

Introduction

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Year 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of one of the most consequential junctions of Italian urban planning and – not too ventured to say – of the entire postwar Italian political and economical history. Fifty years before, Fiorentino Sullo – a Christian Democrat Minister of Public Works in the 4th Fanfani Government (1962), and in the succeeding Leone Government (1963) – was proposing a planning reform to radically reshape land-use regime, and to overturn the balance between the private ownership of land and the public government of territory.

Besides prescribing a more stringent connection between economic and spatial planning, the essential and the most controversial element of the proposal was the introduction of a particular mechanism of land-value capture through a substantial separation of the ownership of land from the building rights on it. Schematically saying, the bill proposed by Fiorentino Sullo was introducing a procedure through which municipality would expropriate all the land that planning provisions would successively cast as building zone (along with the already developed land with uses sensibly discordant with those planning prescriptions). After the expropriation, according to the Sullo bill, municipality would have to provide for primary urban infrastructure and would then have to lease the land for building through a public auction.

For undeveloped land outside building zones before the adoption of a new masterplan, the compensation would

have been based on the agricultural land value; for undeveloped land within already zoned areas, the compensation would have been based on the values of the newly developed land nearby, increased by the “differential position rent” up to a maximum threshold determined by a purposely constituted ministerial committee; finally, for developed land, the compensation would have amounted to the land market value. All in all, and besides many technical and also highly relevant details, Sullo’s reform proposal was essentially introducing a comprehensive scheme for the systematic public capture of urban land rent.

It wasn’t meant destined to be. After a momentous opposition of a constellation of political and economic forces, followed by the “repudiation” of the reform by the secretariat of the relative-majority Christian Democracy Party and by a press campaign bordering defamation against Fiorentino Sullo, the bill never landed on the floor of the Italian Parliament.

The “Sullo affair” has left deep scars and has profoundly marked what has become – and what could have become – the urban and territorial planning in Italy.

It did not seem to us an anniversary to evoke quaint memories, but rather an occasion to reflect upon the past, and to think about the future. The questions of urban rent, of the modes of property and land uses, of the relationship between private ownership and the public government of territory remain current and cardinal issues when debating the prospects of new planning law in Italy, and what might be a reasonable subdivision of planning responsibilities among different tiers of public administration. Even if, together with these questions, we need to take into account the evolving discipline of landscape, the environmental questions, the management of the commons, the urban regeneration, and the local fiscal systems and policies.

For all these reasons, the Inter-university Research Centre for Analysis of Territory (*Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerca per L'analisi del Territorio, CRLAT*) and the Department of Architecture, Design and Urbanism (*Dipartimento di Architettura Design e Urbanistica, DADU*) of the University of Sassari have invited urban planners, historians, geographers and legal scholars on 19-20 September 2013 to a conference for two days of reflection and debate.

From that meeting, this special issue wants to offer to the international readership a few contributions which have been developed, extended and adapted for *Plurimondi* journal after the conference.