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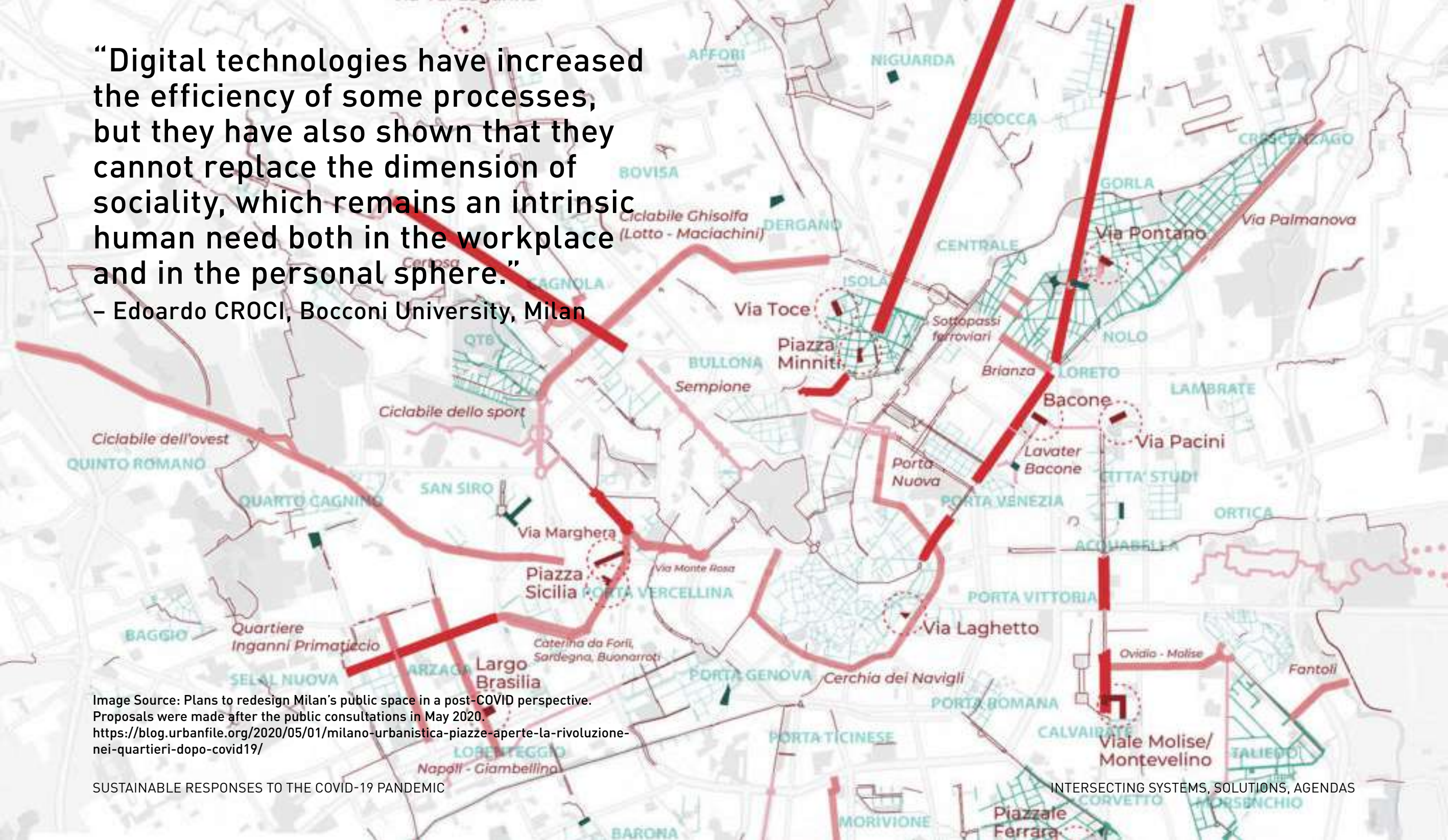


Image Source: Plans to redesign Milan's public space in a post-COVID perspective. Proposals were made after the public consultations in May 2020. <https://blog.urbanfile.org/2020/05/01/milano-urbanistica-piazze-aperte-la-rivoluzione-nei-quartieri-dopo-covid19/>



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A participatory process to redefine the Milan City approach towards sustainable development in a pandemic context

The Mayor of Milan initiated a public consultation to define a strategic approach to redefine policies and measures to relaunch the urban economy, taking into account environmental and social priorities, in a pandemic and post pandemic context. At this purpose seven leading independent institutions were appointed, under the “Fare Milano” project run by a public agency (Milano and partners) owned by the Milan Municipality and the Milan Chamber of Commerce to involve key stakeholders in seven strategic areas. Bocconi University, through its research center GREEN was in charge of the Environmental Transition topic.

In October 2020 four stakeholder consultation sessions were organized at Bocconi premises under the coordination of my research team, on the following topics: 1. Energy Transition, 2 Circular Economy, 3 Digital Innovation, 4 Livable city for all. Forty one top representatives of industry,

academia and NGOs participated, providing inputs to guide the transition.

Overall, the pandemic crisis has put in evidence that is no longer possible to postpone the resolution of pre-existing critical issues and delays, and at the same time has provided evidence of the urgency of changes and innovations. This has imposed a process of acceleration of public and private choices, to which Milan has been able to respond in a flexible and effective way. The persistence of the crisis, however, requires the construction of a strategy of integrated responses also in the medium-long term, which combines environmental quality, economic recovery and social dynamism. A return to the status quo is neither possible nor desirable, but the opportunity for a transition that is based on the attractiveness and inclusiveness of the city must be seized. At the same time, it is necessary to evaluate and manage risks of various kinds (environmental, health, technological, etc.) in order to prevent their harmful impacts and support the transformations of the economic and social fabric.

In this context, digital technologies have increased the efficiency of some processes, but they have also shown that they cannot completely replace the dimension of sociality, which remains an intrinsic human need both in the workplace and in the personal sphere. The vision of the Milan Smart City can combine digital and social innovation by enhancing their respective strengths, to improve the

functioning of the city, redefine and redesign services, create new social centers and communities and redefine new governance and business models, able to maintain the international attractiveness of Milan.

Reports of consultation are here condensed in the following thesis which emerged as transversal to the four sessions:

- Innovate the governance model of the city through the definition of a medium-long term municipal strategic plan
- Reorganize and rethink the districts of Milan as places of socialization, innovation and sustainability
- Plan public policies in an integrated way and at multiple scales
- Create a digital ecosystem and common standards to share data
- Monitor and report the impacts of the measures adopted
- Rethink the relationship between public spaces, the built environment, the mobility system and energy, water, and ICT networks
- Differentiate times of the city in the workplace and school
- Promote the energy transition and reduce the ecological divide
- Make Milan an innovation center for the circular economy and the bioeconomy
- Complete the environmental transition with the elimination of private traffic within the external ring road and the elimination of fossil fuels from heating systems
- Pursue a great symbolic project

ANNEX

1. Innovate the governance model of the city through the definition of a medium-long term municipal strategic plan, centered on environmental transition as an element capable of combining an increase in environmental and social resilience, improvement of the quality of the environment and reduction of negative externalities, increasing healthiness, safety and urban livability. In this context the contribution of private entities, which can be facilitated by innovative forms of partnership and bureaucratic simplification, can be relevant in order to activate investments, additional to the ones funded by the public administration.
2. Reorganize and rethink the districts of Milan as places of socialization, innovation and sustainability: the neighborhoods of Milan should offer decentralized services in a 15 minutes range, to allow citizens to optimize travel, while at the same time rediscovering a sense of community.
3. Plan public policies in an integrated way and at multiple scales (district, municipality, metropolitan city, etc.), up to considering the urbanized area of regional dimension (which even goes beyond regional administrative borders). In this sense, the concept of urban periphery must be overcome and the provision of services and relations between neighborhoods must be redefined, in order to guarantee widespread quality of environment.
4. Create a digital ecosystem and common standards to share data and increase collaboration between different entities: data platforms fed by a variety of actors should interact and put in connection to stimulate new uses and develop new services, for the benefit of both the Public Administration and citizens. Federated data platforms, also based on the experience of the international EXPO 2015, can support value-added services through apps. Interoperability between systems is a prerequisite at this purpose. This path can lead, in addition to generating new business opportunities also for start-ups, to promote social innovation and reduce the digital divide.

5. Monitor and report the impacts of the measures adopted, in order to make citizens aware of the results of innovation processes, through the definition of clear indicators and communication tools, digital and accessible in real time. Information such as the crowding of public spaces and public transport, the increase in walking, cycling and sharing, the use of digital administration tools can be encouraged through the socialization of knowledge.

6. Rethink the relationship between public spaces, the built environment, the mobility system and energy, water, and ICT networks. The lockdown periods required to review the characteristics of the work and domestic environments, in order to increase both the energy performance (reduction of consumption and micro-generation), and the level of healthiness and comfort, starting from schools and public buildings. The redesign of the built environment also recalls the theme of the re-appropriation of collective and public space, facilitated by tactical urban planning processes.

7. Differentiate times of the city in the workplace and school, to reduce crowding in public transport and traffic congestion. The spread of smart working in recent months has shown how it is possible to adopt flexible working hours, which allow to maintain productivity by reconciling work and personal needs. This “desynchronization” should go hand in hand with a lengthening of city times, with an extension of the hours of basic services and shops.

8. Promote the energy transition and reduce the ecological divide. Energy efficiency of the building stock, the use of renewable sources, associated with storage systems, widespread micro-generation and collective self-consumption - at a condominium and district scale -, together with electrification, represent crucial factors for increasing the quality of air. Electrification also makes it possible to give greater impetus to the spread and use of electric means of transport, which are more efficient and have less impact in terms of emissions. District heating networks can contribute to the reduction of emissions and support the electrification process,

ensuring grid stability and reducing emissions. However, energy requalification and clean means transport are not yet accessible to everyone, often reducing the effectiveness of support policies. In order to make the energy transition more equitable, it is necessary to support the weakest social categories, through refurbishment interventions aimed at public residential complexes and collective services, such as schools, sports facilities, etc.

9. Make Milan an innovation center for the circular economy and the bio-economy. Reuse, recycling and sharing, applied to different supply chains, can become a new paradigm of value generation in the name of sustainability. Milan could become a new innovation hub in this area, enhancing the work of research institutes and universities and encouraging start-ups to attract new investments and businesses. The sharing of spaces, services and tools, assuring sanitization, represents a relevant trend. The digitization and automation of processes offer the availability of data and information which, if properly socialized, can lead to optimization in the use of resources and new applications. It is necessary to upgrade the infrastructure, use tariff and tax levers to encourage virtuous behaviors, train operators and inform citizens to accompany this process. Green procurement rules of the Public Administration can play an important role in this sense. In perspective, the Public Administration could offer guarantee and qualification functions for suppliers and activate One Stop Shops that offer information, training and services to citizens and the business.

10. Complete the environmental transition with the elimination of private traffic within the external ring road and the elimination of fossil fuels from heating systems: progressively Milan mobility should entirely rely on soft mobility and public transport. Air pollution is one of the major problems affecting the city of Milan and a reduction, towards total elimination of private vehicles, is necessary in order to make improvements in that direction. Together with the reduction of fossil fueled vehicles, the elimination of fossil fueled heaters is a fundamental step towards improving the air quality of the city of Milan. The transition to alternative sources for urban heating must therefore be accelerated.

11. Define a green sectoral plan: Nature-based solutions can play an important role in the redevelopment of suburbs and abandoned areas. The creation of new green infrastructures cannot depend almost exclusively on land development taxes and the management and maintenance of green spaces has to be performed professionally. The Municipality should adopt a sectoral plan for green infrastructures. Projects such as “Forestami”, envisioning planting 3 million trees, and “green rays”, envisioning greened cycle lanes from the city center to the outskirts, can insert greenery into a wider urban design and perform relevant environmental functions. The main parks should be managed by park managers with functions of protection and enhancement of the natural capital. Green, pedestrian, and open spaces also constitutes important social places in a pandemic phase.

12. Pursue a great symbolic project. Milan’s environmental transition should make use of one or more major symbolic projects that bring together public and private energies towards a common purpose (also based on the EXPO experience). The reopening of the “Navigli” channels could represent this transition, affecting at the same time the water, mobility and energy systems. The convinced participation of a variety of stakeholders is necessary to develop such ambitious processes.