STRATEGIC PLANNING, PLACE MARKETING AND CITY BRANDING: THE ITALIAN CASE

Paolo RIZZI
Università del Sacro Cuore, Italy
paolo.rizzi@unicatt.it

Ilaria DIOLI
Università del Sacro Cuore, Italy
ilaria.dioli@unicatt.it

ABSTRACT

This paper offers an overview about the connections between Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding and intends to give an insight on some Italian cities as empirical cases such as Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza. These interesting examples have been able to combine together the three elements mentioned above. Given the assumption that Strategic Planning is the starting point, Place Marketing makes a city move forward and City Branding helps to define (or renew) the Identity of a Place, it's fascinating to investigate the relations of these issues with big events occurred in these cities. Some opportunities set by the Strategic Plan strive to ensure the best conditions to maximise the city's potential and gain recognition through Place Marketing actions and City Branding techniques, according to a cross-fertilizations of many different themes in order to make cities become vibrant cultural hubs. Creative place make creative economy and skilled workforce. On one hand Strategic Planning means to be a forum for the local interests in order to achieve the consent on some strategic goals and define a strategic view through problems analysis processes, outcomes monitoring and collective learning, on the other hand Place Marketing aims at becoming a real policy tool in order to make demand and offer meet on urban issues. Today, what is more and more emphasized are the immaterial aspects of urban life, such as emotions, knowledge and creativity, all belonging to the field of image-making dealt by City Branding. These issues, which concern the interdisciplinary relations among the three crucial elements of city management, aim to be the backgrounds for further comparison and discussion.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at integrating three contemporary issues in urban studies: Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding according to a holistic approach for a successful image renewal.

First, it describes the Strategic Planning as a process of sharing actions facing an urban development approach by many actors, both public and private, involving citizens and youth.

Second, it moves a step further by defining the concepts of Place Marketing and City Branding and it analyzes some links and implications among them, by focusing mainly on the role of big events for the city enhancement and attraction of people.

Third, the attention is drawn on some Italian cases such as Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza, being all of them expressions of cities able to re-create their own image on different levels, by using precise and targeted actions revealing new resources for the future.

Globalization has increased the competitive nature of the marketplace and has changed the urban development choices. Global competition puts under pressure both enterprises and territorial areas, imposing development strategies' re-configuration both on a productive and an urban point of view. During the last decades many cities experienced a redevelopment for city post-industrial uses, often related to culture, tourism, and technology: opportunities and events have often been the trigger to start an extensive process of image building and productive re-conversion that is still on its way. According to a strategic vision integrated with actions of Place Marketing and City Branding, events are meant to be temporary, highly visible and often expensive projects aiming at attracting a large number of extremely focused visitors in a relatively short time span but able to change the idea people have about a city. Many of these events have been opportunities for important infrastructural investments which helped to modify the aspect of a city, according to its endowment and ambitious urban policies. This kind of image re-definition has been usually supported by a massive and targeted communication plan and advertisement campaigns by a careful monitoring of its perception from both inside and outside, both on the national and international level.

In order to outline this paper, open interviews to each case's operators have been made, local administrators belonging to the economic and tourism enhancement sectors and development agencies have been contacted and met, as well as many documents have been analysed (strategic plans, territorial plans, advertisement campaigns, etc). From a more quantitative point of view, each case has been studied and compared to others in order to estimate the policies' effects through tourism and FDI (Foreign Direct Investments) attraction by the Istat (Italian National Institute of Statistics) as the main data.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic Plans are new forms of territorial socio-economic planning that provide the active involvement of local actors. In comparison to territorial ruled planning, typical in the '60-80s and characterized by a public regulation arrangement, the Strategic Planning shows significant elements of innovation. Strategic Planning means to be a forum of the local interests' representation and a kind of local government organization for the actions' coordination of many local actors and their interaction. In other words, the Strategic Plan is a tool aiming at achieving the consent on strategic goals and at defining a strategic view of a concerned area through problems analysis processes, outcomes monitoring and collective learning. Some of the main features of Strategic Plans consist in re-shaping the patterns of urban development and in increasing of competition, by setting the scene for more strategic actions in the global panorama. They consist basically in strategies of improvement of a local system involving local stakeholders, by following a performative and sustainable approach for medium-long term objectives and goals. Strategic Plans tend to build consensus through extensive negotiations and a decision making process in order to produce collective learning. They can be considered as a new form of democracy process and focus mainly on supply, according to a vision - driven approach by sharing decisions: Strategic Planning intends indeed to overcome any fragmentation given by different single actions and un-integrated policies, in order to conceive different and at the same time complementary lines to follow. As an expression of governance, the Strategic Plan is a bottom-up pact shared by different local actors willing to build and follow a common strategies, axes and lines aiming at modifying and make a city better (Lindblom, 1975; Friend and Jessop, 1977, Faludi, 1984, Bryson, 1988; Houghton and Counsell, 2004).

Some of these elements can trigger the process that is a combination of factors which will eventually create favourable conditions for translating intentions into an operational and successful program of intervention able to change urban texture and re-qualify the appeal of a city, both for the inhabitants' well-living and for tourists and investors' attraction. Strong direct participation of the community in the construction of the Plan is the keystone in a project aimed not just at outlining a precise objective, but also at channelling human and economic resources towards it.

Yet, there are also some limits: the confluence of these key elements doesn't always turn into operational and successful programs due to Strategic Planning's high cost of negotiation, to the risk of having a rhetorical process and to the low implementation of it.

PLACE MARKETING

The use of product marketing strategies in an increasing competitive scenario sits in the need to satisfy stakeholders, inhabitants, public and private actors and to attract tourists and investors. Place Marketing has thus become an indispensable instrument in terms of operative implications associated with a specific place. Its strategies consist in resource and knowledge-based perspectives rather than in "traditional" product-based approaches and it mainly bases on relational resources, networking activities, adoption of targeting and positioning tools. Not only have these strategies an economic effect but also precise cultural consequences: art and culture, image and design, architecture and fashion, sports events and festivals thrive in some places which are more conductive in allowing creativity to produce and people to come and stay (Ashworth and Voogd, 1995, Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). In a resource-based perspective, every place can be seen as a learning organisation competing in the contemporary so-called experience economy (Kavaratzis, 2004). Place Marketing techniques can be considered instruments of the Strategic Plan and focus mainly on demand, according to target-driven and outside-in approach, by sharing a decision making process. Place Marketing activities intended to promote awareness and favourable opinion about a particular place or region.

Yet, the limits sit in considering it as a mere tool of communication and advertisement and as an enterprise instrument to sell a city as a product, according to the idea of tourism destination considered as a Product and Tourist as a Customer.

CITY BRANDING

City branding is meant to act as a powerful image-building strategy. While branding has been applied to consumer products for decades, the concept of strategically branding countries, cities and regions only appeared during the mid-90's to assist places to compete more effectively in an increasingly marketing environment. City Branding is indeed more than a mere promotion of place, as it is used in some cities to rebuild and redefine their image ((Kavaratzis, 2005; Anholt, 2007). City Branding is an act made by the place itself which tells the outside world how it wants to be seen and considered, according to an inside-out approach (Morgan at al., 2007). Every technique belonging to City Branding intends to make a place attractive and recognizable by a precise and targeted image to be spread outside in different ways and through a consistent behaviour, not only by mere communication tools. The identity and essence of a place as immaterial values ground its brand and image – (re) making.

Yet, it doesn't have to be considered a simple advertisement tool but it want to be a way turn a place into a recognizable destination (Klingmann, 2007).

THE ITALIAN CASE

In Italy, the following examples have been forerunners in exploiting some event-based opportunities and in creating a conductive atmosphere to strengthen their own identity, to re-build a new image, preserve and transmit their heritage, provide original forms of artistic expression, widen participation and stimulate creativity both on physical infrastructures and on ideas and actual proposals.

The most successful cases see the combination of Strategic Planning – which is the starting point – with other important actions belonging to Place Marketing and City Branding. Many cities have already launched such operations, some Italian examples follow here below, as representative of such process consisting of different steps and ways to achieve a new image. The assumption starts from the identification of the role of innovation and creativity which are considered to be as crucial for giving new patters to a city and are seen as the foundation for inventive processes both on the economic and social levels. Nowadays what is really important isn't any longer goods purchase and their consumption, rather the so-called aesthetic consensus obtained through strategies creating and promoting new identity built on symbolic dimensions and shared emotions (Florida, 2002).

Italy has always had at the same time the advantage and the disadvantage of being embedded with arts: this condition has often led the Country to give for granted new forms of enhancement and development. The downturn in the economy that negatively affected many cities - the ones which lived post-industrial crisis, such as Turin and Genoa, have realized the importance of being kept up-to-date with today's ever-changing and challenging world - was significantly positive for some of them which really wanted to re-invent and re-position themselves. That's why these places have invested money, energies and brilliant thoughts to re-new the structure and the identity of the city, without losing the importance of a glorious past. In such a context, culture is asked to be part of a multi-faceted regeneration process focused both on physical renovation and re-qualification of buildings and on a deep rethinking of the social logic of space utilization. For this reason many disciplines and subjects intermingle and intertwine to re-draw the image of a place and its identity, making a city as a creative hub's endeavour. Some events and targeted actions become instrumental to the produce and disseminate creativity and to make identity be recognizable.

Examining the experience of Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza, this paper focuses on the implications raised by the use of such policies and targeted actions, showing that they have turned

out to be successful cases thanks to the symbiotic relationships and cross-fertilizations with Strategic Plans, Place Marketing and City Branding.

Turin: the first Italian Strategic Plan and the Olympic Games

Turin was one the very first Italian cities which conceived and adopted a Strategic Plan in 1999. Then a second edition was elaborated and arranged by a coordination structure called *Torino Internazionale*, an association shared by public and private bodies, economic, social and cultural operators, which aims at fostering, supporting and monitoring the Plan implementation process. Strategic actions require work on international, regional and local level.

Hosting the Olympic Games means offering the opportunity to show a city and its inhabitants on a global stage, interact and engage with foreign peoples such as athletes and tourists (Bobbio and Guala, 2002). The Olympics usually provide a way to revitalize and even transform the host city, facilitating the rejuvenation of local economy and the construction of new facilities that can change a city's culture and image for decades. Along with and thanks to the Olympics, Turin have been giving shape to a comprehensive design and communication project with many actions able to ensure an integrated message to be internationally broadcasted.

Its will to become a vibrant place has soon made Turin's Look for the Games become Turin's new look of the City.

Figure 1.

Examples of Torino Olympics logo panels in the city

That's exactly what happened to Turin in winter 2006 when the Games helped to reframe the image of a city ever since connected with the idea of the car production and industry, whereas the Italian

tourist appeal has always belonged to Rome, Milan, Florence and Venice. Following the economic transformations of the 21st century, both on a local and on a global level, Turin undertook significant efforts to improve its infrastructures to get it ready for the big international event. Taking advantage of the Olympics as a platform meant to prove the city's ability to rebuild its image, Turin demonstrated its importance in an international panorama. Since that big opportunity, Turin has been attempting to transform itself into a winter destination, thanks to its location at the foot of the Italian Alps and on a very strategic geographical position. One of its grounded idea about the identity of the city sits on the belief of having something important to offer and to be discovered.

The city has turned out to be, through an effective advertisement campaign, a city of passion (Passion lives here) and a city able to combine together past and present, history and modernity (Torino always on the move).

Figure 2.

Examples of Torino Olympics pay off

Following to its strategic concept, a substantial urban renewal has been going along with the restoration of selected parts of the cultural heritage and their mixed uses, according to a co-existence of past and future to make an appealing present to live today. Thanks to its good and precise job, Turin has transformed itself into a city that keeps attracting global attention for years to come. Somehow, it's like going back to the time when Turin reigned as the former capital of Italy and was a cultural and intellectual hub:

> "Torino has a long history behind it. More than once it has had to reinvent itself, find its role again in generally changed conditions, and at least twice it has been a capital which has driven forward Italian modernisation. (…) Streets, piazzas, palaces, and monuments are the most immediately visible traces ofthe old political capital. But widening our view, we find that there are traditions connected to those roots which are humanistic, juridical, theological, or related to university research, museums and musical institutions, the varied world of the liberal professions and commerce, the high medical and hospital tradition, the great social religious experiences, libraries, publishers, and the thousands of bonds that tie these public and private worlds to their corresponding points of excellence in the world. We can also see this origin of Torino as a leading city in the fact that an Italian banking group on the scale of major international finance has its headquarters here."
>
> (*Torino internazionale*,
> Piano strategico per la promozione
> della città 2000-2010, pag. 10)

In Turin's future, there is also actual and attractive bases for becoming a technology excellence (this year it has been elected 2008 World Capital of Design), and a stronger tourism destination because of the presence of history and arts surrounded by the massive nature of the Alps. Winter Olympic Games have therefore played an important role in reformulating and reinforcing the images of the city, a clear evidence of the successful mix among Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding because a city enters a tourist's mind only when it is recognizable and makes the difference in comparison with all the others.

> "An urban strategic plan defines a vision of a future which is desirable for the city, to be reached by a time limit whose specification serves as a stimulus. The three aforementioned visions (Torino, a European metropolis; Torino the resourceful, a city of action and know-how; Torino the decision-maker: the intelligence of the future and the quality of life) are justified given the history and resources of the city. They are visions which complement each other and as a whole constitute a vision that Torino can conceivably reach by the year 2010."
>
> (*Torino internazionale*,
> Piano strategico per la promozione
> della città 2000-2010, pag. 11)

And its image along with its techniques to communicate it will be consistent and coherent.

Genoa: The European Capital of Culture combining Past and Future

In 1992 a big event called Colombiadi, the celebration of 500 years since Columbus' arrival in America, represented one of the earliest steps towards Genoa's transformation and regeneration process.

Then, in 2001 Genoa hosted the G8, the international forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK and USA. This annual summit meeting of all heads of government was another important situation to set and get the city ready for the event: that's when Renzo Piano designed the glass Bubble, one of his first constructions in the Old Port placed close to the Acquarium. Thanks to a sophisticated "system of sails" this tropical environment is protected from the direct irradiation of the sun. Inside this Bubble there are equatorial animals such iguanas, butterflies, birds.

Figure 3.- 4.

Renzo Piano's Bubble and Bigo

Yet, the real re-definition of the image of Genoa passed through the 2004 European Capital of Culture nominee along with Lille in France. Also the Liverpool example (2008 Capital of Culture) reflects these considerations. The European Capital of Culture is a city designated by the European Union for a period of one year during which it is given a chance to showcase its cultural life and cultural development. A number of European cities have used the City of Culture year to transform their cultural base and, in doing so, the way in which they are viewed internationally. This title acts as a catalyst and trigger for the branding of a city.

Since ever Genoa has had strong commercial and political ties with the rest of Europe through the sea and since then Genoa has remained, above all indeed, a sea city. That's why the main

interventions have been made on the water front and on the harbour: the main theme of 2004 international event was "the voyage", focusing on the spreading and merging of cultures through the act of travelling. Structural interventions have come along, by focusing on the improvement of the cultural proposal, settling a better museum system, restoring some ancient buildings and heritage, and raising the environment quality. In a word: embracing the city on all its facets. Genoa succeeded in combining together modern and original elements with its past spirit: Piano's constructions go along the city centre narrow streets called *carruggi* flanked by tall and old buildings: among the others, an example of it is the Piano's *Bigo*, an ancient dialect word to say navy crane, consisting in a spider-legged elevator that gives a breathtaking view: this huge permanent structure reminds of a ship pole towers over a public square that has turned out to be a new meeting point for the city at the waterfront.

Along with these actions towards the enhancement of arts and culture, what has always been taken into consideration is the amusement aspect, which is a real element of attraction and belongs to the big events' appeal (Gastaldi, 2003).

In relation to City Branding approach and techniques, the Genoa 2004 campaign won the Grand Prix Pubblicità Italia as the best public communication campaign for the year and the Globe Award for the Best New Tourism project Worldwide, yearly assigned by the British Guild of Travel Writers.

Venice: Renewing old Traditions

A city as Venice benefits from its being both a centre of cultural production and a centre of arts taste, both of which generate extensive economic reward.

Yet, in spite of its strong identity linked to the past, of its strategic position between Eastern and Western trade, of being packed with tourist all year long, Venice felt the need to re-create and re-new its image and its patterns, for example by focusing on former productive areas, from their abandoned condition to a contemporary and aesthetic re-use, such as Marghera (Edensort, 2005).

During the last 300 years, many changes have taken place to transform the original structure and use of the city. Being an historical crossroad of cultures and a bridge between many civilizations and old traditions, La Serenissima has urban elements so peculiar to build up a precise identity and sense of place: the Strategic Plan envisages Venice as a Metropolitan City, a modern, competitive and dynamic city characterized by quality, work, culture according to the idea of social sustainability and political cohesion. That's how some cities turn out to be multi-vocational, both because of their actual and historical nature and of strategic areas to be implemented. Strategies of

economic and territorial development need to grasp the idea of a multi-centred city: a city made and linked not by hierarchical relations but synergetic ones, each with a specific role, so that even the spaces which are peripheral today have their own connotation and can develop a sense of identity and belonging among the citizens.

"Venezia 2004-2014" articulates in Structural Conditions and Strategic Lines to activate many precise Policies and defined Actions: as an international city, it intends to increase and enhance tourism and culture, higher education, research and development, logistics, service supply. This is a vast field of action that demands an integrated approach. The city should be considered as a space in which environmental and social networks interact most closely, from a perspective in which the sustainability of development initiatives must be tackled by taking into account all aspects, combining the environment, society and the economy (Houghton and Counsell, 2004).

Being a city built upon water and canals, Venice is known for its charm linked its cultural strong and deeply rooted traditions, such as the Carnival, which is a real expression of the spirit of the city. Venice Carnival is actually a international brand on its own but in 2008 the Carnival was renewed and thus called "Sensation": it was planned to divide the city in 6 districts each of them referring to a sense (smell, touch, taste, sight, hearing, mind and imagination).

Figure 5.

Performance staged during the Sensation Carnival

Venice felt the need of renewing a traditional institution as the Carnival by reading it in a different way. Cultural products have to contain elements of attraction able to fascinate and involve any time differently. That's why the city felt the need to strengthen deep relations with the surrounding contemporary world and with the people who make use of them. Another event conceived by the Venezia Marketing ed Eventi artistic director Marco Balich, who lead the Sensation Carnival was

Love 2008, the "collective kiss" on new year eve: without any distinction of age, sex, nationality a lot of people kissed each other to launch and affirm the night and that place as the most romantic city of the world.

Sometimes, as a paradox, a big heritage is a limit to move on and a burden to carry. It's therefore important to be able to re-invent its own identity, by looking carefully into the city resource to re-new a "stiff" image "only" related to the past, taking advantage of events or situations that may be used as a trigger to start a regeneration process basing on Strategic Plan's lines and axes (Trigilia, 2005).

Promotion and tourism attraction has to coincide with improvements of the inhabitants' living conditions, both on environmental and social levels quality: that's another factor to compete with other Italian and foreign cities in their ability to attract new businesses, new training centres, or new tourist flows. The type of planning required means simultaneously taking into account different points of view within a global vision. The Strategic Plan attempts to respect these needs and translate them into feasible and coherent proposals, Place Marketing and City Branding cope with identity and image - (re) definition.

Piacenza: a good case of a small city

In spite of being more marginal and smaller than the other Italian cities taken into consideration, as a "minor" city Piacenza can be a clear evidence of good results obtained by Strategic Planning (now at its second edition) and a targeted communication campaign.

The Piacenza Strategic Plan started up in October 2000 with the convocation of the General States which included all the local actors, according to a bottom-up approach, in order to define program declarations and present projects. The Strategic Committee gathered the material resulting from the General States and organized it in a list of project lines subdivided into four strategic areas (Human Resources and Culture, Infrastructures and Networks, Integrated Development Resources, Collective and Social Services) together with their respective strategic goals. After an intense and enthusiastic one-year working with the different local actors, and once defined the strategic document, the first difficulties occurred in the second phase that provided the single projects to get into the feasibility phase, as well as a stop due also to the administrative elections that changed the political colour of the city government (June 2002), which is often an obstacle to proceed with the implementation of the Plan. The first outcomes from the Piacenza experience show that the Strategic Plan has above all been able to increase Piacenza visibility both in regional and national contexts: in 2003, the Agreement called "Patto per Piacenza" was awarded with an official

acknowledgment as a best practice in the Forum for the Public Administration. In 2004, a similar appreciation was granted to the Territorial Marketing Plan for the provincial territory, which was worked out by one of the working teams.

In May 2005, the new phase started and led to the 2nd edition of the Strategic Plan named "Piacenza 2020". Since May 2005, Province, Commune and Chamber of Commerce together have expressed their will to re-launch the Strategic Plan by overturning the arrangement of the first Plan: the new challenge was to try and imagine the whole provincial territory in a middle-long term perspective, and build a reference framework pointing out the vocations to assign to the territory for the next 20 years. In such a way, decisions would be more coherent and systematic. To this purpose, it was necessary to open another phase in order to listen to and talk with the local community. An investigation, too, on the high school students was carried out in Piacenza in order to point out needs, trends, and ideas for the future of the city. Focus groups with students and teachers were organized so as to give them voice, too.

Figure 6. – 7.

A Strategic Plan meeting and a Strategic meeting with the Youth section

The vision arising from the Strategic Document undersigned in June of 2006 focuses on two keywords: the former strategic issue results from the territorial choices making Piacenza both a sustainable community (territory of the quality of life) and an open community (territory of welcoming); the latter results from the strategic goal making Piacenza both a knowledge community (territory of learning) and a competitive production system (territory of enterprise) in a middle-long term view. The innovations of the Piacenza Strategic Plan, 2nd Edition concern both content and method as it focuses mainly on the experience of Learning by Planning and Learning by Evaluating and on the will of involving youth and schools in such a participative process of decision-making. The Strategic Plan succeeds in changing the social context not only through a fast implementation of the projects and their financing, but also thanks to an precise strategic direction

of the plan: in fact the Strategic Plan represents for both private operators and investors, a clear indication of the territorial choices as to the economic priority sectors to be supported and to the initiatives fostering investments and activities. From this point of view, the impact of the strategic plan is not only to be measured by the direct outputs of the projects but it can also influence the long term outcomes as to territorial culture and identity and thus it turns out to be an excellent tool of territorial marketing for also external users (Ciciotti and Rizzi, 2005).

Different pay-offs were therefore chosen and communicated to express and communicate Piacenza's identity: beautiful Piacenza to taste (*Piacenza bella da gustare*), beautiful Piacenza to live (*Piacenza bella da vivere*), beautiful Piacenza to discover (*Piacenza bella da scoprire*), city of Denomination of Origin (*Piacenza città D.O.C.*), term usually applied to high quality local food and wine.

Figure 8.

Piacenza's pay offs

A natural evolution has consisted in Piacenza's advertisement campaign which was able to attract tourists, by focusing on precise aspects defining its local products such as food and wine, its good quality and standards of living, its arts and culture heritage.

Being marginal to Milan, which could have considered as a weakness, turned actually out to be a point of strength and a good alternative to big cities' traffic and chaos: Piacenza Strategic Plan and Place Marketing actions along with a precise and targeted advertisement and communication campaign good results can be obtained even in minor sites (Baker, 2007).

From the events point of view, Piacenza doesn't really follow the pattern set in introduction, even though the city has hosted important events (*Carovane, GeoFest, Festival della Teologia, Festival del Diritto, Le Fabbriche della Felicità*) but not as relevant as to have an international weight.

A comparison on Tourism and Foreign Direct Investment

In order to analyse the effects of place marketing and city branding's policies, some elements are taken into consideration, such as population growth and attraction of new residents, tourists and visitors, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Here follows a comparison among the four Italian cases according to tourism arrival and overnight stays in the last five years:

Arrivals	Genoa	Turin	Piacenza	Venice
2000	1097689	1011486	112571	6070356
2001	1064169	1037740	163473	6225752
2002	1112710	1050047	176868	6015634
2003	1122861	1161924	178238	6022374
2004	1238740	1209786	192495	6281113
2005	1173277	1584614	210072	6626108
2006	1233289	1436657	232990	7081495
Media Arrivi	1148962	1213179	180958	6331833
Var.% 2000-06	12,4	42,0	107,0	16,7
Overnight stays	Genoa	Turin	Piacenza	Venice
2000	3157134	3071864	324367	28988801
2001	3204825	3346680	404053	30394654
2002	3212551	3320722	454347	29326115
2003	3168784	3561319	531933	29038119
2004	3306076	3938875	578127	28945641
2005	3147043	4784399	596722	30275185
2006	3321438	5070179	574514	32025961
Media Presenze	3216836	3870577	494866	29856354
Var.% 2000-06	5,2	65,1	77,1	10,5

Source: Istat, 2008

Each city shows different ability of attraction: from Venice with its 6 million of arrivals every year (30 million overnight stays) to Piacenza with its 181 thousand of arrivals (494 overnight stays), Turin and Genoa are placed in the middle: the first with 1 million 200 thousand arrivals and the latter with 1 million e 100 thousands arrivals as average in the period 2000-2006.

As a matter of fact, the characteristics of the four cities are extremely different from historic, artistic, natural and cultural points of view as well as for fame. Yet, it's interesting to notice the Piacenza and Turin's extremely positive flux trends: Piacenza has just started its tourism promotion policies and Turin has taken advantage of its good campaigns planned during the Olympics Games.

Another way to analyse the policies' effects concerns the attraction of foreign investments: Turin turns out to be the most attractive city out of the four, whereas Piacenza and Venice result pretty weak:

2006	Population	Arrival per inhabitant	IDE (thousands €)	IDE per 100 inhabitant
Genova	875.732	141	1028244	117
Piacenza	273.689	85	22873	8
Torino	2.236.941	64	13892644	621
Venezia	829.418	854	117220	14

Source: Istat, 2008

By comparing the data about tourists and FDI attraction with the other Italian provinces (103 on the whole), some "specializations" refer namely to Turin and Venice. On one hand, Turin, just after Milan – the main Italian economic attractor at the international level – is able to attract foreign firms and capitals. On the other hand, Venice attracts many tourists because of its history and famous charm: its position comes just after two cities well-known for being winter (Bolzano) seaside (Rimini) destinations. Piacenza is on the average with the other provinces, whereas Genoa shows good tourism and investments performances:

Figure 9.

FDI and tourists arrivals
(2006 values weighted by population)
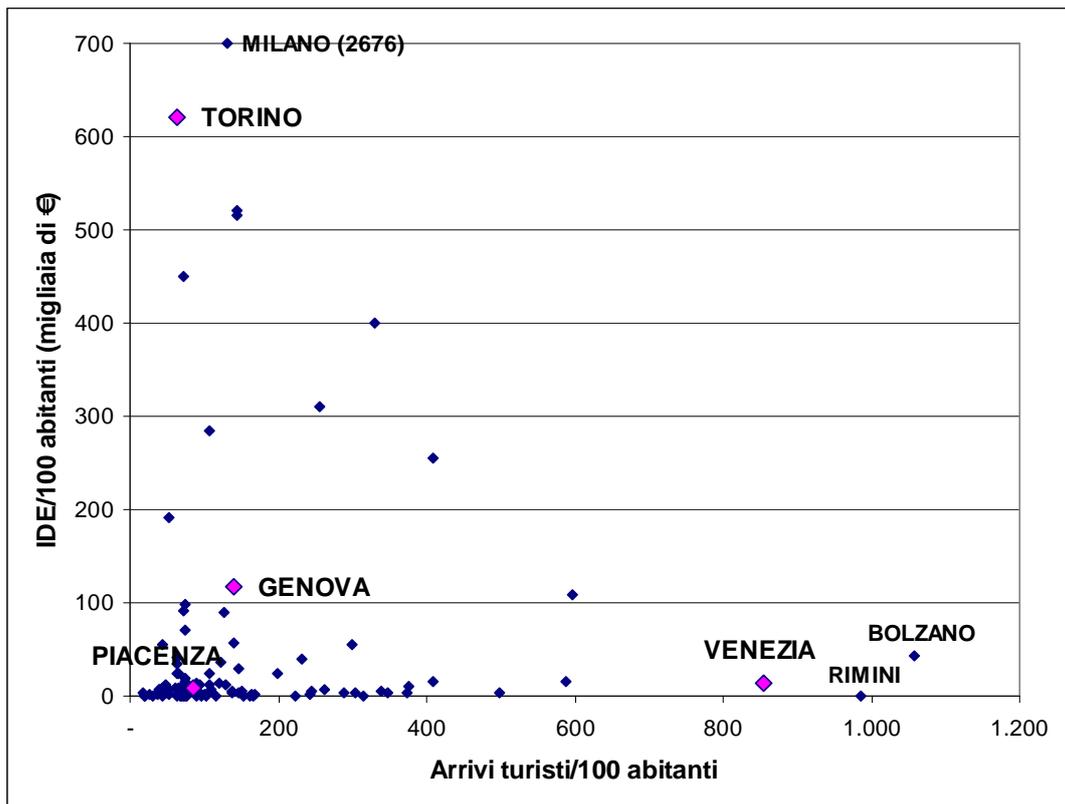
CONCLUSIONS

In Italy the first strategic planning attempts came out at least two decades later then the best foreign experiences in Europe (such as Barcelona, Lille, Bilbao, Lion) and North America, where the Strategic Urban Planning was also known as Urban Renewal Projects and the city of San Francisco constitutes of the first who carried out its process between 1982 and 1984.

In order to fight the danger of a copycat reproduction and lacking of identity, Strategic Plans, Place Marketing and City Branding have to deal with projects with a strong identity. The work starts with a diagnosis of the city's socio-economic, urban and environmental situation. Then, Institutions and Administrations, operators, associations and local population develop hypotheses on medium-term goals and priorities according to its points of strength and weakness, by coordinating public and private efforts, channeling energies, adapting to peculiar circumstances and improving the living conditions of the citizens affected. Once the Plan is drawn, it is not ended, rather it requires a steady monitoring and controlling action to be in harmony with an overall vision of the city (Borelli, 2005). Big events as triggers for development and re-shaping of the city image need to be included in a well-grounded and shared process, otherwise limits and costs are difficult to manage for the local community and administration. This process requires indeed a steady refinement, a strong legacy planning and a further review in order to keep on identifying any best action to make a city a good place to come and live in.

Any city willing to position in such a contemporary world should re-examining its own development policy goals and frameworks in order to make the best choice, solve its problems, at the same time recognizing its own values and enhancing its potentialities. Some places become meaningful sites of social and economic interaction, nodes of creative exchange and dissemination of innovative ideas thanks to the right process of development (Amin and Thrift, 2002). In this ever-shifting post-manufacturing era, economies are driven by ideas, information, communication, skilled human capital, creativity, beauty: places are the scenes where all this process can be done and shown (Currid, 2007; Bauman, 2000). These exchanges go so far that cities have to be able to listen to and look at the rest of the world and especially they need to have the ability to continue to reconfigure and reinvent themselves keeping the best from their past. What resist the passing of time are the intangible and immaterial elements that build an identity and its image (mikunda, 2004; Maorgan and Pritchard, 2007).

In Italy, where arts embed and surround everything, cities are asked to be constantly able to keep the past heritage and to produce a renewed aesthetic consent. Complex and nuanced symbolic aspects are thus reviewed and re-valued, by generating more and more priceless value, starting idea

sharing and establishing interdependent people relationships and collaborations across different disciplines, *milieux*, fields and subjects as the Strategic Plan initiates. What is extremely important by the strategic planning lesson is the participative approach and the involvement of public and private actors, associations, citizenship and youth to build a shared image of the city they all live in and communicate its outside in the best way for a common and mutual interest. In spite of internet and virtual connections, urban spaces remain the best place where people can meet and discuss, share ideas and face opinions: that's the role of a city since ever.

Cities are more important than ever to the economic performance of nations as engines of competitiveness based on knowledge and business/social networks. New opportunities and paths for success are emerging and cities have more choices to differentiate. The crucial aspect to be competitive could be successfully achieved through the combination of strategic planning, place marketing and city branding. These considerations and findings, which are still to be widened and investigated, could represent interesting and useful implications for city managers, policy-makers both at local (city council) and national levels, as well as international recognition and examples to follow. City are the scene where good changes and exchanges are possible, according to the nowadays need to reconfigure and reinvent themselves keeping the best from the past but looking at the future.

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