



Torino, Piazza Castello

THE ANALYSIS. THE PIEMONTE CAPITAL TODAY AND TOMORROW

Turin and its Building Constructors

Thoughts of Alessandro Cherio, President of the Building Constructors' Board of Turin Province - ANCE

Turin has been Europe's largest construction site until 2006. It has experienced a radical transformation made possible by a combined and organized effort by all of those involved, where the contrasts among the different levels of the public administration in play, often took second place before the necessity to realize a mutual project.

The crisis of the car industry and the Winter Olympic games were the reasons for the change. The first hit the motor industry between 2000 and 2003, and caused a loss of 22,000 jobs in our province. From here, entrepreneurs and administrators allied to find a change of mind from a strategic viewpoint and the living testimony of this is given by the fact that job loss was almost completely reabsorbed by building constructors. The Olympics were the "kick off"; they meant a deadline, and thanks to that the beginning of important territorial and infrastructural progresses.

The building sector: a key player in urban requalification

The building sector has been a fundamental instrument of change. The city became for some years a living laboratory and was open to urbanism and architecture, as once were Berlin and Barcelona. Everything was made possible by local building contractors and developers: on a total of investments for 2.5 billion euro in preparation of the Olympic Games,

50% of the sum of building and road works were carried out by contractors and developers from Piedmont, a quarter from Turin. Between 2000 and 2006 over 12,000 new housing units have been built for 1.3 billion euro; as well as interventions within the tertiary industry, trade and the recovery of the existing property patrimony in particular in the Historical Centre.

That entrepreneurial fabric, which realized so many projects, and which is able to generate a relevant multiplying effect on the local economy, is now suffering the consequences of a global crisis which now cannot be considered only a financial one: pessimism is increasing among the firms, they see a substantial reduction of their backlog, severance payments for their workers doubled since only one year ago. Public works decreased during the first half of 2008, after a substantial reduction in 2007. As far as the housing market is concerned, data of the first six months of 2008 show a 10% reduction of the number of transactions in our province (prices, however, have not been affected). The relations between banks, firms and families are now worrying: a serious credit crunch would ignite the crisis of the whole sector. Interest rates on loans increased for more than 70% of our enterprises during the last six months, and the delay of payments, in particular by the Public Administration, also grew, with special difficulties for small town governments.

In such a situation one would first expect a kind of policy measures aimed at renovating the confidence in the financial sector: the credit market needs to find again a good compromise between fluidity and stability. Emergency measures, however, must not weaken the consideration deserved by the long run strategies: the transformation process is not yet completed in Turin, and now we register a decline of interest in it; but the cost paid for not "moving" might be in the long run much higher than the one required to accomplish the strategic objectives.

Projects for the future of Turin

Local infrastructures must be completed: the second line of the underground transportation; a

new "urban motorway" on the axis of Corso Marche to provide a better flow of vehicles between the North and South of Turin, the construction of the ring-road East and the broadening of the existing one, the City of Sciences and Medical Services, that still needs a consensus on many of the aspects required to start the construction. Moreover University and Polytechnic must complete their building projects, and complementary infrastructures must be created, like accommodations for students and researchers. Finally, the growing demand of social housing is still an unsolved conundrum.

The need must be added to preserve and refurbish the existing buildings and roads, that represent a fundamental asset as well as a key factor for a "user-friendly" city. As far as the laws governing the building activities are concerned, it is time to shift from a strict regulation to a more flexible framework, made of general principles and able to meet the variable needs arising from the market. The lack of public funding stresses the need of increasing private partnership, but also of measures able to bind public money to specific targets, in order to prevent current expenditure from jeopardizing investment programmes.

In order to take care of the long run we must look ahead of the crisis. In 20 years time the crisis will belong to economic history; unfinished strategies will turn out to be tangible poverty. ■

Social housing: il Piemonte finanzia 18 interventi

Sono 18 gli interventi ammessi a finanziamento da parte della Commissione di valutazione della Regione Piemonte per il social housing. Il contributo regionale ammonta a circa 9 milioni e 300 mila euro e fa da volano a un investimento complessivo di oltre 42 milioni.

Gli interventi di social housing sono destinati a realizzare alloggi sociali per la locazione temporanea o permanente, con eventuale possibilità di riscatto, proponendo così nuove forme gestionali finalizzate a sostenere modelli abitativi

solidali. L'Italia è tra i paesi con la più bassa percentuale di alloggi sociali in affitto (meno del 5%), contro il 35% dell'Olanda, il 18% dell'Inghilterra e il 17% della Francia.

"Le residenze temporanee - spiega l'assessore alle Politiche Territoriali Sergio Conti - offrono una prima risposta alla perdita di stabilità dovuta ai mutamenti delle condizioni di vita, quali le trasformazioni dell'organizzazione del lavoro, l'irrigidimento degli affitti o le modificazioni dell'organizzazione familiare".