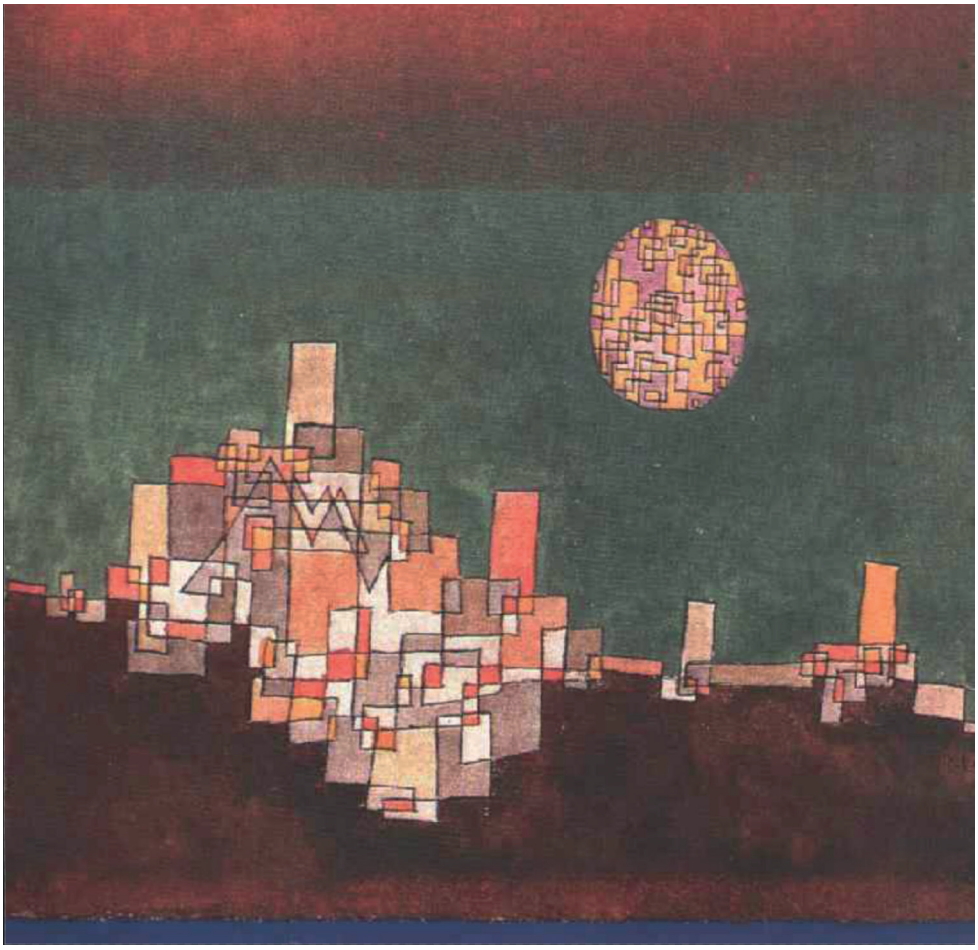
Reimagining Planning

How Italian Urban Planners Are Changing Planning Practices

Edited by Daniela De Leo and John Forester



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Ilaria Giatti

Prodotto da
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Via Castro Dei Volsci 14
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Tel. 06 68134341 / 335-5487645
inued@inuedizioni.it
www.inuedizioni.com
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Paul Klee, Chosen Site, 1940. Courtesy Wikiart

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Community Mapping in the Mood for Learning

Giusy Pappalardo

Skype meeting on November 2015.

I was taking classes with Laura Saija while she was helping with a class at the University of Catania, and we were engaged in a participatory action research project in the city center of Catania. Of course I was just a student taking planning classes, and I had no idea what participatory action research could mean. I was just observing what my professors were doing, and I was engaged in that service-learning project for students.

I was curious because this was different from other approaches, in the sense that we were on the ground doing things with communities for real – instead of studying things in a book or doing projects that were just on paper. So I was fascinated by the approach of being involved directly with communities and trying to do something that could be, in some way, useful for my city. But I was troubled, too, because it was a first project in the area of an ancient market in Catania that was under control of the mafia. There were a lot of troubles with the people who sell products and who were connected with the mafia economy. So the project was interesting because we were involved with the community. But it didn't have any physical impacts. At one point we had to stop, because the municipality stopped supporting that project.

So the first thing was that, yes, I was curious, but then I was frustrated because we did something nice and different from other classes, but then what happened? Nothing changed on the ground.
So, for a couple of months I was frustrated, and I didn't want to do any other planning things because I thought that it was just useless – that nothing could really change. Then I had to choose my master's thesis. I reflected a little bit, and I said: "Ok, let's try to do that again. Let's try to investigate a little bit more what planners can actually do in contexts like Sicily, where there is a lot of trouble with the relationships between institutions and the mafia power". So I said, "Ok, let's do it again".
I went back to my professors, to Laura Saija and Filippo Gravagno, who were working together, and I asked to do my master's thesis with them. At that time, they were working with the Simeto community, and I chose that project because, again, I was curious, and I thought: "Ok, that could be interesting".
What was going on in the Simeto River area at that time was a proposal from the regional board to establish an incinerator in a protected area close to the river. It was not, of course, a wise project, because it was a protected area, and they were trying to transform that into a huge industrial site, with this huge incinerator.
In the meantime, the community was asking for other things, and opposing the project. So I stepped into the Simeto Valley situation when there was this protest. The Simeto community didn't want the incinerator in their community, and they wanted to do something to stop it, so they asked the University of Catania to establish a partnership to understand what could be done differently.
I was troubled by my role, because at the beginning I couldn't understand what my role was, actually. I was there taking notes during the meetings and trying to understand what my role could be. I mean, that question was in my mind for the whole master's thesis project. I can answer the question now, because I thought about it after I finished the project.
I think that my role was actually to try to bridge different ideas, collect different ideas, and try to synthesize what was coming out of the discussions. So I was just collecting and putting pieces together. I was also adding, of course, some of my technical knowledge – but I was aware that my technical knowledge was just a small piece of a very huge and complex system of knowledge of all those people that were participating in the project.

Practically, what I did was develop a community mapping initiative together with Laura Saija and the other participants.
At the very beginning the meetings were just the ones that I was invited to. In the Simeto Valley there are different associations who were networking, but in the beginning, they were working kind of separately because there were different associations in different municipalities. One association was in one small city called Paternò. But there were different municipalities, and different associations involved that I was invited to. They were discussing what to do – trying to focus on what to do, on strategies – and they were arguing because they were not that sure of what should be done. When they were stating their objections, let's say, by saying, "We don't want the incinerator", everything was kind of easier, because the sentiment was just, "We don't want that thing". But when it came to, "We want to do this instead of that", it became more complicated – because everyone wanted to do something different. So in the meeting we were sitting in a circle and talking with a person who was leading the discussion; but that was not me – I was just taking notes.
But at the end of the meeting I found that my role was to share my notes with the people. I saw that was helpful for them because it helped them to keep track of what was said in the previous meeting. It was something that they were not doing, so I said: "Ok, I can do that; I can take my notes, and I can share my notes with you".
So that was what I did in the beginning. In the meantime, Laura sometimes led the discussion – so it was the two of us. She was leading the discussion and taking notes onto a blackboard so that everybody could focus, could see what we were saying, and organize the discussion. I was sharing a full version of the notes via e-mail after the meeting and before the next meeting.
Another thing about my role at that time was that I did a lot of case study research about community mapping. So I found myself useful in sharing what I had done, and I said: "OK, in other parts of the world, community mapping has been done like this, like this, and like this, and we can do that here in our own way – but we have to be aware that there are other relevant experiences. So let's just learn from others' experiences, and let's just focus on what we want to do here".
So I felt a little bit better when I could do that with them, in the sense that I could feel useful. I was sharing my research, and I was helping them understand a little bit better what could be done there, as a community mapping initiative.

Also the frustration was that, of course, I was in charge of organizing the community mapping initiative, but I felt that other people could do the same thing. They were not planners, so I said: "OK, so if they can do that, and of course I can do that as well with them, what then is my specialization?".
So during my master's thesis it was like I lost myself, but then I understood that my specialization was keeping together all those different pieces. So we come to the third point:
The community mapping initiative was organizing public meetings that were based – instead of having just discussions – on a map we had. We asked people to put on that map their different ideas in terms of what they did and cared about, and we did that by asking very simple questions. We asked, "What do you like? What do you not like? What are your memories? What are your visions and ideas for the future?".
So we asked people to indicate places on the map and to write down some notes related to what they had put on the map. So we really collected a variety of different ideas. Sometimes there were people, of course, who agreed with each other, and sometimes they didn't; but, at the end of the process, that lasted about nine months, we had reached out to about five hundred people, and the real challenge was synthesizing, to try to make sense of what we had collected. Of course, we had different things, different pieces, and we wondered how to make something that could be a little bit organic, and that could be, of course, helpful.
So to organize those pieces was the real challenge. At that point I understood that my role was really to try to find a sort of balance in this huge variety of things: in terms of the knowledge that people had of their place, in terms of projects or ideas. So instead of having just a list of projects, the challenge was to understand what the priorities were and what would have to come next.
So my knowledge acquired as a planner was applied when we had to synthesize that huge variety of ideas. Then I understood: "OK, my role could be to try to make sense of this diversity".
That's what I had studied, you know, about strategic planning and all these things. So I was using the tools that we had studied in class to make sense of that diversity. So, the ideas and the knowledge came from people, the system of values underlying the project came from the people, and what we did as planners was just to try to make sense of that diversity.

Again, the technical knowledge came into play because those people had studied more about, for example, alternative forms of collecting garbage and how to process garbage, or alternative forms of selling products in local markets – so they really had more knowledge than me because they were directly involved in the issues.
When I say "they", I mean "local activists in that part of the project", and then we also involved the institutional people, but that's another story; so when I say "they", I really mean the activists.
There were also people who were activists and who at the same time had their technical knowledge because their job was connected with what they were doing. So we had people who possessed technical knowledge. That happened mostly with organic farmers, who had their small farms there. They had studied how to run an organic farm, so they had a lot of knowledge about that, and then they were involved in processes of activism as well. Of course they knew more than me about agriculture, so their knowledge was important in the project, and I learned from them because I've never studied organic farming.
It was useful because of course if you have to develop a project in a rural area, you need to know something about organic farming! So, they gave that advice to me and the only thing I had to do was to understand what they were saying, and put that together with other things – because, of course, on the other side you could have fisherman or ecologists for example. They wanted clear water and advocated for rivers so sometimes that could be a little bit in contrast with agriculture, let's say. And they had their own knowledge. They know how a river works, and I didn't know anything about that. So I learned from them, and then I tried to put their needs together with those of the farmers – and then we had people who were, for example, tourism operators.
So they know about their business, and some of them want to develop sustainable tourism. So you can link that knowledge with the farmers' knowledge and say: "Ok, we can do tourism and then do something with the organic farms, linking them to the sustainable tourism system". So you had people who were really different, and did different jobs, so they had different forms of knowledge, and you don't know that much about each job – but putting them together you can help these ideas flow from one group of actors to another.
Some of them were saying, "Oh, we can put the organic issues to-

gether with the tourism issue". Some of them already had that in mind. Some of them understood the importance of doing things in an integrated way, and of course we were pushing toward that. So, some of them knew that, but not everybody. Some of them already understood the importance of working with other pieces of the puzzle.

It was not just me doing all the learning; they were learning from each other, too. We had public meetings and it was tense in those meetings, because when you have a public meeting, everybody speaks and says something about his or her own specific interests. So after the meetings, then, you could talk to the other participants and hear: "OK, that was interesting because, oh, I didn't know that before".

So we could see that they were really learning from each other as we were doing, because, of course every person who came to speak had a specific knowledge of something. If you were in the mood for learning, other people could say: "Oh, that was interesting". So that was thanks to the public meetings.

So yes, these public meetings did involve expertise, and yes, chaos was there. So how did they work? I think it comes back to the question about the role of doing planning action research. Of course there is always chaos, and we experienced that, so I am not saying that everything was perfect, of course. But we learned also, developing this, how to organize chaos a little bit. So we found it very useful, at first, to share, every time that we did something – again, taking notes and transforming those notes into collective documents so that people could really follow the discussions step by step throughout the meetings. They could have the feeling that what they were doing was not just starting from the beginning every time, but that there was a slow, but real, progression of the discussion.

That was like keeping a shared record or shared history. We shared that in different forms. It could be just an e-mail, or it could be a document that then became part of a huge collection of documents – that then became part of the River Agreement that was made with these recorded pieces that have been produced throughout the years. So that was very useful because people could have the feeling that they were not just starting from the beginning every time. They saw that what we were saying was not just words in thin air, but that we were really trying to affect reality.

These were not just words, but something more that could be effective in reality. Because a big part of the chaos, in my experience, came from people who had the feeling that we were just discussing about nothing. During the meetings, of course, they shared their frustration, that nothing has changed, and nothing is changing for real. So during the meetings that was one part of the chaos.

We were trying to keep them focused on the fact that we were building something step by step. So with this, we tried to say, "Look at the progress that we have made from the beginning up to now". So that was one part.

Another thing we did was split up the group. So we usually started the meeting with, let's say, a plenary session, with all the participants together. Then we split the group into smaller numbers that were focused on specific issues.

So it was easier to manage smaller groups, rather than manage a big and huge group of people. When I say "big" it might be one hundred people, which we then split into three to four smaller groups, sometimes five, of let's say, twenty to twenty-five people, so they were easier to manage.

In the smaller groups you had one person leading the discussion, and another person taking notes. That's the best situation you can have, and of course you have to have facilitators – so people that could do that, but that's another story.

So in these groups, the first thing that we usually asked people, person by person, was, to introduce themselves very briefly. We gave them, let's say, two minutes to answer, "Why are you here? What are your expectations?" for example. So we began with a very brief introduction so that everybody could understand who was in the group. That was the first thing, and then we focused on the specific issues. So we had to discuss, "What's the best way to manage the water cycle in a farm? What are, for example, the projects that can be done in order to not waste water or not put polluted water into the river?" let's say. So everybody shared experiences related to that in the small group that was focused on water.

Then there might be another group in the meantime that was working on tourism, let's say, and they were discussing things in the same way – introducing themselves and then saying: "Ok, let's discuss about what's the best, let's say, greenway that we

can have to connect the farms, and what's the path that we have to design?" and all these things.

And let's say another group in the meantime was discussing farming itself, with questions like, "What are the problems of farmers?" "We have to sell our products and we don't have outlets like other businesses in shopping malls and all these things, so let's try to make links to local markets, farmer's markets, and all these things…". So these groups are working together, first introducing themselves: every person is introducing himself or herself in the group and then discussing specific issues.

So, let's say that it takes one hour to do that, and at the end all these groups come together again into, let's say, the plenary session. There are a couple of people usually who are the facilitators, or there's a facilitator and one person on behalf of the participants, and these people share what they have done as a small group with the other groups.

So in the plenary session the facilitator can put things together and try to have a more organic project; this is what should happen. This is what we have been able to do when we were supported by classes of students doing service learning projects. We could have a good number of facilitators, so that the groups could be supported by two people leading: one person taking notes and the other leading the discussion. But often you have just a few people involved as facilitators because there are no resources for the project. Our real situation is that you don't really usually have the number of facilitators that would be best.

So, there are a lot of challenges because, of course, let's say you don't split in groups, and then it's more complicated to discuss things in a plenary session – or if it is just one person who is facilitating and is taking notes, at the end of the day that person will be very tired. So this kind of thing really can work when you have a good team of people who are working together.

Some people just think if you get groups together they are going to spend an hour complaining about how bad everything is. That could happen, and it could happen too that you have people butting heads with each other, of course. Whenever it happens I have learned that I have to let them for a little bit at least, express their conflicts, their complaining. So they have to say what they are concerned about, and they have to share this with others.

That's fine, you are not wasting time if these things happen. If I don't let them share that, I think they are not going to be able to contribute their best to the discussion because they have in mind what they haven't been able to say. So they have to share whatever is on their mind.

But you have to keep the discussion on track. So, whenever there is a complaint you have to ask: "Ok, that's the problem! What do you think could be the solution?" or "Ok, that's the conflict, you are right; but what do you think, how can we overcome that, what are the issues?".

All those questions can help them move forward. So, you say, "OK, we know that, that's the problem. Yes, that's true, you are right, but"... – just asking the question that can help them move forward a little more is important. Then someone could say: "OK, but you know this is never going to happen", and whenever they say that, OK, you say: "No. OK, we know that Sicily is not like California, let's say, but let's try to do that". So it's always, you know, saying the words that can keep the discussion focused on: "OK, we know that there are problems, and we are not going to solve them tomorrow, we know that. But we are doing this, and we don't want to waste time, so we are doing this for a reason, so let's just focus on that reason…". So that's how we usually manage to try to keep going forward.

If I have to be honest, completely honest, about the Simeto project, we came to one point when we had done so many meetings and we had written so many documents that if we didn't do something real on the ground, real projects that people could touch, we were going to lose all these things, all that work.

So when we started doing these meetings at the beginning, it was just the university with associations. Then we understood that it was necessary to involve institutions, government, and all the agencies at every level in order to transform this discussion into reality. Otherwise it's just discussion. So then we were at the point when we shared the documents that we had done as the university in partnership with the associations and institutions.

They liked what we had done because we had done it with no public money! So it was – OK, let's say – a sort of gift, that we were giving them our ideas, our time, and our work. But then we wanted to transform ideas into something that was real, and the institutions, some of them, were excited and supported us – and then we signed a document that now is a sort of memorandum of understanding. That now is the Simeto River Agreement and the official

document, the last document, was signed in May 2015!
Let me go back a bit. The community mapping initiative started in December 2009 and had a first moment of synthesis in April 2010. After that was the first time when we realized that we had to involve governmental agencies, and, at that time, we were focused on municipalities.
We had the documents with the ideas, projects, and it was in our hands. It was a sort of strategic plan, a community-based strategic plan. And then we thought: "OK, how can we transform it into reality without the municipality? We cannot do that by ourselves". That was what we thought because we understood that the associations didn't have, let's say, the power or the money or could not do that alone.
So we focused together during discussions with governmental agencies that had the responsibility of doing things. So we did not want to substitute or assume their responsibilities, but we had to bridge them and to include them in what we wanted to do. I think we were able to think about that because in the partnership, within the associations, we had people that had previous public administration experience.
We had a former mayor who then became an activist, and she is very special as a person: every participant trusts her! I think this is particular to our project. She was able to let people understand through her words that the governmental agencies were not always just enemies but they needed to be included in the discussion – because she explained to us: "That's, you know, how our institutions work now. We have institutions that are in charge, and they have to do things, so we cannot exclude them".
Some people saw the public institutions as enemies: "They don't do their job! They do bad things". So yes, some people didn't want them, but other people were OK with that. From the university perspective, too, we knew that it was important to involve the institutional part, the governmental agencies, because we wanted to have them as another piece of the puzzle. I mean, if you have a puzzle to put together, you have to have every piece to work with, and that was a necessary piece for us. But it took time to focus. It took discussions. It took conflict. It took everything we had, because people didn't think the same way. But in the end, we decided that's the thing we had to do: we had to involve governmental agencies in the project.

People trusted Graziella Ligresti because when she was a mayor she was very good – so she is one of the most trusted leaders that the community has had as a governmental person and as an activist. Now she is just an activist, but her previous experience gives her the accountability of saying things in the right way, and people, in the end, trust her. So I think she was very special, and she has been one of the unique elements in our work. There might be other people able to do the same thing in other places – to be as trusted as she is – but in the process there were things that happened because of the specific people who were who they were.

One of the successful, let's say, outcomes of the process now, is that different associations became able to network in a sort of umbrella association that now exists, but didn't exist before. That exists because of the process that we did. So instead of having associations working and networking but working separately in different municipalities, now you have ten municipalities, and in every municipality, there is a group that is networking for real. They are doing things together: organizing meetings, organizing all those things that can help the community stay together in the sense of meeting and keeping this process alive, and on the other hand, pushing institutions to do what they have to do.

In the very beginning of the process they came in just representing their own associations, and at the end they were still representing their own associations, but now they were working together in a very, very different way.

The River Agreement Memorandum of Understandings that was signed in May 2015 basically contains a governance system of the river agreement, saying how these pieces – governmental organization, non-governmental organizations, researchers and educators – have to stay together. So we wrote that there has to be – because we agreed on that all together – an association of associations that is called the Participatory Presidium of the Simeto River Agreement, that represents the whole non-governmental sector.

So this exists as a new entity, and inside it we have all these associations or citizens individually: all these people who can be representatives of an association or of themselves as a single person – but all of them are part of this new entity that is the participatory presidium.

The participatory presidium represents the complexity and the wholeness of the associations that exist in the Simeto valley, and

they are supposed to work together with the other pieces in the general assembly. The assembly is composed of each mayor – so if we have ten municipalities, you have ten mayors, two people from the participatory presidium, and one person from the University of Catania. So this is how the assembly works: whenever the assembly meets, you have ten mayors, people from the University of Catania, and two people from the presidium. These people, together, are in charge of organizing things, and they are in charge of making things happen, for real, in the sense now that you have projects.

The community has done a lot of work together, so how do we transform these things into practice? How do we prioritize things? How do we find resources for doing things? In the assembly the most active part has been the participatory presidium, because the mayors are slow – they have a lot of things on their minds, and things to do with their municipalities. So the participatory presidium actually leads the discussion. This is the design that we came up with in the agreement, and we'll see in the future how it works and then adapted it as it goes.

Of course, the relationships among all these participants developed slowly over time as they shared information. A nice thing was said by a person during a meeting about this. An activist, during a meeting, said, "OK, thanks to the community mapping initiatives, we finally learned that we have to listen to each other".

So I would say that people finally understood that they were not alone, and that they had to, at least, listen to each other. It is not that you always agree on everything, of course, but at least you have to understand what other people that live close to you think about the place you are living in – in order to make that place become what it can be, together. So listening to each other, I think, is the thing that we all really learned doing that – because we understood things, and it was not just listening in terms of words. Again, you have the map, and on the map, you have different signs, different notations. It is not just about words, because you have a map with things that are drawn on the map, that people have drawn. So it is not just listening to words but seeing how in one place there are different ideas or in another place the ideas are the same, or can be going in the same direction. The ideas can be in some ways conflicting, but at least you see that you have this complexity that you have to deal with. So that was a thing that would happen: listening to each other.

What did people get out of this? They were seeing the process of doing things with specific tools that were planning tools, because we use maps as planners. Before starting the project, I couldn't imagine how powerful a map could be. But if you do the act of mapping with people that are not used to have a map in their hands, then when they have one in their hands, it's something that really helps them to understand things in a different way. It's a powerful tool that I was happy to show them, and I know that they were happy to use that tool, because they were saying things like: "Oh, we can see where we are...".

I don't know how to say it, but I thought the act of mapping was something that made a difference in the process because they could not just talk but deal with the complexity of the space. It was not just saying, "I want to build a greenway", let's say. It was: "OK, let's see, where should we do something like that? What does it affect? Who are the people we have to involve because the greenway is here instead of there?".

So it was keeping the discussion a little more focused on the difficulties that are connected with implementing projects, rather than just saying: "OK, we want a greenway, that's it".

So this was more dealing with the complexity of doing things for real, rather than just saying we want this because we want this. It was like: "OK, we want this, and now how do we do that? Let's take the map and let's see what should be done".

So they are dealing with difficulties but they are also dealing with solutions and not just saying what they want. Now people from the community organize walking along an old rail trail that they want to transform into this greenway. They are actually still working with other maps and they are going and seeing places. They are actually working on the project. Of course with them is an architect who is doing his job. He wants to do that because it's his job, but he is doing it with the perspective of the activists, too, and with the other participants. So they now know how to work together and through the participatory presidium they are developing this project for real. And the project's difficulties are connected, again, with the institutional authorities, because they have a lot of problems in getting, first, the money, and then authorizations and things.

So, again, the community is vibrant, but the institutions are slower. So the big challenge now, I think, is to bridge these two pieces. The

community has learned a little bit how to work together, and the problem, now, is to help the institutions to work together with the community with the same rhythm and not to be that slow compared to the fast pace of the community.

Another thing that I can say about this project is that the project has had different phases. You start with huge enthusiasm: people were participating, public meetings were vibrant. Then you do a lot of work: you produce documents and at one point – this had already happened in the process, in 2012 or so – it seemed like the process was dying because there was no more enthusiasm. People didn't want to participate anymore; they felt frustrated because nothing had changed. So that happens, and that was only a phase. I mean, in that moment I thought, "Oh!". I was frustrated, too, because I thought, "OK everything is finished, and we have done a lot of things for nothing!". But what I saw is that if you did things in a certain way, then a new element might have been thrown into the discussion again.

Probably there won't be the same people who participated before. Although some will remain, and some new people will start, in the light of what has been done before during the phase of enthusiasm. They will start doing things again with the same enthusiasm from the very beginning. So a new cycle starts, and then, again, you have people involved in participating and doing all these things with enthusiasm, OK, in the high points of the process. Then again it can also happen that people get tired and frustrated again. But my hope is that this is not a short-term process, but a long-term process. But there could be different phases.

You have to be good at maintaining a record of what has been done from the very beginning up to now. So that even if you have phases of frustration where people don't want to participate anymore, it doesn't matter. You are still working in a different way, and then something new will happen. Then you will have new, vibrant, and energetic meetings and phases.

I am seeing that in the process there can be moments of high enthusiasm and moments of very low enthusiasm. Then, as long as there is a group of people that is able to maintain a memory of the history of what has been done, there will always be a new moment of enthusiasm – probably with new people involved, but with the awareness that something has been done before, so that you are building step by step.

In addition to the technical skills, an important skill is to keep track of what has been done, and to not give up, in the sense that you have to push on when things are not vibrant anymore. So it's like keeping track – it's memory, memory of the process – keeping track of the memory of the process.

Along with keeping track, there's always the question of "What can we do now?" So, yes, one of the key things that a facilitator would do would be to say: "OK, yes there are problems, but what can we do, what can we do next?" – to pose the right questions at the right time, during meetings, during whatever, and to be focused on the right questions: "OK, we know there are problems but what can we do?".

So it is always, "We know there are problems, but what should we do?" So it's not giving up on problems, it's just trying to find alternative solutions – and to put them into the discussion. Then people would discuss them, but the point is to trigger these things, to remember what you are there to find out about, and to discuss how to move forward, continuously.

Would I have done anything differently? I would definitely change a lot of things, now, in light of what we have done. First, we never designed the project – except maybe a little bit – and I know that you cannot design everything, or let's say, plan everything, because you know reality is complex. We knew that – I knew that – but it was like going with the flow at the beginning, and I am saying that because we were not good at having a source of funds that could sustain this project in a reasonable way. We were just, I think, a little bit crazy at the beginning. Now the problem is that Laura is in the United States because of that, and we need her a lot because she was another person who helped a lot with this process being as developed as it was.

So we are having issues. We don't have a lot of facilitators when we have to develop public meetings, as I was saying before. So whenever we had students that could help with a service learning process, that was great. But now that we don't have them because we don't even have a class involved in the process – because, for example, Laura is not here – how can we deal with this number of people? How can we organize public meetings?

So it's a very important thing, to have a little bit of design of the process in order to get the necessary funds to support and to sustain the process itself – otherwise it's going to be very complicat-

ed, very frustrating, very tiring. So I would look for sources of funds a little bit more than we did!
We kind of skipped that part and that was not good for the sustainability of the process – that was one thing. Another thing would be – and I think it was the main problem – that we had to learn to do these things while we were doing them. We were not really very sure what we were doing at the beginning. I am talking about myself: so I was a little bit confused, and because of this confusion, it was more complicated to plan what to do in terms of sustaining the process. So I guess it's a problem of designing things to be done before doing them, but as we were not fully aware of what we were doing, it was complicated to do that!
I don't know if this is clear or confusing, but it comes down to the fact that Laura now is not here because she did not have continuing support despite having done a great job. So I am talking about the difficulties connected with the reality of being planners and scholars in Italy.
I think the mood for learning can be facilitated. It is something that you have to have, but it can be facilitated, and it can be stimulated if you provide the right material in terms of documents, devices and tools – all these things that we did. So again, going back to the community mapping, giving a map to someone is giving them something that you can touch, you can see, and you can deal with. So creating a report and sharing that report can help people to have some material to read or hear in a presentation. Then you can ask people not to be just passive listeners, but you can ask them questions, and say: "OK, what do you think – what is more important, this or that?".
So in this way, you can prepare the materials and show the materials that can help people to be focused, to be active learners, and not just listeners but people who can and have to be directly involved in the process of producing knowledge together – through open tools that have been organized before, and then the people can add their own part. So you might have, let's say, a report. At the end of the report you always have white pages where people can add a little bit more, and you say: "OK, this is never a complete report; what more can you add? Please share that with us". So people come to feel more involved in this process, and probably, I think, all this can help to encourage a mood for learning.

There's one more thing. I said that there were a lot of things that we were good at doing, but also that during the process we had tons of reframing processes – in the sense that we stopped, and we said: "OK, we are doing this, but probably we are making a lot of mistakes. So let's stop a bit, and let's think". And that was done by the scholars and also by the most active participants. So I think it's very important to point out that there are moments when you stop, you sit down a little bit, you reframe what you are doing, and you change things a little bit – because that's the only way things can continue working. That's one thing, one practical advice I have to share.

When I was saying that the assembly now is composed of ten mayors and two people from the participatory presidium, one of those people is actually Graziella Ligresti – again, the person who was the former mayor. So this is, again, to point out that there are some key people in the process who are really investing a lot of time, and a lot of effort. She is one of those people, and it's thanks to these people that the memory of the process is still there – because she's been there from the very beginning until now. A lot of people have changed, but you need to have some people who are always there, and she is one of them. That is just a detail, but again, it's important to point out that you really need people like that in these processes.

The Authors

Alessandro Balducci, Professor of Urban and regional planning at the Polytecnic of Milan, sandro.balducci@polimi.it.

Angela Barbanente, Professor of Urban and regional planning at the Polytecnic of Bari, angela.barbanente@poliba.it.

Claudio Calvaresi, Urban planner, senior consultant in the AVANZI srl, calvaresi.claudio@gmail.com.

Carlo Cellamare, Associated professor in Urban and Regional planning at the Sapienza University, carlo.cellamare@uniroma1.it.

Daniela De Leo, Assistant professor in Planning and urban design at the University of Rome, daniela.deleo@uniroma1.it.

John Forester, Professor of Urban and regional planning at the Cornell University, johnforester@cornell.edu.

Patrizia Gabellini, Professor in Planning and urban design at the Polytechnic of Milan, patrizia.gabellini@polimi.it.

Silvia Givone, past president and member of the "Sociolab"-Coperative Society, silvia.givone@sociolab.it.

Claudio Gnessi, president of the Ecomuseo Casilino Association, Lead Interaction Designer, Communty Planner, co-founder of Karawanfest and member of the Tor Pignattara Committee, claudio.gnessi@gmail.com.

Francesco Lo Piccolo, Professor in Planning and urban design at the University of Palermo, francesco.lopiccolo@unipa.it.

Alberto Magnaghi, Professor emeritus of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florence, alberto.magnaghi@gmail.com.

Marina Marino, Urban planner, urb.marinamarino@gmail.com.

Anna Marson, Professor in Urban and regional planning at the IUAV, marson@iuav.it.

Francesco Domenico Moccia, Professor of Planning and urban design at the University of Napoli, fdmoccia@unina.it.

Giancarlo Paba, Professor emeritus of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florence, giancarlo.paba@unifi.it.

Giusy Pappalardo is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Catania, Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture, giusypappalardo83@gmail.com.

Iolanda Romano, Mediator with 25 years of experience in public policies within the group Avventura Urbana, since 2015 she is commissioner of the Government for the Terzo Valico Railway, the italian part of the European Rhine Alpine Corridor, iolandaromano@avventuraurbana.it.

Laura Saija, Assistant professor at the University of Catania, saija.laura@gmail.com.

Marianella Sclavi, Retired professor in urban planning, sclavi.marianella@gmail.com.

Italian urban planners do much more than people think. This book reveals such grounded urban planning practices that extend far beyond any reduction of "real urban planning" to plan-making or urban design. The narrower vision of planners as plan-makers has had a dominant influence on Italian planning curricula by severely limiting the scope of what to teach. In contrast, the place-makers' urban practices detailed here open up a wide spectrum of possibilities of planning action, suggesting many ways to update the forms, themes, and teaching methods of Italian planning education. This book shows the functions played by diverse planners and their senses of strategy and action, both shaped by their education and training. By evoking and exploring these practitioners' extended accounts, the editors sought to erase epistemological and political tensions between pragmatism and critical theory by articulating a "critical pragmatism". This book should provoke critical and grounded discussions, both practically, pedagogically and theoretically, in the national and international scholarly and scientific community.

Daniela De Leo is a tenured researcher and Assistant professor in Urban Planning at the Sapienza University in Rome. She has conducted and coordinated national and international research on challenges for planners and Urban Planning theories and practices in the face of the Mafia, in conflicts and contested space and in deprived areas with strong inequalities and asymmetry of powers. Recent books: *Mafie & Urbanistica* (2016), *Planner in Palestine* (2013).

John Forester is Professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. After writing *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989) he examined planners' detailed practice accounts in *The Deliberative Practitioner* (1999), the lessons of public dispute mediators in *Dealing with Differences* (2009) and *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (2013), and planners' pragmatic improvising in *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance* (2015 with D. Laws) and *Rebuilding Community After Katrina* (2016 with K. Reardon).

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Paul Klee, Chosen Site, 1940. Courtesy Wikiart

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