

## Transparency in Planning: A new Viewpoint

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The Next issue of IJPP will consider a specific methodology for “planning without planners”; i.e. locally built plans through planning processes of active participation.

A specific goal of the issue relates to a set of techniques that originate from the same research line that our research group has set up over time. A radically new perspective for community planning is envisaged subject to three main conditions. The first is that techniques should have greatly reduced or possibly null costs. Little has been written on the costs of planning, which in some cases have been enormous. In this regard, the most striking Italian case concerns the Master Plan for Rome (Scattoni, 2004). Exceptional situations aside, even less expensive “official” plans have costs that a local community cannot afford. A minimum set of no-cost planning tools will be therefore presented.

A second condition is that of planning tools that should be used by the community itself without the help by the planners. In this respect, the proposal goes beyond advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965) which implies an expert “at the service” of grassroots groups who wish to build their own plans. The proposal is for the identification of simple methods and

techniques to be locally managed and requiring the expert only for specific performance tips and technical know-how.

The third prerequisite is that of time management skills in these processes. If the purpose of the process is to influence decision-making it is essential that it be made traceable over time to provide information to local the local community in order to relate effectively with the “governments” responsible for official plans affecting the specific community.

Empirical research (Scattoni, Falco, 2012) shows quite clearly that in a particular Italian context opacity of decision-making in planning is due to mechanisms of local politics. The "hidden factor" is precisely that of a local political system that takes advantage in mediating in a confidential manner with stakeholders. The proposed approach of “planning without planners” would have an important role to eliminate such a negative practice. Transparency remains the only option. from this point of view and the tools made available by INTERNET can play a role of primary importance.

Despite its pervasiveness Web 2.0 is a relatively new factor in planning. It has started to be a mass phenomenon only from the early 2000s. On the other hand there are urban plans that have started the process in those years and have not yet been concluded. This is to emphasize that the tools of planning have not yet been able to experience the full potential that the web can offer them.

The approach presented implies that a myriad of strategic frameworks built from the bottom is then used to influence “official” planning. Such strategy would have no chance to develop in a sporadic and not continuous environment without the help of the net.

## REFERENCES

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