocioni, 2014, pp. 35- 38). Such protection was soon undermined by Law 865/1971, which considerably increased the opportunity for expropriation, as did the sequence of legislative provisions through the 1970s, that can be summed up as «urban policies of national solidarity» (Crocioni, 2014, pp. 58 ff.).

This process was clearly a far call from the ideal planning law, which according to Crocioni should endow the plan with «broad powers and ample room for manoeuvre; without trying to predetermine the planning processes, but rather ensuring the essential conditions» (Crocioni, 2014, p. 29). On consideration, this would imply discarding the concept of a city isolated within the perimeter of the plan, but rather inserting its development in the wider regional context, as attempted by the few experiences of continuous planning over wide areas, the first of which was the *Piano Intercomunale Milanese* (p. 57).

Since the nineties, however, geopolitical and economic changes to the global scenario have forced planners to reconsider the importance of spatial analysis as an integral part of any plan, at all dimensions and scales. Thus, under pressure also from the guidelines proposed by the INU (Italian National Institute of Urban Planning), innovative aspects began to appear at the legislative level regarding planning. Starting

from the definition and creation of the plan, regulations were introduced regarding management, control and monitoring of the effects using two different modes, strategic/structural and operational, which were supported by shared cognitive frameworks, created within the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and substantiated by the creation of maps of places, landscapes, soil, etc. (Landini and Properzi, 2005).

However, it would be mistaken to talk of comprehensive reform – says Crocioni (2014, p. 87) – as the reform was enacted in regional urban planning laws that were in no way uniform, while the central government seemed removed from this context, except when it intervened with taxes that were hidden within the budget.

Inevitably, in such circumstances, geography struggled at first to take any role in planning. This was also partly due to the objective existence of a regulatory gap as regards professional recognition (lack of a professional association authorized to perform such activities). The extensive production of geographical knowledge thus found little application in urban planning except in isolated cases, where there was a preliminary analysis regarding population and settlement structure (town/country relation) and productive structure (agricultural modernization, industrial and tertiary localisation). At most, the geographical analysis provided support to the functional hierarchy of plans, adapting regional conceptions arising from theories of urban and industrial polarisation to them (Landini, 2015, pp. 39-40).

The new guidelines issued at the end of the twentieth century (see above) reassessed the potential contribution of geography to planning, thanks above all to the cross-scale approach that led to a definition of new spatial orders generated by social changes and technological innovations. The conception of the territory as a product of cultural belonging and as a project developed by collective action emphasized the role of public support for decisions, which gave birth to new instruments of concerted planning, inspired by the principles of subsidiarity, territorial compensation and co-planning. The bottom-up approach was preferred, while the functionalist models were not discarded but the hierarchical structure gave way to a reticular approach that favoured complementarity and the integration of measures for transformation and economic propulsion. The regional space reassembled the greater dimension of a wide area through passages of scale that enabled the insertion of local systems that become more competitive, into a progressively broader regional network (Landini, 2015, pp. 40-41).

The problem remained, however, of how to define, both from a conceptual and regulatory viewpoint, the wide area. Geographers immediately took regional theory, itself cross-scale, as the point of reference. Indeed, as they had not been involved in creating the urban plan model, the definition deemed suitable was the region as a natural or culturally homogeneous area, both as regards functions and local systems.

As far as urban planners were concerned, it is interesting to find other atypical positions of theorists and practitioners who were more sensitive to the spatial problem beyond strictly urban considerations. In addition to the above-mentioned Franco Archibugi, whose original methodological approach to planology (*planologia*) as a paradigm of multidisciplinary integration (2000; 2003) is worthy of note, the position of Pier Carlo Palermo (2004, pp. 13-40) is important. By retracing the events of planning in Italy, he defines the wide area as «one of the most innovative of the complex system of plans envisaged in the national planning law of 1942», highlighting how the government of land management at that scale had always been a weakly developed theme. Palermo also refers to the decisive introduction of Law 142/1990 to observe how the spatial plans of coordination that the law entrusted to provincial institutions retained a traditional approach (spatial distribution of functions; localisation of infrastructures; lines of action on environment and landscape). Depending on the level of flexibility/rigidity of regulations, the risk was that they would be either nothing more than simple guidelines or would create conflict with planning at the municipal level. Moreover, the latter was characterized by a dualism between the scheme of spatial organization and that of urban design or, more narrowly, between urban planning and architectural design. This dualism was only partially resolved by the tools for negotiated planning introduced from the 1990s onwards. Even in structural planning an issue remains substantially unresolved: whether the structure should be a system of invariants, therefore prescriptive, or a matrix of possible transformations and inherently dynamic.

Roberto Mascarucci, with whom I also worked professionally⁷ and carried out research⁸ while actually teaching at the same university, clearly inclines to the latter view. In his recent book (2014), that he provocatively entitled *Serve ancora l'urbanistica?* (Is urban planning still necessary?), he starts from the premise whereby urban planning is ever less a designing of cities and ever increasingly territorial government (see Imbesi, 2009, pp. 11-12). In this respect, as regards strategic planning, he identifies a new generation of wide area plans, which he defines «inter-municipal spatial plans». Regardless of the redesign of the administrative network, he argues, the intent is to promote groups of municipalities both in «metropolitan conurbations [to be] rationalized and regenerated» and «in growing territories of the middle-sized urban network (to create synergies and optimize the system» as well as «in smaller urban centres in marginal areas (to promote complementarity and create critical mass)» (Mascarucci, 2014, p. 46). Therefore, the essential analytical categories of the plan will be those that are typical of geography: geomorphology, landscape and settlement layout, related to urban morphology and the design of infrastructures, interweaving «the spatial approach with all the other technical approaches (socio-economic, transport, energy, etc.) and seeking functional links that relate one to the other, and acting on these to maximize the positive effects of design choices» (p. 48).

Another area of interdisciplinary convergence of obvious geographic interest, is the Territorial Project (for a broad examination of the possible interpretations and variations, see Palermo, 2004, pp. 275-296). Pierluigi (Piero) Properzi, an urban planner from Aquila at the head of the INU in the early years of this century and closely linked to Giovanni Crocioni through both professional ties and ties of friendship, gives a convincing interpretation. He carried out experiments in this area in research on Italia Mediana (a potential macro-region made up of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo). This research led to the recent publication of a book (Di Ludovico and Properzi, 2015) in which he defines relations with regional planning as follows (pp. 21-22):

The Territorial Projects [...] have been a working hypothesis, which has characterized the whole experience of strategic platforms (SIU Research [Società Italiana di Urbanistica]). Yet, while acknowledging that these platforms possessed a substantial capacity to make proposals and develop an innovative interaction with the European framework and the activities of the regions, the shift from a level of reconnaissance and proposals, such as that of the platforms, to the actual operational level of Territorial Projects is not a foregone conclusion. [...] Moreover, the Territorial Projects are intricately connected with the outcomes of other plans for reform: institutional reform, characterized by the uncertainties of the new Title V of the Italian Constitution and an electoral system that [...] brings back into centralised decision-making areas that had apparently been left up to the autonomy of local governments; legal reform that [...] forced [...] institutions such as public-private agreements, while reducing the legal weight of agreements between authorities and not resolving the core issue of the [...] dual nature of planning restrictions and reconnaissance. Finally the strictly disciplinary reforms, that are still uncertain whether to opt for a unitary conceptual dimension of territorial government, into which urban planning does not really fit, and a dialectic “separation” of the different disciplinary rationalities (law, economics, planning, evaluation) that converge in the Territorial Project. [...] In terms of size, of the Territorial Project offers an implicit cross-scaling, but it must necessarily deal with the two hubs of Community territorial policy: polycentrism and functional areas [...] but to do so often coincides with the project for infrastructuring. If the aim is to avoid these, a broader structuring of the projects's contents will be required [...] and of] its relations with interacting planning systems [...]. In Europe, the problem is

⁷ In particular, the Area Plan of the Lower and Medium Valley of the Tordino River. Preliminary project (2007-2008), for the Province of Teramo.

⁸ With reference to the development scenarios of the Abruzzo region, see Landini (2014).

still the distance between the vague definition of the objectives of cohesion and coherence and the rudimentary indicators used to measure effects. [...] How do you measure territorial coherence and prior to that how do you build? Surely by planning in its most advanced forms, rich in participation, competitiveness, territorial compensation, co-planning, inter-municipality, all activities that are complex, [...] interacting with the traditional hubs [...] of income [...] The other question of sustainability also remains, [...] which can, and indeed must, be read in terms of “value added” not only as an outcome of the Territorial Project [...] but as a factor that determines its success or failure. This opens up another reflection regarding disciplines that is in no way secondary. Sustainability is linked in Europe with evaluation and with a tradition that holds the impartiality of the evaluator as implicit, as regards both the plan and the cognitive frameworks and the indicators used in the evaluation. In Italy, on the other hand, due to the deeply holistic and self-justifying tradition of the discipline, combined with a more prosaic defence of professional skills, the plan itself is given priority over the evaluation. It is, in fact, very difficult to establish assessment practices linked to stable environmental reports (cognitive frameworks) that are “external” to the plan; rather, these practices tend to be subordinate and adaptive. If we place the Territorial Project into this context, the (pre-)existence of cognitive frameworks, of local environmental and landscape phenomena and processes, stands as essential factor for its procedural “validity” and its success.

Where does Crocioni stand on the debate regarding the relationship between municipal and regional planning? We should note, incidentally, that he published a volume (Crocioni and Fantuzzi, 1976) on regional planning in Italy in the well-known and prestigious series “Geografia umana” edited by Lucio Gambi, and in his most recent book he includes the note that «every regional context has its own specific character as regards urban networks and territories, as well as the dynamics of transformation of their settlement structures». He refers firstly to the North-South dualism, then the «three Italies», to the fringe economy and the excellence in production and services also present in the overall urban void of the South (Crocioni, 2014, p. 18). He also highlights the inescapable centrality of the municipalities in planning, for reasons of competence related to the evolution of town planning legislation, and in particular the *legge-ponte* (p. 34). For this reason, «today, the reform of the municipalities remains a crucial step; the necessary condition of any commitment to re-launch [...] reasoned and updated forms of territorial government» (p. 45). Hence, the importance of compensation (p. 75), although it must be noted that Crocioni uses the term in a technical-urban planning sense, while from a geographical perspective – but also, more widely, in new territorial governance – the strategies of compensation at an inter-municipal scale are given greater importance.

As regards environmental issues, Crocioni critically stresses the discrepancies in regulations of the trio, sustainability-protection-development, especially given the disappointing results (Crocioni, 2014, pp. 89 ff.). But then, with the pragmatism that characterizes him, he takes a look at Italy as it now is, at the end of both his personal cycle, and that of classical urban planning that «no longer exists». (p. 93) He formulates assessments of cities, territories and landscapes that objectively are not positive, but neither catastrophic. Not all is lost, and gradual redevelopment would appear possible, if there exists a strong commitment. Certainly any such undertaking would be highly complex in view of the prolonged stagnation and scarcity of resources, both public and private, and could be compromised where there is extensive suburban dismantling, especially industrial closures, in the North, and massive amounts of illegal construction, especially in the South (pp.106-108). The strategic role of infrastructures and logistics is undeniable if recovery is to be achieved, a role that was first recognised as fundamental by urban planner Osvaldo Piacentini at the end of the 1960s, as Crocioni underlines (p. 136). In fact, the lack of resources forces a choice between the alternative of enhancement – or rationalization – of heritage or of public networks (military property, beaches and marinas, service companies, decentralized offices) (pp. 146-149) and use of tax assets (pp. 151-152).

Finally, Crocioni underlines the need for a reform of planning (2014, pp. 152 ff.). This requires an institutional and territorial reorganization that will redefine and re-evaluate the competencies of the municipalities, as long as these are adequate in terms of size, of the regions, that have the task of spatial planning and landscape, and of the State, that is responsible for addressing the absolute priorities of hydrogeological planning and for combatting illegal building. It may be that such a vision underestimates the centralist thrust of the draft constitutional reform initiated by Renzi's government (constitutional draft bill 1429/2014).

As far as geography is concerned, since the 1970s it has pursued the search for a territorial unit of a comprensorial nature that would be better suited to the characteristics of the individual sub-areas. This intermediate dimension has swung from a consolidation of the provinces (proposed by Law 142/1990) through their downsizing, to their actual abolition, according to the trends that now seem well established in national policy (Law 56/2014, in addition to the aforementioned constitutional bill 1429/2014). However, it is significant that the oldest geographical institution in Italy, the Italian Geographical Society, has played an important role in the scientific and political debate on territorial reorganization in recent years, being called upon to do so by the *pro tempore* Minister for Regional Affairs and Local Autonomies following a workshop⁹ which gave rise to a specific collection of writings (Castelnuovi, 2013). Based on consolidated studies on the Italian urban structure¹⁰, the Society proposed the reorganization at a single layer of wide area: 35 urban systems, called *piattaforme regionali* (regional platforms), at the basis of social and productive relations on which to build – obviously, through processes of multi-sectoral reform – a new territorial and economic structure. The disruptive legislative impact, which abolished even constitutional regions, has slowed the progress of the plan that was, however, widely reported in the media and adopted in a number of bills pending in Parliament.

Simultaneously, in 2013, the INU called on the political forces, arguing that it should be a spatial and urban plan to

[...] guide territorial transformation processes [...] A plan that is, however, completely new even compared to those produced in the recent past, radically reformed, and more highly structured and simpler and more essential, as well as a plan tailored to the actual needs of the contemporary world [and] only the plan, as a public spatial plan, will be an effective institutional instrument to counter the spread and sprawl of settlements typical of the present day and the consequent increasing consumption of land; a plan based on new sustainable mobility systems that interconnect the new centrality of the «contemporary city», home to territorial functions of excellence, basic services and public space, of which it is lacking, as well as a territorial ecological network that will link the areas of greatest environmental potential, maximizing the effects of the regeneration of fundamental reproducible resources and the protection of non-reproducible resources [and calling for] the approval [...] of a national law on the «basic principles of the government of the territory», an act now constitutionally required after the new Title V; a law [...] that will strengthen regional laws and give them a sounder legal basis; a law [...] that innovates the structural form of the plan even more decisively than has been done in the recent past [...] A plan that will therefore be programmatic and not conformative of development rights and that will guarantee the necessary forward-looking vision for urban and territorial land management.

Perhaps the time has finally come to reach a real convergence between the two disciplines, and the major scientific institutions that represent them, in order to achieve the required attention and undertake

⁹ Held on March 8, 2013 in the Society's headquarters, Palazzetto Mattei at Villa Celimontana in Rome.

¹⁰ Among others, we should remember the Quadroter Strategic Project (1999), in which it participated in the agreement drawn up with the National Research Council.

the necessary concrete measures that can no longer be put off, given the increasingly evident collapse of both manmade and natural territory.

After the stimulating experience of intellectual debate and work I engaged in with an «artisan» of urban planning, as Giovanni Crocioni likes to call himself, I find myself (a «toiler» in geography) to be in complete agreement with him in believing in a future of «patience and expertise» (Crocioni, 2014, p. 106), that hopefully urban planners and geographers will share.

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GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING THIRTY YEARS ON. CONSIDERATIONS MADE IN THE MARGINS OF AN UNUSUAL BOOK – The author is inspired by a recent book (2014) written by Giovanni Crocioni, an engineer and urban planner, to take up once again a past debate on concepts and themes used both in geography and in planning such as city, territory and region. After retracing opinions formed in the past century, the author focuses on the development planning of wide area, pointing out how the British vocabulary, in its various compounds (town-planning, city-planning, regional planning, town and country planning, city and regional planning), expresses greater attention for the global problems of the territory. Nowadays, in Italy, the issue is concentrated on both the strategic value and the scale of planning to stress its united and inter-disciplinary nature. In order to achieve that aim, administrative reorganization and consequently a new juridical frame, are fundamental. According to recent opinions collected from the Società Geografica Italiana and the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, the author concludes by stating that it is time for the two disciplines to find a point of convergence, in order to avoid deferring action and to obtain concrete measures, made more pressing by the degradation of both natural and manmade territory.

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