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**Towards a new urban agenda: does it make sense to talk about of strategic planning for the government of the city?**

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The strategic guidelines of the European Union for the next decade require cities to develop an urban agenda. An agenda that expresses the design capacity of the city, that sets out targets, that knows how to build development strategies. It has long been a widespread awareness of the importance that cities play in the development of their territories (territories of variable geometry: from a metropolitan area to the macro-region), and in turn how these territories have a meaning and identity through their urban systems that connote them. The theme of the city, and urban governance, is the focus of much discussions, not only academic, and occupies a prominent place in many EU and national policy agendas. The challenge for cities plays on at least two distinct levels: the competitive level (the city as a regional and national economic engine) and cohesive level (the city as the place that must be able to cope with the problems of social exclusion, with a territorial fragmentation, with a difficult urban sustainability). If urban areas have become a critical point for the development, then it becomes important to investigate and understand how this happened, what were the dynamics involved and the tools used. Consider, for example, the strategic planning processes carried out in recent decades in many European cities.

In light of these considerations, the paper aims to describe some results of a study that aims to understand the extent to which the experience of some strategic plans for medium- size cities can demonstrate how they still represent an effective and updated governance tool for the territory. Through the analysis of four case studies in Europe - Barcelona, Glasgow, Lyon and Stockholm - selected for their relevance in their territorial reference scenario (local, regional, national), this research has come to give more than one answer the question concerning the effectiveness of the instrument and to point out a number of problems. The four case studies have been analyzed through documents and questionnaires reserved to key players, they show how it can be possible to make a sort of "balance" of the first twenty years of strategic planning, going to identify a series of strong criticisms (which are crashing with the great changes taking place in Europe and world wide), but also a series of experiences, "good practices" that should not be underestimated.

Through a territorial approach has been built a matrix that points out these issues: the "territorialization" of the strategic vision and subsequent actions, awareness of public-public and public / private relation to their local circumstances, the relationship between strategic planning and traditional planning. As a matter of fact, if in one hand the global competition between cities and regions is now a reality more evident than the other ones, in the other hand we cannot ignore the recent global downturn that represents a watershed for the development of cities and territories. If this can mean new opportunities, this requires that cities can identify strategies and methods for their implementation, they have to demonstrate that are able to "govern their territories" not forgetting the wealth of experiences in these twenty years of strategic planning in Europe.

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