

Chapter 13

The Complexity of the Metropolitan Planning and Governance in Milan: The Unintentional Innovations of an Implicit Urban Agenda



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Abstract In the city of Milan, in Italy, complex processes of redefinition and rescaling of the urban agenda have been taking place for the last 15 years, reshaping the urban identity through a mix of social mobilization and innovation, private investments and public policies. Referring to this context, this chapter specifically analyses how processes of redefinition and rescaling of both urban planning tools and issues, and metropolitan government and governance, have been working with complex multi-scalar urban phenomena. Consequently, it reflects on how recent institutional rearrangements (beginning with the establishment of the new Milan Metropolitan City) are or are not able to face multi-scalar urban dynamics.

Keywords Multi-scalar Milan · Post-Fordist urban change · Post-crisis urban change · Multi-level planning and governance

13.1 Introduction

The urban agenda is grounded in the interaction between different choices of policy and is influenced by multiple factors of political and cultural nature. It depends on the dominant rhetoric in both the political discourse and public opinion: that is, it depends on the political cycle (at the same time, local, national and supranational), as well as on the construction of problems by the media and on the general vision that predominates in the civil society. This means that the development and implementation of the urban agenda do not lie exclusively in the hands of politicians or public administrations. It is due to a large number of issues, often difficult to identify clearly. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that the public action influence the city agenda through a selective process which places some collective issues at the top and excludes others (Pasqui et al. 2017).

According to this background, Milan seems to be an interesting case study. On the one side, it is living a positive moment, of which Expo 2015 represented the symbolic

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event: it is a dynamic and welcoming city, able to attract talents and tourists thanks to its universities and excellences (finance, fashion and design, economies of culture and communication, health and related technologies). On the other side, until now the redefinition of its urban agenda has not been able to take into account that Milan is not only its vibrant metropolitan core, that has strengthened its attractiveness, but also a multi-scalar and multifaceted city with contradictions and internal differences and inequalities. According to Gabriele Pasqui (Pasqui 2018b):

- Milan is the central city, historically narrow in its municipal borders, but increasingly dynamic and attractive for different populations: not only national and international business tourists, students and city users, but also migrants and (more recently) cultural tourists. Over the years, this city has changed incrementally, also through molecular processes and mechanisms of social mobilization (promoted by cultural, social and economic actors), and not only through unitary plans or projects.
- Milan is also a wider city that extends, with variable geometry, to a densely urbanized area, more or less corresponding to the new institution of the Metropolitan City. This city includes some of the most important recent or potential transformations and, at the same time, some of the stronger contrasts between economic and social dynamisms and new forms of inequality and fragility (Centro Studi PIM 2016).
- Milan is then a post-metropolitan urban region (Balducci et al. 2017), that extends between the Pre-Alps foothills (involving the provincial areas of Novara, Varese, Como, Lecco, Monza-Brianza and Bergamo) and the Po Valley irrigated plain (encompassing the provincial areas of Pavia and Lodi) (OECD 2006). This large urban region is structured on a complex context of interrelations made by long and short material and intangible networks (Magatti and Gherardi 2010): from environmental and infrastructural connections made by green, blue and grey networks, to economic connections between supply chains and territorial clusters (Bolocan Goldstein 2018).
- Furthermore, according to the dual logic of competition and complementarity, Milan is part of an enlarged city-region; that is, a polycentric urban network that extends (at least) from Turin to Verona and Venice (up to Trieste), and to Bologna and Rimini (up to Ancona), and in which infrastructural corridors and functional clusters play an essential role (Perulli and Pichierri 2010; Del Fabbro 2019).
- Finally, Milan is a gateway city to global flows; that is, a connector city, located in international networks which go beyond geographical proximities and mobilize significant financial investments (Taylor 2004; Bolocan Goldstein 2015).

This chapter aims at understanding whether and how the ongoing processes of redefinition and rescaling of the Milan urban agenda have been taking into account this articulation of urban phenomena and dynamics.

13.2 The Multi-scalar Milan: The Spatial Interface Between the Italian Economy and Society, and the World Networks

Into the wider Northern Italy city-region, the Milan urban core and its wider and very productive urban region have been representing the Italian cultural and economic capital since the beginning of the industrial and urban development process, that started after the Italian unification in 1861 and increased, in particular, after the Second World War: both in the central city and in the linear city extending all along the Pre-Alps foothills (from Novara to Bergamo—and up to Brescia—passing through Varese, Como, Monza and the Brianza area). At the same time, they correspond to one of the crucial European nodes of world urban networks (OECD 2006), that has been recently strengthened by—but not only—the Expo 2015 (Pasqui 2015; Di Vita and Morandi 2018).

On the background of its urban dynamics (their regional-scale spatiality, and their macro-regional, national and European connections), this multi-scalar Milan (Pasqui 2018b) is maintaining a leading position, in Italy, in terms of investments, entrepreneurships, technological progress, social innovation, and urban change (Armondi and Di Vita 2018). It is the only Italian city able to attract highly skilled human capital and relevant foreign direct investments (Camera di Commercio di Milano 2016). Being part of a wider supranational network of European economic engines (including Munich and the federated State of Bayern, and Stuttgart and the federated State of Baden-Wurttemberg, in Germany; Lyon and the administrative region of Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, in France; Barcelona and the autonomous community of Catalonia, in Spain), the Milan urban core and its urban region (together with its administrative region, Lombardy) are one of the main and most meaningful European spatial and productive platforms: that is, cities and urban regions which, according to their productive trends and performances, represent diversified economic hubs in transition from the third to the fourth industrial revolution (Armondi et al. 2019) and with strong international aptitudes, but without function of political capital (Assolombarda 2018).

As in other European metropolises, the economic and demographic growth of both the Milan municipal and metropolitan areas concluded in 1970s, when the production and residential relocation from the main city to the neighbouring municipalities and the external areas of the urban region intensified. Consequently, since the 1980s and, in particular, from the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the service sector metamorphosis and the real estate overproduction of the city (Pasqui 2018b) spread from the urban core to its surrounding areas, even by contributing to the partial substitution of both former and traditional large industrial plants and small manufacturing buildings with new urban functions and activities (Armondi and Di Vita 2018).

Even though the world financial and economic crisis has affected the economic, social, institutional and spatial dynamics of urban change, that had already positively distinguished the Milan urban core and region from other former industrial cities in Italy, its economic performances have remained better than in other urban areas of

the country: for instance, in terms of GDP,¹ growth of new firms, foreign direct investments, or limited decrease of real estate prices (Armondi and Di Vita 2018), as well as unemployment rate and limited social costs (Pasqui 2018b). In general terms, the multi-scalar Milan, that still corresponds to the Italian richest area and makes a fundamental contribution to the entire country competitiveness, has been favoured by a polyarchy of public and private actors: during the still ongoing global crisis, these multiple actors have been able to overcome the downgrade of large real estate projects (which had characterized the urban change from 1980s to the first 2000s), as well as to mobilize local resources and to attract external investments, talents and digital technologies (Armondi and Bruzzese 2017).

Together, the Milan urban core and region confirm themselves as the main Italian financial and economic hub, and they have been developed as the core of the Italian knowledge and creative economy, with a growing sharing approach (Mariotti et al. 2017) and strong connections with its still vibrant manufacturing background (Armondi et al. 2019). The Milan urban region offers specialized productions of services (i.e. health, high education and research, finance). At the same time, it still provides local and traditional economies related to the *Made in Italy* (i.e. fashion, design, home furnishing and fittings) and other specialized productions of goods (i.e. mechanic and mechatronics; chemical and pharmaceutical; metal, plastic and rubber manufacturing; textile, clothing, leather, footwear and related mechanics; aviation and logistics) in a diffused system of small and artisan firms, scattered in different districts and often linked with global giant brands (Unioncamere 2013; Centro Studi PIM 2016).

Despite the proliferation of vacant areas and spaces, led by the 1970s and 1980s de-industrialization and service metamorphosis phases, and by the 2008 financial and economic crisis, the persisting diversity of economic sectors and noteworthy quota of manufacturing industry (in particular, outside the urban core) have shown that this has been a long and complex transition from a mainly, but not exclusively, industrial-based economy to a mainly, but not only, service-based one. At the same time, they have contributed to reduce the vulnerability and boost the resilience of the Milan urban core and region to this relevant socio-economic and spatial change (Armondi and Di Vita 2018). However, the combination of different productive and urban development phases and trends has led to the overlapping of opposite tensions and impulses, which are trans-scalar, difficult to manage and demand for new urban policy and planning approaches and solutions: from the centrifugal socio-spatial dynamics of the dense urban core, to the centripetal socio-spatial dynamics of the wider urban region (Bolocan Goldstein 2018).

The recent success of the Expo 2015² has contributed to reconsolidate the local and international attractiveness of the city, as well as its positive image as one of

¹A the end of 2017, the Milan GDP is above the 2008 levels by +3.1%, whereas Italy is still under the 2008 levels by -4.5% (Assolombarda 2018).

²According to recent data, in the period 2012–2020, the Expo produced an added value for 13.9 billion € and an additional production for 31.6 billion €, together with 115,000 new jobs and 10,000 new firms (Dell'Acqua et al. 2016).

the most attractive European cities. This mega-event has catalyzed and accelerated several already ongoing trends, as well as flagship and infrastructural projects, which have been making a relevant contribution to the transition of the multi-scalar Milan from city mainly oriented to production, finance and business tourism, to urban region characterized also by several leisure opportunities. Art and cultural events are growing in several districts of the urban core (Bruzzese and Tamini 2014; Bruzzese 2018), also thanks to the development of new art and cultural facilities (from the Fondazione Feltrinelli, the Fondazione Prada and the Silos Armani, to the Museo delle Culture—MUDEC, the Museo del Novecento, and the Museo della Pietà Rondanini) and productive clusters (made by incubators, co-working spaces, makerspaces, and other hybrid workplaces dedicated to innovative productions of goods and services), which are often located in former industrial buildings or vacant spaces.

However, against the backdrop of the consolidation of the multi-scalar Milan as Italian main epicentre of the current metamorphosis towards a knowledge and creative economy and society, this change has not involved yet the entire urban core and region, that is still formed by outskirts affected by phenomena of “poor metropolitanization” (Garofoli 2016). In contrast with their main centralities and strengths, both the urban core and the urban region are affected by diffuse phenomena of poverty. In the only Milan municipal area, even though the population has returned to grow (1,369,000 inhabitants in 2016, that is +75,000 from 2008), about 20% are migrants, 16% are elderly,³ and 330,000 are the mono-nuclear families (Pasqui 2018b). As the processes of socio-spatial polarization and segregation are increasing, over the last 10 years the growth of homeless (+21%) and of poor citizens (+13%) has been impressive, and the demand of social housing is expanding (24,000 requests in comparison with 70,000 existing units, of which 10,000 vacant) (Pasqui 2018b).

The decrease of welfare, the growth of social fragility, and the raising contrasts between excellences and poorness are typical of contemporary world cities. However, in the case of Milan, it is not possible to ignore the responsibility of the planning and governance system: this is traditionally very fragmented, complex and weak and has not been able, yet, to develop a shared strategic approach and a broad urban regional vision, which could be able to address trans-scalar issues and effectively orient public policies. “Milan has confirmed its reputation as a ‘polyarchic city’ (Dente et al. 2005), not linked to just a unique centre of power, in which the governance coalition, the interplay of actors, and the interests in the urban making and remaking have always been complex, multi-layered and multifaceted (Perulli 2016)” (Armondi and Di Vita 2018, p. 9).

On this background, this chapter highlights that the post-Fordist Milan experimentation with urban planning tools and metropolitan government (in Part 3), and the post-crisis Milan experimentation with urban planning issues and multi-level governance (in Part 4) can be considered as unplanned innovations of an implicit urban agenda.

³That is, people who are more than 75 years old.

13.3 The Post-Fordist Milan: Experimenting with Innovative Urban Planning Tools and Metropolitan Government

The Milan service sector metamorphosis and real estate overproduction phase, that started in the 1980s, corresponded not only to the planning and government of unprecedented large urban transformations, but also to the experimentation with innovative urban planning tools and metropolitan government. The previous phase of urban growth and development for the Milan municipal area,⁴ that began after the 1861 Italian unification and following industrial take-off, and concluded in the 1970s,⁵ was marked by different typologies of urban plans, which were connected to the development of both the legislative framework and the cultural background of society and planners:

- the urban expansion plans, such as the Piano Beruto 1884–1889 (2000 ha of new urban fabric to host 500,000 new inhabitants), the Piano Pavia Masera 1910–1912 (2200 ha of new urban fabric to host 560,000 new inhabitants) and the Piano Albertini 1933–1934 (10,000 ha of new urban fabric to host 3,650,000 new inhabitants), which took their names from their planners;
- the urban general plans, such as the first rationalist plan (the PRG 1953, aimed at supporting the already ongoing industrial development and high urban densification, also promoted by previous post-war reconstruction plans and building speculations) and the second rationalist plan (the Variante Generale al PRG 1976–1980, aimed at managing the uncontrolled development of the tertiary sector in order to preserve the productive activities, but contradicted by the ongoing processes of de-industrialization⁶) (Morandi 2007).

Traditionally, all these Milan Municipality's plans were more or less contradicted or anticipated in their implementation by spontaneous urban phenomena. Therefore, these frequent contradictions and anticipations encouraged the development of an experimental approach (even though, often not intentional or aware) in the urban planning and government of the following phase: that is, the post-Fordist phase of urban change, when traditional urban plans and government became more and more inadequate to new socio-economic and spatial trends, and when local policy-makers (more or less intentionally) avoided to plan and govern sometimes impetuous socio-

⁴That today extends to 18,100 ha and hosts 1,350,000 inhabitants (Source: ISTAT 2016).

⁵When the population of the Milan municipal area exceeded 1,700,000 inhabitants (Morandi 2007).

⁶This plan was very powerful from the ideological point of view, as it aimed (i) to decentralize new residential and business developments outside the municipal boundaries; (ii) to distribute extensively public facilities and areas for community services; (iii) to safeguard the industrial sites within the central city. However, it was not able to stop some of the ongoing socio-economic and spatial phenomena connected to the productive activities. The following industrial reconversion phase into offices and residential uses of small and large brownfields was handled outside the plan framework and was negotiated through a "case by case" procedure of variation to the zoning provision of the general plan.

economic and spatial dynamics in a rich context of cultural and economic resources (Pasqui 2018b).

This Milan's widespread cultural tendency to innovation and to be ahead of other Italian cities had already expressed, even in the field of the urban planning and government, immediately after the end of the Second World War, when the issues of the metropolitan planning and government became clear.

After the first metropolitan scale vision of urban functions and infrastructures, developed by the *Architetti Riuniti*⁷ in 1945, since the 1950s (and before than in other Italian cities) the debate around the planning and government of the Milan metropolitan area became very important within the local institutions. According to the National Urban Planning Act,⁸ in 1959, the Ministry of Public Works established the Piano Intercomunale Milanese (PIM) and its borders (thus, including 35 Municipalities of the former Milan provincial area), and it provided the Milan Municipality with the power to coordinate it. After its institution, the PIM borders, features and competences changed along the years, according to both the continuous urban growth and the approval of following national and regional acts.⁹ Nevertheless, the role of PIM was more important from the cultural point of view than from the political one. Different kinds of metropolitan visions and plans were elaborated, such as the very well-known Turbine model plan¹⁰ (in 1963), Linear city model plan¹¹ (in 1965) and Comprensorio 21 Territorial Plan¹² (in 1982). However, their implementation was almost always negatively affected by political conflicts between/within the Municipalities.

On this long background, the 1980s service sector metamorphosis and real estate overproduction phase corresponded to the maturation of an already ongoing reflection about the updating of the urban planning tools to the new post-Fordist socio-economic and spatial dynamics, as well as the upscaling of the urban planning and government at the metropolitan scale. At this regard, the Documento Direttore del Progetto Passante, approved by the Milan Municipality in 1984, was the first step of this experimentation, even though this kind of innovation was not completely intentional and aware (Oliva 2002; Boatti 2007). Going beyond the ideologic approach promoted by the second rationalist plan (1976–1980), the 1984 structural plan overcome the preservation goal of the industrial production inside the Milan urban core (difficult to implement in a global de-industrialization phase of world cities) and the zoning. Through a still “milanocentric” approach, the Milan Municipality identified the priority axis for the development of the entire metropolitan area in the construction of the new suburban

⁷A group of rationalist architects as Albini, Bottoni, Gardella, Mucchi, Peressutti, Pucci, Rogers, Belgiojoso and Cerutti.

⁸Specifically, the National Urban Planning Act n°1150, approved in 1942.

⁹Today, the Centro Studi PIM is a voluntary association of local authorities placed in the Milan Metropolitan City and Monza-Brianza Province.

¹⁰Elaborated by Ludovico Belgiojoso, Giuseppe Ciribini, Demetrio Costantino, Giancarlo De Carlo, Domenico Rodella, Gian Luigi Sala, Bernardo Secchi, Silvano Tintori and Alessandro Tutino.

¹¹Elaborated by Marco Bacigalupo, Giacomo Corna Pellegrini and Giancarlo Mazzocchi.

¹²Developed after the institution of the Comprensori (promoted in 1975 by the Lombardy Regional Acts n°51 and 52).

railway tunnel,¹³ crossing the municipal area from the north-west of the city to the south-east, enabling the activation of a new suburban train network, and contributing to redirecting the urban change process of the urban core towards an urban region perspective. Along this new infrastructures, the 1984 structural plan promoted the transformation of big brownfields (the former gasometers in Bovisa, Fina refinery in Certosa, Alfa Romeo car plant in Portello, railyard in Porta Vittoria) and vacant spaces (the central area of Garibaldi-Repubblica) into new, accessible and mixed-use, metropolitan centralities.

Just a few years later, this approach was extended to other areas by the following Documento Direttore delle Aree Dismesse approved by the Milan Municipality in 1988: for instance, to the large Pirelli brownfield in the Bicocca area, that was the first big urban transformation project to be implemented, even though it was not included in the previous 1984 structural plan. It was on the background of these 1980s experimental structural plans that, in the 1990s, Milan made an important contribution to the innovation of the Italian urban planning system,¹⁴ based on the strategic negotiation approach: the experimentation of the so-called Programmi Complessi, such as the Programmi di Riqualficazione Urbana (PRU) and the Programmi Integrati di Intervento (PII), aimed at facing the decrease of public funding (by involving private actors in planning urban transformation projects), as well as the rigidity of general urban planning tools inspired by the expansion-oriented zoning approach (through partial, site-specific and mixed-use urban planning tools, more flexible and transformation-oriented).

The 1990s and 2000s phase of the post-Fordist Milan urban change based on a large use of this innovative planning tools. The 1995 PRUs planned and designed the transformation of big brownfields, such as the areas Pompeo Leoni (former OM truck plant), Rubattino (former Innocenti and Maserati scooter and car plant), and Quarto Oggiaro—Palizzi (former FINA refinery). Following, the 1999 PIIs planned and designed the transformation of other big brownfields, such as the areas of Rogoredo-Santa Giulia (former Montedison chemical plant), CityLife (historical Milan City Fairground), Portello (former Alfa Romeo car plant), Marelli—Adriano (former Marelli engineering industry), Manifattura Tabacchi (former tobacco industry) and Porta Vittoria (former railyard), as well vacant spaces (such as, the central Garibaldi—Repubblica area) (Morandi 2007).

In Milan (more than in other Italian cities), this experimental phase was more radical. Until the breakdown of the 2008 global crisis and, in particular, of the real estate market, the Milan Municipal Administration allowed an exceptional real estate redevelopment of industrial sites and vacant spaces by leading, at the same time, to high private returns and poor contribution to public benefits. Furthermore, several of these large urban projects (often designed by global architects¹⁵) have remained unfinished, because of high costs of land reclaiming and financial problems of private developers (Bolocan Goldstein and Bonfantini 2007; Pasqui 2018a). Without a clear

¹³Planned in 1982 and gradually opened to service since 1997.

¹⁴Originally based on the Italian National Act n°179, approved in 1992.

¹⁵Such as Stefano Boeri, Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki, Daniel Libeskind, Cesar Pelli.

intention and aware of innovating processes of urban planning and government, local policy-makers simply renounced to traditional procedures and approaches. They fostered the market through neoliberal political choices and, only implicitly, they experimented with innovative planning tools and metropolitan government, that is, by developing inspiring (but weak) “milanocentric” vision for the urban region.

This is the case of the Documento di Inquadramento Ricostruire la Grande Milano, approved by the Milan Municipality in 2000, updating the city image produced by the 1980s structural plans, and upscaling it at the territorial level. According to the ongoing PIIs, to the new urban regional infrastructural corridors and to the location of the three urban regional airports, this new structural plan synthesized the future development of the multi-scalar Milan with the famous image of the “inverted T”, through which the main urban change axes were emphasized (Bolocan Goldstein and Bonfantini 2007; Morandi 2007): from the North-West to the South-East axes, plus the North-East one, that correspond to the main railway and motorway corridors connecting Milan to other Italian and European cities and regions.

This is another example of a never solved and a never-ending conflict between the planning and government of the urban core and those of the urban region: from the innovative 1960s–1980s PIM proposals, to the experimental fulfilment of national and regional acts¹⁶ by the Milan Provincial administration. Because of the constitutive weakness of this institution, the three Milan provincial plans (the 1991 Piano Direttore Territoriale dell’Area Milanese, and the 2003 and 2014 Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale—PTCP) were not able to implement their polycentric vision for the Milan metropolitan area, that collided with strong centripetal urban dynamics towards the urban core. At the same time, also the new 2012 Milan urban plan, that was finally approved in conformity to the new regional urban planning act¹⁷ (after more than 30 years from the previous 1976–1980 general urban plan), counterposed a new “milanocentric” vision for the urban region, by highlighting the supremacy of the Milan urban core.

According to the same regional urban planning act, this (radically new) general and transformation-oriented urban planning tool was totally different in comparison with the previous zoning-based and expansion-oriented ones (approved in 1953 and in 1976–1980), thus obligating the city administration to experiment with both innovative urban planning system¹⁸ and procedures. Referring to the ongoing post-Fordist socio-economic and spatial metamorphosis, this 2012 Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT), approved by the Milan City Council, introduced innovative goals,

¹⁶The reference is to the Italian National Act n°142 (1990) and the Lombardy Regional Act n°12 (2005), which provided the Province Administrations with powers and competences also in terms of urban planning (such as, town planning coordination, new infrastructures, environment protection, ecological networks).

¹⁷That is, the Lombardy Regional Act n°12 (2005).

¹⁸The former Piano Regolatore Generale (PRG) is substituted by the new Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT) that, in turn, is made by three documents: the Documento di Piano (a sort of structural plan), the Piano dei Servizi (a sort of public city plan) and the Piano delle Regole (a sort of ordinary management and regulation plan).

issues and processes. According to the slogan of the “city as a common good”, it has been aiming at:

- promoting an inclusive and mixed-use city, even through innovative mechanisms and rules for public/private agreement in order to balance public and private building rights in every urban transformation;
- improving the quality of urban environment and social services through the preservation of the urban green belt, the exploitation of the agricultural production, the creation of an ecological network, the development and incentivization of a social housing program, the improvement of collective services and open spaces, the inclusion of innovative workplaces in the system of urban services (in order to facilitate their development), as well as the regeneration of both the historic areas and the rest of the built-up city;
- involving supra-municipal and sectoral institutions, local borough administrations and civil associations in the planning process through specific public meeting to discuss and share the planning choices (Arcidiacono and Pogliani 2011; Arcidiacono et al. 2018).

The 2011 political change in the city administration¹⁹ influenced the urban agenda and, through the 2012 PGT, enabled a post-crisis downsizing of the building rights. Even though this urban plan was based on the confirmation of already planned large urban transformations, it tried to contain the previous pro-growth approach (Pasqui 2018a). However, being this plan originally aimed at the redistribution of the added value in the real estate and on few new sectors (including leisure tourism), the substantial deregulation in terms of land-use, together with the absence of a shared vision for the development of the Milan urban core and the effects of the financial crisis, limited the capacity of the Milan Municipal Administration to take the lead in planning new transformations. Accordingly, these projects depended almost entirely on the private players of an increasingly unstable real estate market (Palermo and Ponzini 2012; Palermo and Ponzini 2014).

An extreme example of this approach can be identified in the 2012 PGT’s neglect of the big Expo 2015 projects.²⁰ While the breakdown of the 2008 global crisis affected the implementation of such oversized interventions, the World’s Fair 2015 was originally considered as an extraordinary event (to manage through extraordinary planning tools and governance), thus ignoring the permanent effects of its legacies (beginning with the problematic post-event reuse of the Expo site, originally considered as further occasion of real estate overproduction) (Di Vita and Morandi 2018). These are challenges for the contemporary Milan urban agenda, even though the multi-scalarity of such large projects demand for an unprecedented multi-level planning and governance.

¹⁹From a right and neoliberal administration (Mayor Letizia Moratti), to a left and democratic administration (Mayor Giuliano Pisapia).

²⁰Projects proposed during the event bid (2006–2007) and implemented after the event awarding (2008–2015), according to a specific *Accordo di Programma* (started in October 2008 and approved in July 2011), which both the Expo site and its post-event transformation in the new Milan Innovation District (MIND) refer to.

13.4 The Post-crisis Milan: Experimenting with New Urban Planning Issues and Multi-level Governance

In the current post-crisis phase, that in Milan corresponds also to a post-Expo phase, several indicators show that the urban core (in particular) and its region (in part) are involved in a renaissance trend, that contrasts with the long-standing economic stagnation of the whole country (Camera di Commercio di Milano 2016; Assolombarda 2018). In this phase, the current left-wing city administration (2016–present)²¹ is developing a new urban plan, that is trying to interpret the current and trans-scalar urban dynamics in partial continuity with the 2012 PGT (still in force); that is, to emphasize the discontinuity produced by the first left-wing city administration (2011–2016) in comparison with the previous right-wing ones (1993–2011).

For what concerns the large urban transformations, the Milan Municipality is promoting an innovative vision (called Milan 2030), that could overcome the fragmentation of the past urban plans and projects. Indeed, it is focusing all the main interventions around the reuse of the former barracks and railyards, also in connection with the proposal for a new circle railway line, that should take advantage from the existing city railway belt. In parallel, after the recent investments in the exploitation of the tourist resources of the Milan urban core (i.e. the historical centre and the new centralities), and in the improvement of its international attractiveness and image (also accelerated by the Expo 2015), this new PGT aims at rebalancing the urban development trends, for instance by focusing on environmental and social problems of its outskirts. Accordingly, the main (and sometimes experimental) goals and issues of this new urban plan are:

- not only, the development of the Milan urban core as a node of global networks, where places and people are connected, also by improving the functional and building density in areas which are close to the metro and railway stations;
- but also, the renewal of the urban core as an attractive and inclusive city, by selecting areas to locate strategic urban functions (such as, innovative services, new economic activities, social housing, renovated public spaces), beginning with the reuse of former industrial areas;
- at the same time, the regeneration of the urban core as a green and resilient city, by limiting the land take and incentivizing the improvement in the energy performances of the built-up city, as well as by creating new ecological corridors (from a new connection between the Parco Nord and the Parco Sud, to a linear green system along the railway belt and across its railyards);
- finally, the spread of the regeneration processes inside all the 88 neighbourhoods of the urban core, by taking advantages of the reuse of the former barracks and railyards, the reopening of the historical Navigli canal systems and the renewal of squares along the main public transport corridors; or by promoting self-recovering projects of abandoned buildings and self-restructuring processes of social housing neighbourhoods, with specific attention to the urban peripheries.

²¹Mayor Giuseppe Sala, former CEO of the Expo 2015 Spa management company.

These goals and issues confirm (and simply upgrade) goals and issues which have been already promoted by the 2012 PGT. However, even as reaction to the previous real estate driven development, they specifically focus (sometimes rhetorically, but sometimes innovatively) on the urban outskirts. On the background of the Italian Government's Piano Periferie, that in 2016 established extraordinary funds for the urban peripheries at the national level, the current Milan Municipal Administration has launched a specific Piano Quartieri. This specific plan has been developed also on the basis of an unprecedented participation process (despite some difficulties in the coordination with the upcoming new general urban plan) and includes projects for 1.6 billion € in 40 city neighbourhoods (even though their effects are not tangible, yet).

Referring to the same extraordinary national funds and to a similar participative approach, also the new Milan Metropolitan City²² has been working on the territorial fragilities of its outskirts, and it has been doing it at its wider metropolitan scale. The project "Metropolitan welfare and urban regeneration" is trying to combine the redevelopment of degraded, abandoned or isolated places (located in clusters of municipalities surrounding the Milan urban core) with the social housing inclusion and cultural promotion of citizens. Unfortunately, with the exception of this interesting territorial scale project, the metropolitan planning and government system is still vague. The constitutive weakness of the new Metropolitan institution is even worse than that of the former Province: not only because its borders, which are no more adequate to larger boundaries of the actual Milan urban region, have not changed, but also because its economic resources and its political powers and responsibilities are smaller than those of other institutions such as regions or municipalities (Fedeli 2016; Pasqui 2018a, b).

According to the green, blue and grey networks which it mainly relies on, the new PGT promoted by the Milan Municipal Administration (and still under development) proposes a new territorial vision that works also at the broad scale of the Milan metropolitan area, as well as at that of the wider urban region. On the contrary, the Piano Strategico Metropolitanano 2016–2018, promoted by the new Milan Metropolitan City, has been mainly ignored, also because it was developed just as a collection

²²This new institution, that was established by the National Act n° 56 (2014), substituted the Provincial Administration of important Italian cities such as Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Turin and Venice.

of already existing generic and easy to share themes²³ and local projects.²⁴ It has been neither able to match the high quality of the participative approach engaged by the experimental Progetto Strategico Città di Città, started in 2007 by the Milan Province Administration (in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano), and aimed at promoting local projectualities and at enhancing multiple forms of urban habitability (Balducci et al. 2011). At the same time, the new Piano Territoriale Metropolitan, that should be the Milan Metropolitan City's planning tool able to promote specific projects and actions of inter-municipal cooperation (Pasqui 2018a), has not been elaborated yet.

It is against the backdrop of the lack of both a shared metropolitan vision and a recognizable metropolitan government that relevant projects, sometimes potentially connected, are still fragmented, and weakened by risks of mutual overlapping and competition of functions (Armondi and Di Vita 2018): from the post-event reuse of the Expo site between Milan and Rho (close to the new Fairground, on the way to the Malpensa international airport), to the transformation of the big brownfield of the former Falck steel plant in Sesto San Giovanni (between Milan and Monza), and the consequent relocation and reconfiguration of the historical Città Studi university campuses and hospital facilities, inside the Milan municipal area.

It is hard to plan and govern such a fragmented and complex space, as that of the multi-scalar Milan, by taking into account the official authorities only: from the Milan Municipality to the Milan Metropolitan City; from the Lombardy Region to the Italian State. On the contrary, an essential resource is (implicitly but traditionally) made by the broadened city governance, that involve universities, multi-utility companies, firms, foundations, associations, and other public and private stakeholders able to produce new narratives on the city (Pasqui 2018a, b).

At different level and at multiple spatial scales, the ongoing socio-economic metamorphosis towards the knowledge and creative economy and society, that is deeply rooted in the manufacturing background of the multi-scalar Milan, has been occurring both in some districts of the urban core and in some sectors of the urban region: in particular, along the North-East axis (connecting Milan to Monza, Lecco and the Brianza area) and the North-West one (linking Milan to Como, Varese and the Malpensa International Airport) (Armondi et al. 2019). This metamorphosis has been involving several actors:

²³ Agile and efficient (open data, digital platform, online services, public administration reorganization); creative and innovative (university and research for productive innovation (fashion, design, media, chemical, pharmaceutical, mechanical), new technologies, sharing economy and society, incubators, start-ups, co-working spaces, fab-labs, post-Expo); attractive and world-oriented (city-gateway, city branding/marketing, airport system, quality of services); smart and sustainable (urban agriculture, urban food policy, metropolitan parks, Idroscalo, Parco Sud, Navigli, green and blue infrastructures, urban regeneration, energy efficiency, optic fibre); fast and connected (transport intermodality, integrated logistics, cycle network, vehicle sharing); cohesive and cooperative (associated management of services, social inclusion, social and temporary housing).

²⁴For instance, concerning brownfield transformation, transport hub improvement, riverbank and canal renewal, existing territorial park enlargement; new territorial park and agricultural district development; green infrastructure implementation; urban district regeneration.

- the Milan Trade Fair, that has become one of the main real estate promoters (with the new exhibition venue and convention centre within the former Alfa Romeo industrial plant at the Portello, the new exhibition venue within the former Agip refinery in Rho, and the tertiary and residential CityLife redevelopment in the historical city fairground);
- the universities, that have become one of the main drivers of urban change processes and projects (with the new Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca in the former Pirelli factory, the new Politecnico di Milano campus in the former Bovisa gasometers and industrial buildings, the new Università Bocconi campus in the former milk factory at Porta Lodovica, and the planned Università degli Studi di Milano campus in the former Expo site), as well as strategic suppliers of innovative services for both students and other urban populations, and relevant promoters of innovative entrepreneurial activities;
- similarly, the hospitals and connected research centres (with the new Ospedale Galeazzi venue and the new Human Technopole research centre²⁵ on predictive medicine in the former Expo site, or the relocation of the Besta and the Istituto dei Tumori in the future City of Health that is planned in the former Falck industrial area in Sesto San Giovanni);
- the cultural institutions, that have become both important drivers of socio-economic and spatial regeneration through the reuse of abandoned buildings or vacant spaces (from the Hangar Bicocca and Teatro degli Arcimboldi in the Bicocca redevelopment area, to the new Fondazione Feltrinelli venue at Porta Volta, the new Fondazione Prada venue at Porta Romana, and the new Silos Armani and Museo delle Culture—MUDEC at Porta Genova), and supporters or providers of new forms of welfare (such as, the Fondazione Cariplo, its connected Fondazione Housing Sociale and the Caritas Ambrosiana, besides other several Third Sector organizations);
- besides the institutional role of the Milan Chamber of Commerce, the contributions made by several associations (for instance, the Assolombarda industrial association, that elaborated its own strategic plan for the Milan urban region,²⁶ as well as the Nexpo concept to promote the reuse of the Expo site by hosting innovative and technological firms);
- the investments of both multinational firms (i.e. Deutsche Bank and Siemens in the Bicocca redevelopment area; Amazon, Axa, BNP Paribas, Coima, Google, HSBC, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Samsung, Unicredit and Unipolsai in and around the Porta Nuova transformation area; Generali in the CityLife conversion area; ABB, Bayer, Bosch, Celgene, Galxo, IBM and Novartis in the Milan Innovation District—MIND redevelopment project in the former Expo site, partially inspired by the

²⁵That is, a new research centre promoted by the Italian National Government and coordinated by the Italian Institute of Technology (IIT) in cooperation with Politecnico di Milano, Università degli Studi di Milano and Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca.

²⁶Called “50 progetti per rilanciare il territorio. Far volare Milano per far volare l’Italia” (website: <https://www.assolombarda.it/chi-siamo/le-assemblee/assemblea-generale-assolombarda-confindustria-milano-monza-e-brianza-2016/documentazione/il-piano-strategico-50-progetti-per-rilanciare-le-impres-e-il-territorio>).

Nexpo concept promoted by Assolombarda) and local public/private companies and utilities (i.e. A2A for technological networks; AMSA for waste collection; ATM for public transport; FNM and FS for regional and national railways; SEA for city airports).

Also, the Milan Expo 2015 and post-Expo are expression of a traditionally implicit urban agenda that, when the candidature was proposed before the breaking out of the global crisis, was mainly driven by the real estate market. Despite its traditional lack of a clear and long-term strategic vision, Milan was able to face the World's Fair by experimenting with innovative projects.

Against the backdrop of the official event success and post-event difficulties in the exhibition site reuse, the Expo 2015 represented an occasion for the experimental coordination and empowerment of a new multi-level governance, potentially able to overcome the administrative boundaries between the Milan urban core and its urban region. The rigid event deadlines played a positive role to stimulate this unprecedented collaboration, even though this convergence of multiple actors was not planned or intentional, but it happened spontaneously. While the Expo projects for the exhibition venues and infrastructures, as well as the post-Expo redevelopment plan for the reuse of the former exposition area have been promoted according to a specific and just-in-time vision, the event and post-event have been an occasion for the cooperation between a huge variety of actors (Di Vita 2017; Di Vita and Morandi 2018):

- within the Expo 2015 Spa company (in charge of the event planning and management), that was established in 2008 by the Milan Municipal Administration, the Milan Provincial Administration, the Milan Chamber of Commerce, the Lombardy Regional Government and the Italian National Government;
- within the Arexpo Spa company (in charge of the post-event planning and management), that was established in 2011 by the Milan and Rho Municipal Administrations, the Milan Metropolitan City, the Milan Trade Fair Foundation and the Lombardy Regional Government, and integrated in 2016 by the Italian National Government;
- within the several collateral initiatives to the main event and post-event projects (which have made a relevant contribution to the event success and, hopefully, to the post-event one), which involved public companies (Infrastrutture Lombarde, Metropolitana Milanese), universities and research centres (Politecnico di Milano, Università degli Studi di Milano, Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia), foundations (Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione Feltrinelli, Fondazione La Triennale, Fondazione Mondadori, Fondazione Piccolo Teatro, Fondazione Triulza), associations (Assolombarda, Confcommercio, Confindustria, Unione del Commercio, Unioncamere Lombardia) and private companies (Gruppo Ospedaliero San Donato, Lendlease).

On the background of both its successes and problems, the City Operations Master Programme (specifically approved by the Milan City Council in 2012 in order to match the event and the city) launched the ExpoinCittà, that was a pioneering

initiative in the long history of the worldwide exhibitions coordinated by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE). Inspired by the Milan Fuorisalone event,²⁷ the ExpoinCittà (promoted in 2014 by the Milan Municipal Administration and the Milan Chamber of Commerce) aimed at coordinating and supporting existing and new cultural, commercial and sport initiatives promoted by multiple stakeholders in order to exploit tourist potentialities of the urban core and region. The bottom-up collection of the collateral event spaces and initiatives throughout the city, and the development of the collateral event program, was supported by an innovative e-participation digital platform,²⁸ that aimed at broadening the Expo inclusion. In parallel, a second pioneering initiative promoted by Expo 2015 Spa (in collaboration with the Milan Chamber of Commerce, the Assolombarda industrial association and the Confcommercio retail association) is that of the E015 Digital Ecosystem,²⁹ aimed at providing the interoperability between different applications. This ecosystem exploited the ICT potentialities to match several traditional and digital services which are provided to different typologies of citizens and visitors by multiple public and private actors of the urban core and region.

Both the ExpoinCittà and the E015 Digital Ecosystem, which are unprecedented in previous mega-events, contribute to the reflection about the ICT potentials to overcome the barriers of the administrative fragmentation that has frequently affected the metropolitan planning and government, as well as to experiment with new forms of multi-scalar governance that need to be investigated more in depth (Di Vita et al. 2017).

Since the election of the 2011 City Council, also the Milan Municipal Administration has been investing in technological innovation, economic development and social inclusion. For instance, in the frame of the Milan smart (and sharing) city policies,³⁰ it has been promoting different kinds of projects and plans to highlight the role of ICTs as drivers of urban change; that is, to incentivize sustainable mobility, as well as to support and subsidize bottom-up innovative socio-economic initiatives (i.e. co-working spaces, makerspaces and other kind of hybrid workplaces). These initiatives, which are potentially able to strengthen ongoing urban regeneration processes, are very frequent because of the traditionally important role of private actors (profit and non-profit, from economic operators, to industrial, cultural and social associations) and higher education institutions in setting the Milan urban agenda and in implementing the related projects, in parallel to local authorities (Armondi and Bruzzese 2017; Mariotti et al. 2017; Pacchi 2018).

Basing on a mix of public and private investments, the Milan Municipality's approach to smartness experimentally aims at combining new technologies with economic development and social inclusion, infrastructures and human capital, innovation and training, as well as research and participation. Therefore, it aims at focusing not only on ICTs potentials, but also on socio-economic fragilities and vulnerabili-

²⁷Website: <https://fuorisalone.it/welcome/>.

²⁸Website: www.expoincitta.com.

²⁹Website: www.e015.regione.lombardia.it.

³⁰Website: <http://www.milanosmartcity.org>.

ties, in order to increase equality and reduce discriminations (Armondi et al. 2019). In particular, besides art and culture, tourism and urban agriculture, the Milan City Council is promoting policies aimed at supporting new entrepreneurial activities (digital and green, service-oriented and manufacturing, artisanal and international) but, without forgetting their risks of polarization, is trying to match them with other policies aimed at fostering social inclusion and sustainable urban environment (De Biase 2019). This has been a relevant shift from a traditional pro-growth development model, mainly aimed at a real estate overproduction, to a new mixed development pattern (Pasqui 2018a).

According to the frequent connections between these growing policies of innovation and inclusion, and the reuse (also temporary) of small abandoned buildings and vacant spaces, the case of Milan (before than other Italian cities, but similarly to other world cities) demonstrates the crisis effects on long-term processes of urban change and on consolidated (even if implicit) urban agendas (previously based on large transformation projects, rather than on spread and molecular regeneration processes). However, despite the potential outcomes of this innovative trend and the strong narration on this new phenomenon (promoted by both the policy-makers and the media), this is still made by marginal and niche episodes, and it has not been possible, yet, to assess its real socio-economic and spatial effects and risks: neither at the neighbourhood scale, nor at the urban one.

These innovative and inclusive policies are still sectoral,³¹ external to the local urban planning system, while their mutual relationships could be much more fertile to better combine the socio-economic and spatial dimensions of urban regeneration processes (De Boyser et al. 2016). At the same time, these innovative and inclusive policies are still promoted at the only municipal level of the central city, while their extension (at least) at the scale of the Metropolitan City could contribute to overcome the limits of obsolete municipal borders and competences; that is, to better deal with the growing duality between centralities and peripheries (Secchi 2013; Ranci and Cucca 2017; Pasqui 2018a).

13.5 The Big Absence and the Impellent Challenge: Planning, Governing and Making the Urban Region and the City-Region

The multi-scalar Milan highlights new trends in the contemporary urban metamorphosis process. After the post-Fordist phase, when the knowledge and creative economy was instrumental to the development of large real estate projects, the current post-crisis phase translates itself into long-term urban regeneration processes, also connected to the growth of the sharing economy and society. With different intensity and success, the Milan Municipal Administration has been able to foster the grow-

³¹Specifically, promoted by the Direzione di Progetto Innovazione Economica e Sostegno all'Impresa of the Milan Municipality.

ing attractiveness of the city at both the international and local levels: not only for investors and tourists (i.e. through Expo 2015, other large redevelopment projects and new infrastructures), but also for citizens (i.e. through smart city and outskirts policies) (Pasqui 2018a, b). Nevertheless, despite the weak efforts promoted by the new Milan Metropolitan City, this dynamic urban region is affected by the lack of a wide and shared strategic vision, as well as institutional tools able to deal with a polyarchic governance. And this absence leads to negative effects in terms of coordination between different-level policies: from municipal to metropolitan; from regional to national (Armondi et al. 2019).

On the one hand, “a new metropolitan agenda (...) should be based on a policy of cooperation, able to produce projects through agreements, and select initiatives and programs based on criteria of efficiency and effectiveness” (Pasqui 2018a, 141). The case of Milan highlights that the administrative borders of the new Metropolitan City, which are smaller than the real urban region, weaken its planning and government activities. While contemporary urban spaces, networks and dynamics call for updated tools of planning and systems of governance (Rydin 2013; Knieling and Othengrafen 2016), and the overtake of traditional levels of public authorities becomes necessary (Dierwechter 2017), wide urban regions are more and more crucial in their duality which connects the international and the sub-national (Taylor 2013; Herrschel and Newman 2017).

On the other hand, the spread of new technologies, and the resulting digitalization and hybridization of production, consumption and accessibility of goods, services and places, drives trans-scalar urban processes, and affects meaning, organization and regeneration of multi-scalar spaces: from neighbourhoods to city-regions. In the context of such a disruptive technological, economic and spatial change, multi-level urban policy should consider how new technologies affect manufacturing and commercial activities, service and mobility supply, place quality and social equity. That is, how new technologies affect the contemporary urban environment, and with which implications (criticalities and potentialities) in terms of multi-level planning and governance: not only in terms of contents, but also in terms of approaches (Kellerman 2019).

On the background of a scalar transition from urban to urban–regional space, and a digital transition in economy and society, it is challenging to deal with the planning and governance transitions in innovative urban–regional agendas, and with the decision-making transition from “elite managerialism” to participatory collaboration (Herrschel and Dierwechter 2018).³² At the same time, the participatory place-making approach could be extended from the neighbourhood and city scale of planning, where it has been developed over the last decade, to the urban–regional level, by exploring the possibilities to relate multi-level planning and governance through a sharing region-making practice (Di Marino and Di Vita 2019).

³²This statement also synthesizes findings of the Regional Studies Association (RSA) temporary research network on “Smart City-Regional Governance for Sustainability” (<https://www.regionalstudies.org/networks/smart-city-regional-governance-for-sustainability/>), whose edited book is now under development.

This could be a challenge also for the Milan urban region, where the lack of a wide and shared strategic vision, as well of institutional tools able to deal with a polyarchic governance, exacerbates the functional competition and affects the coordination between different projects and functions. This scenario could also stress the multi-scalar dimension of the city by involving other components of the wide Northern Italy urban platform: from (at least) its neighbouring cities, such as Genoa and Turin, to the SME urban–regional platforms of Emilia Romagna and Veneto (Armondi et al. 2019). In a prolonged phase of international and national crisis, the North Italy city-region is still resilient: in particular, the so-called new industrial triangle that excludes Genoa and Turin,³³ but extends from Milan to Bologna (in Emilia Romagna) and Treviso (in Veneto) (Di Vico 2019). This is a heterogeneous city-region, that is formed by:

- on the one side, the consolidation of the Milan urban core and region as an international innovative hub according to its advanced services, exchange activities, specialized manufacturing and growing tourism;
- on the other side, the evolution of spread productive systems (from artisanal industrial districts, to sophisticated international productive chains), together with the specialization of firms (from SMEs to innovative laboratories) and medium-sized cities (i.e. Modena in automotive and industrial design, Parma in agro-food and culture, Piacenza in logistics, Rimini in leisure, Trieste in port activities) along the two main infrastructural corridors and macro-regional linear cities of the A4 motorway (Milan–Venice–Trieste) and the Via Emilia (Milan–Bologna–Rimini) (Garavaglia 2019).

Within this polycentric urban network, the borders between innovation and decline, or between specialized cities and their manufacturing background risk to increase, because it is the product of spontaneous process (historically rooted and market driven—Garavaglia 2019), neither supported by multi-scalar urban policies, nor multi-level economic and infrastructural policies (Balducci et al. 2018; D’Albergo et al. 2019). Therefore, the strategic scenarios for the Milan urban region and the North Italy city-region could foster the consolidation of this urban network: they could lead the Milan innovative ecosystem to reach a material and intangible dimension that could be compared to those of its international competitors (beginning with the *Ranstadt Holland* urban platform, i.e. on the occasion of the recent competition for the post-Brexit relocation of the European Medicine Agency) (De Biase 2019). In the 1980s, the 1984 structural plan led to a first change of scale in the Milan urban core perception, according to the project for the new suburban railway system. In the 2000s and 2010s, the new high-speed railway system has been strengthening the connections among the Milan urban region and other important urban poles of the North Italy city-region³⁴ (Rolando 2018). In the 2020s, these connections could

³³That is, together with Milan, the vertexes of the twentieth century industrial triangle.

³⁴The new high-speed railway lines Milan–Turin (partially opened in 2006 and completed in 2009), Milan–Bologna (opened in 2008), and Milan–Brescia (opened in 2016).

be better exploited, if they would be supported by a wide and shared strategic vision, able to converge a multi-level planning and governance.

Besides the Expo 2015 and post-Expo experimental innovations, outcomes and legacies,³⁵ Milan has been making another contribution to the debate about mega-event planning and governance. Nevertheless, it has been making it within the usual Italian political conflicts, and without an explicit and shared territorial scenario. On the occasion of the ongoing bid to the 2026 Winter Olympics, the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) has been trying to experiment with an innovative macro-regional candidature: from Milan and the Lombardy Alps, to Cortina d'Ampezzo and the Dolomiti. Despite its risks in terms of planning and governance, this candidature could be challenging and timely for both the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the enrolled cities and regions.

In order to avoid the recurrent problems concerning the development of large event facilities and infrastructures, and their post-event reuse (that also the successful case of the Milan Expo 2015 has shown), the current Milan-Cortina bid to the 2026 Winter Olympics could be taken as an occasion to experiment with a new approach. In order to improve their sustainability, the planning and management of mega-event legacies could become the priority over the event itself. Therefore, the mega-event process could be no more promoted on the background of an implicit territorial agenda, that cannot avoid their negative impacts (i.e. the festivalization of the involved urban places, the marginalization of the excluded areas and populations). On the contrary, the coordination between a trans-scalar event and (often missing) multi-scalar (urban) policy, related planning and governance (i.e. municipal, metropolitan, urban–regional, city-regional), could lead to improve and broaden the event effects and legacies in space and time (Di Vita and Morandi 2018).

The governance experimentations and spatial innovations provided by the Expo 2015 collateral initiatives³⁶ through the exploitation of digital technologies, and cultural and environmental resources could be one of the goals and issues for this new kind of territorial agenda, that should deal with both the phenomena of growing attractiveness of the city (to consolidate) and raising processes of poor metropolitanization (to mitigate and invert) (Pasqui 2018a, b). Therefore, the (originally unplanned and unprecedented) Expo 2015 experimentations and innovations could be mixed to the Piano Quartieri that the Milan Municipality is promoting (even by taking advantage of minor events to activate social regeneration processes). At the same time, they could be applied to the macro-regional Milan-Cortina bid to the 2026 Winter Olympics, as well as to future worldwide BIE exhibitions.

³⁵See Paragraph 4.

³⁶See Paragraph 4.

13.6 Conclusion

The multi-scalarity of Milan (from the urban core to the metropolitan area; from the urban region to the city-region), as well as the transcalarity of its socio-economic and spatial dynamics make it similar to other world cities. These multiple dimensions make it an interesting case study, when talking about increasingly blurred administrative borders. As socio-economic and spatial dynamics transverse boundaries, local authorities (i.e. municipal, metropolitan or regional, solely from an administrative point of view) can lead to limited effects on urban change processes (Armondi and Di Vita 2018). Therefore, one of the main challenges for its future policy, related planning and governance could be the strengthening of both necessary sensitivity to and permanent activation of local and supra-local relations; that is, the overtaking of usual scales, which local and national authorities refer to, but which contemporary urban phenomena usually overcome (Brenner 2014; Soja 2011).

Notwithstanding the recent financial crisis and austerity measures, this chapter shows how the traditionally polyarchic local governance of the multi-scalar Milan has always been and still remains one of the key drivers of urban change and innovation, as well as the main player of a (usually) implicit urban agenda. This could be the local resource to exploit towards the development of a (increasingly necessary) long-time and wide-shared scenario, able to inspire and coordinate multi-level planning issues and tools. In this perspective, and in order to avoid the risk of a rhetorical goal, that in Milan and Italy has always been difficult to develop and implement (Pasqui et al. 2017; Balducci et al. 2018), the Milan-Cortina bid to the 2026 Winter Olympics could be a chance.

Despite the well-known threats of mega-events (i.e. the intensification of socio-economic and spatial conflicts and disproportions), in general terms the Milan-Cortina candidature could be challenging in relation to a potentially experimental redirection of the extraordinary dimension of mega-events towards the ordinary dimension of regional-sized contemporary urban phenomena (Di Vita and Morandi 2018), that could lead to an innovation of the (more and more unsustainable) event approach, useful for both other candidate cities and event international organizations.³⁷ Furthermore, at the local level the unprecedented macro-regional scale of this proposal could foster the consolidation of a (more and more necessary) explicit territorial agenda for the multi-scalar Milan, aiming at both strengthening the growing attractiveness of the city and rebalancing the raising duality between centralities and peripheries.

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³⁷Such as the IOC and the BIE.

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