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Proposal for retail planning in Piedmont under new tools for territorial governance

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Retail planning in Italy has developed separately from urban and territorial planning. Tertiary and retail buildings and new large retail stores have economic, social, territorial and environmental effects that could modify territorial orders significantly. In 1998 a reform process of retail sector started with decree n. 114 that introduces important innovation also under territorial outline: the concept of urban compatibility of retail structures was introduced and regions were charged of setting criteria for urban and environmental compatibility for retail settlements.

From an economic point of view, the reform abolished previous rules that impeded access to new operators in order to promote competition and to favour a variety of typology of retail structures for consumers. This reform identifies the role of retail of neighbour as primary service for residents and favours retail network development in urban centres and in degraded areas as opportunity of improvement of quality of life. The normative of Regione Piemonte shares objectives of retail development fixed by national normative and introduces new elements. In Piedmont a development scheme for retail sector was introduced trying to join retail network development to local territorial systems. For each typology of retail structure conditions of territorial compatibility are fixed by regional criteria. The territory of the region was split up according to the role of commercial attraction played by each municipality and for each class of municipality a different type of development of retail network is expected. All municipalities locate zones inside their territories for retail settlements, areas suitable to host new settlements or to develop existing ones. The rules promote use of brownfield and requires that retail activities must respect artistic heritage, architectural goods, landscape and environment.

Evaluation of effects from retail settlements, although being an important theme for nature and range of effects often involving large territories, had difficulty to develop in Italy.

In general evaluation procedures used in last years , both qualitative and quantitative, have been difficulties to integrate with procedures of urban and regional planning.

In regards to evaluation of effects of retail planning, both to regional and local level, a new method has been tested in Piedmont: VIT, that means integrated territorial valuation.

The test of VIT considers effects (direct, indirect, cumulative) on local economy, on ecosystems and landscape, on mobility, on dispositions of settlements, on retail network structure and on planning capacities of bodies involved in retail planning.

A key question in retail planning comes from externalities born from medium and big retail structures which concern a vaste territory often over boundaries of the municipality that gives a license and takes building taxes, while other municipalities suffer effects on traffic, retail network and on environment.

In retail planning of some regions and in policy guidance of the new Territorial Plan by Regione Piemonte the body Province with its coordination plan has an important role in planning of retail structures causing over local effects.

On the basis of the case of the plan of Province of Bologna for retail structures, a similar proposal is showed in conclusion for retail planning in Piedmont, in which the Province plan rules the development of big retail structures with cause over local effects.

The scale of Province is the best to read territorial effects of modern retail structures, located mainly near major road axis and nodes outside centres, with great accessibility and minor cost for land than urban centres. The actual model of retail planning in which single municipalities give licenses disregarding over local effects have to be overcome.

During next years, also with the reform of tools for planning, the bodies of Piedmont will have to develop a retail planning system under criteria of sustainability, and so a higher integration of retail planning with general territorial planning is desirable.

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