

Urban holistic design. A process of transverse planning. Trials of application between Gothenburg and Turin

by Giuseppe Roccasalva

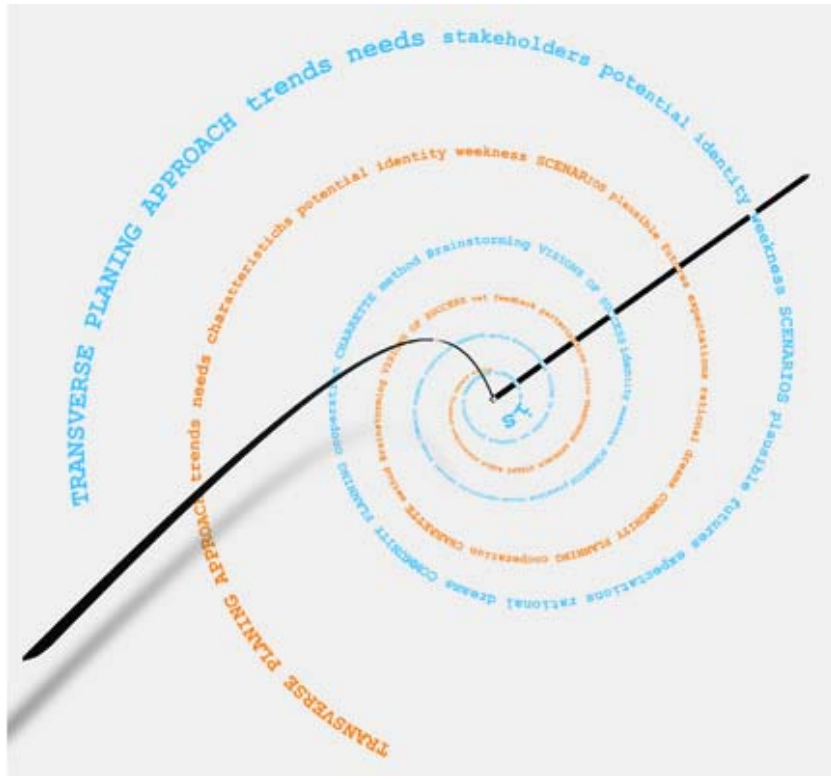
Tutor: Franco Corsico

According to the *new Urbanism* debate it is needed to develop new approaches for solving the decision-making gridlock in designing public urban spaces.

Between August01-May03, as first student of the Architecture faculty of Politecnico di Torino, I chose to spend an academic year at Chalmers University of Technology (CTH) of Gothenburg. I took part to a singular course experiment named Studio U&U (Urbanism and Urbanity), hold by the Dean Hans Bjur¹ (winner for this initiative of the Stockholm *Jannes stipendium*). I developed a final thesis work about searching a conceptual definition of this experience and trying two practical implementations in Gothenburg and Turin as settings of this research.

The main issues of the Studio U&U, established as a complementary, as well as separate activity of CTH was to stimulate the development of:

- An understanding of qualities and values in the urban landscape.
- Planning approaches, how to communicate with people representing the Municipality and the authorities on one hand and private interests on the other, to achieve practical and feasible solutions.



*This thesis needed to design an image for picturing the **transversal thinking** in all the debates hold around the construction of this idea. Transverse planning, as an on going thought, is between being practical and playing with ideas, and is unashamedly conceptual. Concepts, although debatable, have an immense power in the way we interpret and experience the complexity of the city.*

¹ Professor & Chair Urban Design & Planning, former Dean School of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden. Advisor of Swedish thesis research at the Studio U&U.

I started investigating the Urban Design (UD) discipline to understand the edge of a field that is constantly changing and to compare the language approaches of the Studio with the main international thinking

I stressed how the weak/strong power of UD lay on the ambiguous definition in terms of application field, results and planning approaches. The latter were divided following those two main characteristics that often recur in the examples, analogue to the U&U attempt; I have examined Strategic and Procedural approaches. The first have an overlooking set of interpretative rules: the way to read the urban fabric is the way to understand and possibly modify it. The second, without principles, focus on the way to reach a decision as a guaranty for its feasibility. Among these, I deeply described the technique named *Charrette* whose study has been qualified by the support of Prof. Goran Cars² and by the experiment he hold in Kung \otimes lv.

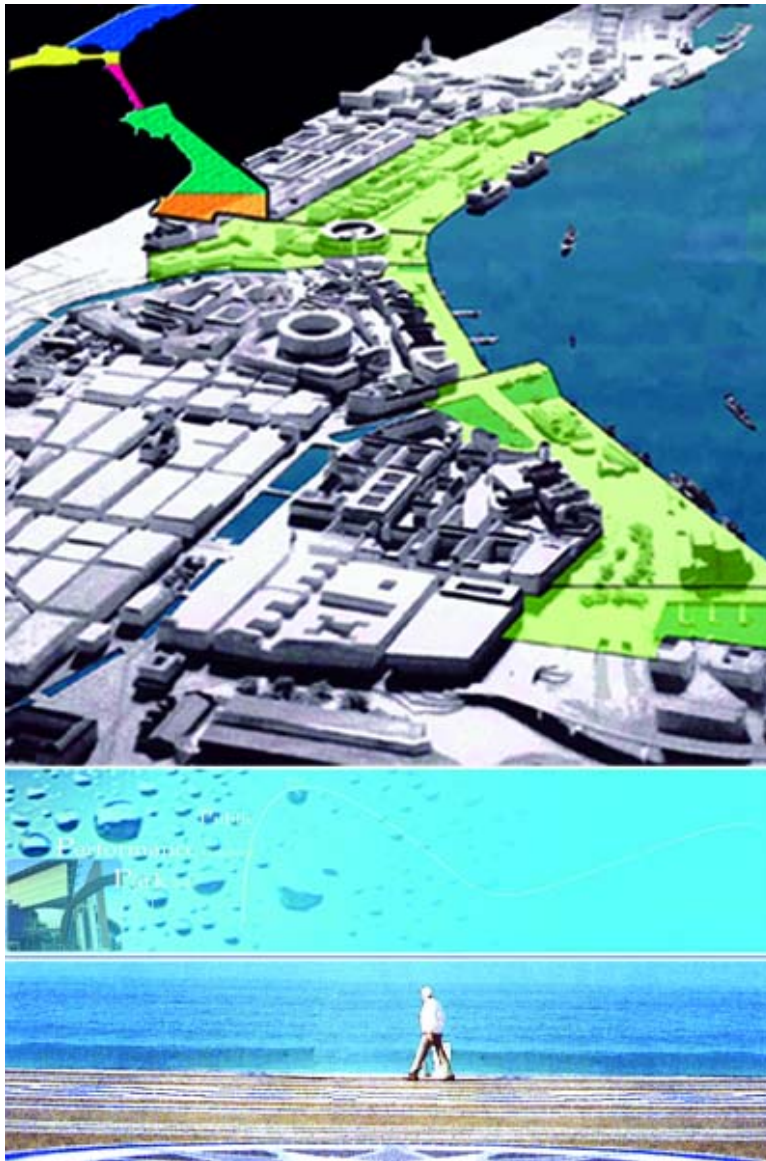
I also tried to build up the background thesis belief that considers a significant planning key, the way to influence the decision-maker awareness and response. The growing complexity of the society and territory need practical strategy development and evaluation procedure that are able to select the different input and sew them in a compact and synthetic image (see image aside). With *Urban Holistic Design* I labelled the modern planning aspiration of been interdisciplinary, multi-sector based. The spiral of concepts makes decisions understandable, shareable and consequently implementable

Moreover I described the practical experiences parallel with the theoretic investigation about new UD approaches. I suggest for both cases studied, **2 essential conducts** of urban transformations. An **Engagement Procedure** that try to build working spaces where interaction creates a mutual learning for the ones who are involved but also an **Implementation Strategy** which catalyses the first steps for changing

In Gothenburg the focus was centred to Södra Älvstranden (the southern river shore). The area will be reconnect to the city core with a tunnel that will relieve it from the intense traffic.

The thesis proposal –produced as an internship with the Town Planning Office of Gothenburg– has followed the schedule of intentions that the Municipality has decided to get, within 2005, to a resolute Plan. The U&U, once more professional stage of the research, has provided neutrality for the participative initiatives with different stakeholders, architects, community groups that contributed with their opinions and ideas. **The engagement** is based on the *Urban Centre*, a think tank space of conception, interaction and designing. Here students, practitioners and local actors work for setting up the *Public Performance Park* (see image).

² Göran Cars, Prof. in Regional Planning at the Royal Institute of Technology (K.T.H) of Stockholm. Main Scandinavian expert of the Charrette method.



The Public Performance Park –divided in five specific resort areas– will dress up the whole strip of the coast. Nearly 1500m, the area is made of little harbour, huge parking space and entertaining enterprises

A synthesis of U&U projects visions for each of the 5 resorts and a precise list of expectations, guarantee the urban quality of public and private Park space.

Implementation: a catalysing event named *Gothenburg 2006 art at the harbour* will again attract the citizens on this area with different appeals addressed on the topics of life and water by the river front. The event will take place when the tunnel under the area will be deliver to the city. This propose, presented in May 2003 at the Town Council of Gothenburg, aim to generate in the authorities and private actors a mental agility in choosing the solutions to implement.

The attention in Turin focused on a specific district, Borgo Aurora (Between the Dora River, Regio Parco street and Novara street). The morphological borders of the quarter and its car/pedestrian movements and flowing, makes it an area remote and central to the city core. Targeted by renewing public interventions, Borgo Aurora is addressed by increasing investments. Here I chose to work by simulating a realistic operation of community planning. The first and initial contribution came by an inspiring meeting at the Basic Village (famous block inside the studied area) with Marco Boglione (Owner of Robe di Kappa, sport brand), Prof. Franco Corsico³ and Armando Baietto⁴. The eclectic entrepreneur discussed with us some

³ Former Major of the Town plan office in Turin, Professor in Urban Planning at Politecnico di Torino, Advisor of Italian thesis researches.

major problems and future scenarios of the area which he lives and works in. Fruitful starting soil was also the experiences that Prof. Baietto, Corsico and Riccarda Rigamonti⁵ gained during some previous courses focused on the same area. The result, whose studies were stimulated by the Charrette method procedures, was an open discussion about the implementing potentials of Borgo Aurora.

The Engagement is founded on a serious of interacting/learning among which one real (*PortAperta* agency) and one virtual (Borgo Aurora Web Site). **The implementation** is catalysed by visible suggestions on the different thresholds of scale and on the interfaces between the public spaces of Borgo Aurora. The suggestions, aim to convey the first future steps and intents for changing. The web pages tools aim to hopefully engage new reflections among students, teachers and practitioners and allow all the interested actors involved in further researches.



Designed and published to guarantee an increasing attention and to generate new and wider interests, the Web Site is not only reporting the activities in and out the area, but it shows some feasible development visions and engage the Community through a forum/referendum page

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