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Considering the quality of projects in relation to the city as a common good

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Abstract

When architects speak of the quality of projects they do so from the point of view of production, or in other words they ask "how to create quality". In this viewpoint, economic viability, structural solidity, functionality and beauty are regarded as the fundamental dimensions. Adopting a different perspective, the present article tackles the problem of quality in the city by concentrating on the effects of projects that, by modifying the use of urban spaces in their entirety, transform the environment of life for citizens.

In the second and third sections, this article considers the city as a complex whole, a system of relationships between the physical, built and socio-economic environments. It examines the functions and relationships in the system in terms of the sensory perception of its users. We argue that the city should be interpreted as a common good, the home of the community, which provides for those needs that cannot be satisfied by individuals alone but require there to be a union between people.

In the fifth section we outline the concept of common good and in the sixth we indicate how it can be applied to the city and its public urban spaces. After this, we bring to light the concept of the 'tragedy of the commons', which in the urban context involves the dispossession and private appropriation of public spaces. Subtracting from the common good leads to the loss of urban value and contributes to a sense of crisis in the city.

In Section 7 we advocate the abandonment of the individualistic view and adoption of an approach that is rooted in the community and based on principles of care, responsibility and reciprocity. The final section describes the effects that this alternative perspective would have on the level of evaluation, underlining the need to complement traditional forms of individual evaluation (technical-managerial and for economic efficiency) with participative forms, which are open to all members of civil society and are thus more able to express the relational nature of the urban common good. In this case, evaluating the quality of a project means verifying changes in the way that urban spaces are used and determining their effects upon the city with regard to the common good. The transition from theoretical reflection to practical action remains an unresolved problem, which, however, is outside the scope of this article.

1. ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY AND THE "CULTURE OF HIGH QUALITY CONSTRUCTION"

This article reflects on the nature of architectural projects, including those that relate to single structures, groups of buildings, and modification of larger urban areas. It considers them in terms of how they change the way the city and its spaces are used and what effect they have upon the life of the inhabitants. From a theoretical and methodological point of view, we ask whether the concept of quality can be considered without taking into account the effects produced at a broader scale on the whole city.

When one speaks of the quality of architecture, by necessity, one tends to think of the formal technical, traditional Vit-

ruvian triple distinction of *firmitas, utilitas et venustas*, which establishes "how to create quality" (Bentivegna, 2019) and how to measure it objectively. *Firmitas*, meaning the structural solidity of the building, refers to the technical rules of construction. Therefore, it relates to the choice of structural components and materials. Quality is thus defined on the basis of the scientific and technical rules of construction. *Utilitas* is interpreted as the functionality of the building and refers to its uses. Quality depends fundamentally on the attributes of the product and is defined as "conformity with requirements" and "response to needs in terms of performance". *Venustas* signifies the visual quality of the building, with reference to its formal aesthetical dimension. Thus, it defines the form of the designed object and the language in which its content is presented and communicated to the outside world. Architecture expresses its collective nature in terms of form and function, at any moment in history and in a particular place. In this case, quality is definable in terms of aesthetic canons, such as order, hierarchy, proportion, scale, spatial relations, visual angle, rhythm and harmony. To these three dimensions, theory and practice have added a fourth, namely, the insertion of the project into a context, or in other words the specific relationship that it establishes with the surrounding physical environment.[1] In this case, the definition of quality does not refer to a law, a canon or a standard procedure. As every location has a degree of uniqueness, it begins with an understanding of the quality of surrounding buildings, of the urban fabric, and of the relationships that the project creates with its immediate environment.

The *Proposed Legal Framework on Architectural Policy* created by the "Consiglio Nazionale degli Architetti Pianificatori Paesaggisti e Conservatori"[2] (2018) achieves progress by defining architectural quality as "that which permits the general well-being of the citizen to be maintained within the space in which he or she lives". It argues that projects which transform spaces must contribute to "improve people"s lives by creating evident societal progress of a civil, social, cultural and economic nature". This bill of law is inspired by the 2018 "Davos Declaration" (henceforth referred to as "DD"), which is based on the concept of the *culture of construction (Baukultur)*, including "all human activities that transform the built environment" (in literal form, "*Baukultur* embraces every human activity that changes the built environment"). It adds: "*Baukultur* is also expressed in the planning processes for building projects, infrastructures, cities, villages, and open landscapes" (DD, 2018).

High-quality *Baukultur* (high-quality construction) cannot be created in the context of single disciplines. It requires a holistic approach that promotes «the right balance between cultural, social, economic, environmental and technical aspects of planning, design, building and adaptive re-use, in the public interest for the common good» (DD, 2018). In addition, the DD affirms that, «to be successful, high-quality *Baukultur* also requires the participation of civil society and an informed and sensitised public». The concept of high-quality *Baukultur* means that it is not enough to concentrate on functional, technical and economic needs in the built environment, which embrace the depersonalised approach of the market. We are not dealing with an ordinary economic good, a commodity whose quality is measurable objectively in relation to the attributes of the product and calculable in relation to the cost of production and, in the final analysis, the amount of profit (Garvin, 1984). Instead, it is a matter of:

> *«conscious, well-debated design to every building and landscaping activity, prioritising cultural values over short-term economic gain. High-quality* Baukultur *thus not only fulfils functional, technical and economic requirements, but also satisfies people's social and psychological needs»* (DD, 2018).

Two points are particularly important to the objectives of this article: giving priority to cultural and social values and emphasising the common good. The latter is intended, not as a harmonious and unified societal concept, but as a heterogeneous collection of physical, cultural and institutional resources that the community offers to all its members and which everyone must look after in order to safeguard their common interests.

2. THE CITY AS A COMPLEX REALITY

The modern city has undergone profound transformations and is in a state of perpetual change. Cities express their growth in various components, with, perhaps, an ancient centre that has borne profound changes in use and many different peripheral neighbourhoods. Transformation can occur in relatively short periods of time and is not a matter solely of physical space, measured in square or cubic metres, but also of social organisation, culture and the urban image. The inhabitants will have changed along with the uses to which they put the city, and what they ask of it. The contemporary city must respond, not only to basic needs, but also to the desires of its inhabitants. It must *function*, *satisfy* and *please*.

It is significant how at a certain point in history it seems to have become insufficient to use the single word "city" to embrace and completely define the whole urban phenomenon. Instead, it is a matter of *urbs et civitas, the city of stones and of citizens, the book of stones and of the community.* This has happened in response to strong and sustained growth in our cities since the Second World War.

[1] According to the proposed 2004 framework legislation on architectural quality: " Architectural quality' means the results of a coherent, developed project which takes account of the functional and aesthetic character that underpins the design and construction of the work and which guarantees its harmonious insertion into the landscape and the surrounding environment." For further information, see Forte (2019) and Acampa (2019) in the present volume.

[2] National Council of Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects and Conservationists.

This unstoppable process has made it necessary to find new words to describe and represent a city that is always growing and always difficult to understand. The words used to describe the city so far – dimension, form and role – are no longer sufficient. Thus, new specifications arise: city-region, distributed city, metropolitan city, and so on. The most recent terms include: liquid city, global city, intangible city, post-modern city, infinite city, city of networks and smart city (upon which are concentrated many current studies and hopes). They extend as far as multicultural city, or better "intercultural city", which emphasises reciprocal relationships.

Braudel (1977) offered a testimony to how cities are always complex phenomena:

> *«Cities are like electricity transformers, they increase tensions, facilitate exchanges, stir up people's lives. They were born out of the oldest, most revolutionary divisions of labour: fields on one hand, so-called "urban activities" on the other. Cities are also parasitic, illicit formations […] but these cities are also intelligence, risk, progress, modernity. They are the accelerators of all history, which does not mean that they have not made men suffer over the centuries, including those people who live in them».*

Likewise, from Mumford (1938):

> *«The city is a geographical complex, an economic organisation, an institutional process, a theatre of social actions and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity. On the one hand it is the practical frame for normal domestic and economic activities; on the other, it is the knowingly dramatic scene for the most significant actions and for the most sublimated stimuli of human culture. … The city promotes are and is art itself».*

Regarding the "city of stones and of citizens", as Leonardo Bruni argued in a letter of 1535 to Niccolò Niccoli: «There is another meaning for *urbs* and another for *civitas*: *urbs* is the collection of buildings and walls which derive their name from the circuit within which the place is enclosed; *civitas* instead is the aggregation of men associated with rights who live together under the same laws». The city and its surrounds are therefore a complex entity, a collection of deep relationships between the physical, built and human environments, and not merely a collection of objects. Research and the depiction of qualitative traits and identity require an approach that is much more complex that that used for functional analysis, in which the landscape is simplified into its use as a support for construction projects.

3. THE CITY AS "SYSTEM" AND "EXPERIENCE"

Sometimes the centrality of the city is not matched by an adequate capacity to interpret, govern and design it. Whoever assumes the task of managing or planning a city will often become trapped in a reality built upon data, theories and regulations that is unable to produce a city that is tangible and liveable. The city can be viewed as both a "system" of functions and relations and as an "experience". One view encompasses the idea that the city can be considered in terms of a system of precise laws that govern its functioning. The alternative view makes people the centre of the analysis, the subject, along with their sensory experience in which the city and its spaces are an essential element.

To create a high-quality project, the contemporary city needs to be reinterpreted as a whole, from its most well-known places to its earliest suburbs and to the inharmonious, fragmented effects of recent expansions. This exercise will light the way to a more all-embracing vision and a consequent project to regenerate the entire city and its individual components. In the range of possible solutions, there is no doubt that a prominent position is occupied by the recognition of the value of artistic and cultural heritage as a factor in regeneration and rebirth, as noted in Article 9 of the Italian Constitution: "The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It safeguards the landscape and the historical and artistic patrimony of the Nation."

A heritage can be viewed, not as a single work of art or a collection of works, but above all as a gallery of public spaces which are the living-room of communal life. For millennia we have been educated to be citizens. This has connected us with our past and enables us to construct our future: this is the effect of cultural heritage. Heritage consists of our cities, the nature of our places, fusions between art and environment, and the continuous urban fabric of squares, roads, buildings and churches. The landscape, works of art, libraries, archives and archaeological sites are part of this fabric. The city is the home of the community, the embodiment of the common good, in the sense that it belongs to many people united by voluntary ties of identity and solidarity. This means that it satisfies the needs that single people cannot cater for without joining up with others and without sharing in the design and management of the common good. The artistic and cultural heritage of the city can be interpreted as everyone's good, as a school of citizenship, and an instrument used somehow to construct a sort of equality between citizens because all of them can enjoy it. It constitutes an exercise of two of the rights of citizenship, the right to have knowledge and the right to enjoy beauty.

On the basis of this interpretation of the city, its quality cannot depend solely on the technical and economic aspects of the processes of production of a single good. It is necessary to substitute a community approach for the individualistic one, and thus to shift attention from decision making processes that create individual ownership of physical transformations to those that make them a product of the community.

4. PUBLIC GOODS AND COMMON GOOD

With particular regard to urban centres, references to architecture as a public good are relatively common. For example, Glazer (1987) argued that:

«Architecture, by its very nature, is a public matter. Whenever we consider buildings in their aesthetic, economic, or moral dimensions, we must be prepared, at the same time, to treat those dimensions in public terms: to see that buildings can also serve as public art, or as civic monuments, or as contributions to the social life of the city».

In reality, the city, its buildings and its urban spaces should be regarded more as a common good than a public one. From the point of view of economics, public goods are characterised by non-excludability and non-rivalry in their consumption. The latter characteristic makes them suffer from the unfair behaviour of free-riders, or in other words people who use and consume the public good while not making any contribution to it. Hence, the production of public goods cannot be left to the market but must be provided through some form of public action. In line with individualism, the use of public goods does not imply that there is any relationship between subjects. Instead, it comes from choices made independently in isolation. Public goods are therefore accessible to everyone, but they are used by individuals independently of other people.

Common goods are characterised by being "non-excludable" and "rival" in consumption. Apart from the fact that each individual receives an advantage from using them, they cannot be separated from the advantage received by other people. In other words, common goods exist only in terms of the common shared actions, freely undertaken, that create them (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007, Zamagni, 2013). This means that common goods are relational goods[3], which require well-being not to be seen in a purely individual manner. No analysis founded on individual choices and preferences can adequately represent the collective contribution of common goods well-being, because the benefit produced is endogenous to the experience in which those goods are simultaneously generated and enjoyed (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007). Common goods are «[t]he collection of material and non-material resources used by various people that can be considered to be the collective heritage of humankind» (Enciclopedia Treccani). The Rodotà Commission[4] defines them as «things that express functional utility in the exercise of fundamental rights and the free development of people».

Analysis which focuses only on individual preferences or choices cannot capture common goods because what makes them good is endogenous to the living of the life.

5. THE CITY AS A COMMON GOOD

Therefore, the city is the ultimate common good and is the collective resource, the living environment of human beings. The common good of the city is that which citizens obtain by interacting among themselves and sharing the same physical and life spaces. To the extent to which the inhabitants work, move around, enjoy themselves, meet, and so on, they participate in actions that are inevitably common and that contribute to the production of a complex good, irreducibly common, which otherwise could not exist (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007).

It is not only the city in its entirety that is a common good, but also all the fundamental services and structures required to support the life in it and the public urban spaces, including all those places streets, squares, parks, gardens, etc. in which the inhabitants move around, meet, communicate, and engage in social, cultural and political activities.

Public urban spaces are not common goods in virtue of their "cultural relevance", nor as a consequence of particular objective characteristics, but because they are "strictly connected to the identity, culture and traditions of an area or are directly relevant to the exercise of the social life of the community" (Iaione, 2013). Thus, they represent the glue that, if it is in short supply, leads to the decline of economic and social life. A common good, such as a square, a park or a road, cannot be owned but it can be experienced. It can be an active part of the urban ecosystem (Iaione, 2013). Thanks to the exercise of responsible and supportive freedom that today constitutes the new way of being a citizen, new rights are being associated with urban common goods, not in terms of ownership, but in terms of "care" (Iaione, 2013).

6. THE "TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS"

The maintenance and reproduction of urban common goods are not automatic processes. If one does not recognise their intrinsic limits, they risk falling into the "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin, 1968). This results from the myopic pursuit of individual interests. Under rational behaviour, each person tends to increase his or her use of a common good without taking account of the fact that this process will reduce its overall availability. The result is an intensive and conflicting usage of the common good, which becomes ever scarcer. Paradoxically, as the critical threshold is passed, the perception of the imminence of the "tragedy" does not reverse but rather accelerates the rush to stockpile, causing decay and congestion of the good to the point of destroying it (Zamagni, 2013). With respect to common urban spaces, the tragedy induces practices of appropriation, dispossession and enclosure that subtract collective resources from common usage and transform spaces into areas of consumption[5]. In this manner, the "tragedy of the urban commons" determines, at least in part, the crisis of the city[6], which, beset by increasing lev-

[3] According to a definition by Uhlaner (1989), "The relational goods can only be possessed by mutual agreement that they exist after appropriate joint actions have been taken by a person and non-arbitrary others."

[4] The Rodotà Commission was set up at the Ministry of Justice in 2007 to draw up a draft delegated law for the amendment of the civil code rules on public goods. The bill never became law.

els of congestion, decay and conflict, progressively loses its urban values and sees its quality as a common good depleted.

Unfortunately, the neoliberal urban planning policies and market control in strategic planning often lead towards the progressive impoverishment of urban common goods. Many projects for urban renewal produce secondary effects such as the dispossession and displacement of people from places that were used for free association and meeting, which are by no means secondary in terms of their importance.

The most common form of dispossession is gentrification[7], which changes the character of the most central or attractive areas of the city, evicts the poorest classes and replaces them with wealthier ones. The urban environment is transformed so radically that it becomes alien and unsuited to the needs of the original inhabitants. The city no longer guarantees the common dimension of living, the feeling of being at ease with one's surroundings and the ability to rely on a network of social relations to sustain life. «[T]he affective and social ties, and the rhythms of life» which constitute the essential urban atmosphere, are at risk (Marella, 2015; Iaione, 2013). Regarding common goods, rather than merely the physical dimension of well-being, the use of public urban spaces is fundamental because it represents the conditions, the norms and the habits that govern social relations between citizens.

7. A DIFFERENT PARADIGM FOR THE CITY AS A COMMON GOOD

Avoiding the decay of the spaces used for collective life the tragedy of the urban commons is fundamentally a political problem whose solution cannot be placed entirely in the so called invisible hand of the market or in the more visible one of the State. Regarding the market, the "exchange of equivalents"[8] principle does not work, because the "goods needed for people's free development" have not perfect substitutes. Thus, in the market, the freedom to sell is not matched by the freedom to buy (Zamagni, 2013). This asymmetry undermines what Amartya Sen (2005) called the "fundamental capabilities"[9] of marginalised groups, denying them the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1970). In the second case, the principle of redistribution[10] is at the base of the "public-orientated" solution. It fails to work, because the common goods would lose their meaning and be transformed into public goods. Thus the issue of the "government failure"[11] would rise (Zamagni, 2013).

In order to avoid the tragedy of the commons, economic theory has proposed a "community-based solution" rooted on the principle of reciprocity (Ostrom, 1990). This argues that self-interested individual rationality should be replaced by that of the community (Zamagni, 2013). On the basis of the principle of reciprocity, an individual gives or does something for another individual so that this person, in proportion to his or her capacity, is able to give or do something for a third person (who could also be the first individual): «reciprocity therefore involves giving without losing anything and receiving without taking anything away» (Zamagni, 2013).

On the one hand, the maintenance and reproduction of urban common goods are the responsibility of the community, which needs to implement "care actions" in order to safeguard them. On the other hand, architects and urban planners need to adopt a fundamentally different perspective. As «agent[s] of the transformation of landscapes and cities», they should be able to «relate to the needs of justice and equity expressed by society» and «cultivate in themselves, and transmit it to their work, a sense of the rights of future generations [...] consistent with the principles of the common good, which permeate our constitution» (Settis, 2014b).

Architects and planners cannot "design" paying attention solely to the technical and financial aspects of projects and ignoring their effects upon urban common goods. Rather than merely guaranteeing a supply of infrastructure and services based on quantitative standards, it is necessary to pay attention to qualitative factors and thus guarantee the

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[5] This is how the transformation of the citizen into a consumer characteristic of neoliberal democracies assumes a concrete spatial dimension (Marella, 2015, p 80).

[6] Already at the beginning of the 1990s, many commentators began to discuss the crisis of the city, echoing Mumford's sombre prediction (Mumford, 1961). According to this, after megalopolis, there is nothing but the death of the city and decline of civilisation. This theme reappears in our times with the work of Benevolo (2011), Boeri (2011) and Settis (2014a). However, there is now a renewed interest in giving cities a design, a vision and a plan, in other words, a future.

[7] The theme of gentrification and the effects of the exploitation of historical cities for the monoculture of tourism will be discussed in a forthcoming publication by the present authors.

[8] The principle of the "exchange of equivalents" stipulates that an individual gives or does something upon condition that he or she receives something else that is equivalent in value (see Zamagni, 2013).

[9] According to Sen, "capabilities" are defined as the extent to which a person is free to choose (has a tangible opportunity) to reach particular levels of "functioning". They represent what a person can be or do, given the person's characteristics, the social-cultural environment, the resources and the services he or she can make use of, the rights he or she can enjoy, and the institutions, social structures and laws that govern society.

[10] The principle of redistribution "postulates the existence of a public authority typically the State that, making use of its coercive power, imposes both respect for laws and the transfer of resources from one social group to another in order to achieve its declared objectives" (Zamagni, 2013).

[11] J.E. Stiglitz (1988) identified three possible causes of the failure of government: imperfect information, limited control over market and bureaucracy, and the limitations imposed by political processes.

community the ability to "live well" in its own home area. Under the principle of reciprocity, this means recognising the "right to care" (Iaione, 2013). Going beyond the individualistic and quantitative framework of the practice of architecture and planning means assuming political and social responsibility as part of the general decision-making process that should necessarily be participatory and community-based.

The theme of the common good is difficult to address using traditional political models. Rather, the theme is at home in the model of a deliberative democracy in which citizens take decisions collectively, with due regard to the common good, inspired by reasons that all of them can accept. Common good and deliberative democracy are thus concepts with natural affinity: deliberation about what constitutes the collective good is an integral part of its production.

8.1 EFFECTS UPON EVALUATION: QUALITY FOR WHOM?

The quality of urban space is not only a problem of how well equipped with infrastructure it is, how good its buildings are, and how well they are designed. It depends above all on the relationships that are established between the physical city and people who live in it, on the opportunities to live there, to live according to one's means and needs, and to make it one's own by transforming and adapting it to one's material and non-material needs. In other words, it depends on the capacity of the community and of individuals to live well in the city as a physical space and as a system of relationships that allows them to behave as active citizens. The latter is not merely an issue of participating in decision making processes, but is also a question of looking after and taking care of common goods, the places that help determine the quality of life, which reinforce the "right to the city".

Evaluating the quality of a project that modifies the use of the city and its spaces or the life of its inhabitants means recognising the effects that it produces on urban common goods and on the city in general as the environment of human life. However, in this case the point of view of the evaluation cannot be an individualistic one based on the traditional criteria of economic and financial efficiency and technical-managerial effectiveness. It is not enough to devise means of satisfying the demand for buildings, homes and services. As the Davos Declaration asserts, to respond to the demand for urban common goods, one must recognise, if not the supremacy, at least the relevance of public interest in relation to private profit. By adopting a community-based vision, one should judge the quality of a project in the interests of, and in collaboration with, citizens on the basis of the principle of reciprocity and by activating the rights and responsibilities of care of the common goods.

Naturally, this does not mean completely disregarding the contribution of traditional evaluations of quality, but one should recognise the need to open up both decision-making and the evaluation processes to active participation by citizens. Thus the citizen becomes, neither a subject nor merely a consumer, but a person who has useful skills and knowledge, who is able to collaborate with institutions in the pursuit of the common good. Concepts such as "active citizenship"[12] and "social responsibility"[13] thus become fundamental.

In terms of evaluation, this leads to profound changes. Essentially, this is because the beneficiaries of the evaluation are no longer only the actors who are directly involved in the conception, design and construction of a project – public or private investors, politicians, public administrators, technicians, etc. – who have resources and decision making power, but also the inhabitants of the area in which the project is located. They are the stakeholders who are not present at the table where decisions are taken, in other words, the community, its citizens and people who are normally without the power or capacity to influence decisions.

If evaluation is conducted with reference to the creation, maintenance, reproduction and care of the common good, the key values will be inclusion, social justice, equity and solidarity, which traditional evaluation practices tend to ignore. Objectives will be defined on the basis of a dialogue between all the stakeholders: institutions, economic operators, experts, citizens and civil society. In consequence, the evaluation should no longer be considered as an objective, generally recognised process, a search for the truth for all beneficiaries. It should instead recognise its own subjective nature (Fattinnanzi et al., 2018). It should take into consideration and lend dignity to diverse, and often conflicting, interests associated with each kind of stakeholder. The evaluation criteria should not be limited to issues of economic efficiency and technic-managerial success. It should also consider the effects upon the urban common goods, for example in terms of mitigation of climate change, reduction of environmental risks and pollution, technological innovation in the process of urban regeneration, and how the infrastructure that supports mobility, creates new points of visual reference and new identities.

Evaluation should make use of case studies as a research strategy (Berni, 2014). It should not be based on the aggregation of preferences, but it should have at its heart a deliberative process that is indissolubly linked to the creation of the common good (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007). In fact, it is by deliberation that the stakeholders (citizens, public administrators, economists, etc.) define of what the urban common good consists and how it is produced. When stakeholders recognise the functionality of a specific pro-

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[12] Active citizenship means that citizens assume some responsibility for the community and for common goods (see Iaione, 2013 p. 10).

[13] Social responsibility means that citizens must take an active role in approving both decisions and "the practice of concrete activities of care and management" and functional appraisal of common goods (Iaione, 2013).

ject and its impact on individual and collective well-being they will commit themselves to making it happen and sharing the responsibility of care to the general advantage of the entire community.

Finally, evaluation should foster the empowerment of citizens, in terms of their ability consciously to influence collective decision-making processes and to master both situations that are problematic or complex and the evaluation processes. One possible direction to follow in order to satisfy these needs is indicated by the democratic evaluation approach. This relies on the principle of inclusion, dialogue and deliberation that are the substantial components of deliberative democracy (House and Howe, 2000). It uses multi-criteria decision analysis with multi-decision-maker. Thus, it is able to satisfy the demand for information and knowledge on the part of all stakeholders, to underpin decisions with a complete, explicit, transparent and constructive analysis of reasons, to support diverse points of view and to conceive of and reach improved and commonly shared solutions, without adopting a single form of rationality but as the result of coordination and constructive debate over a multiplicity of criteria and among the multiplicity of social actors.

Naturally, how to progress from these general suggestions to practical evaluation actions, and how to reconcile and merge diverse conceptions of the quality of a project and different ways of evaluating them, are still unresolved problems. They represent a challenge, which we believe deserves further study and development in order to meet it. On the other hand, in terms of programmes and intentions, the scope of this article was not to offer solutions, but to stimulate reflections on the opportunities to consider the quality of the architectural and urban project also in the light of its effects on the uses of the city and urban spaces, or in other words on urban common goods.

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