

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AND CONSENSUS BUILDING IN ITALY. THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON “GRONDA DI PONENTE” IN GENOA

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ABSTRACT

A central issue for the feasibility of large infrastructures in Italy concerns innovation in consultation procedures which, at present, are ineffective in guaranteeing the quality, fairness and feasibility of projects. In this framework, the paper gives a synthetic review of institutional consultation procedures for the large infrastructure projects in Italy, highlighting the possibilities and the limits of national and regional procedures. Moving in this direction, the paper presents the innovative aspects and non solved problems of a first case, in Italy, of public debate on new highway, held in Genoa in 2009, based on French procedure of *Débat Public*. The Genoa Public Debate represents a non-institutionalized deliberative process in which some shared principles may be accompanied by relative openness to the priorities of the issues to be dealt with to the sources of technical knowledge, necessary for the activation of it and to the actors involved. The Genoa Public Debate offers many suggestions on some unresolved problems that affect the political feasibility of infrastructure in Italy, particularly as concerns the management of conflicts and, then, the importance of structured consultation procedures that are repeatable, flexible and able to offer transparency and right of access to the different parties involved when the projects are being defined. The legal dispositions must be interpreted not only as a “solution” for consensus building around an infrastructure project and for reducing conflicts, but also as an opportunity for improving the quality of the infrastructure project itself.

Keywords : Public debate, Deliberative procedures, Large infrastructures projects, Citizens' involvement

1. THE CONSULTATION PROCEDURES FOR LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN ITALY

A central issue for the feasibility of large infrastructures in Italy concerns innovation in consultation procedures which, at present, are ineffective in guaranteeing the quality, fairness and feasibility of projects.

The search for structured consultation procedures that are repeatable, flexible and able to offer transparency and right of access to the different parties involved when the projects are being defined, must be interpreted not only as a “solution” for consensus building around an infrastructure project and for reducing conflicts, but also as an opportunity for improving the quality of the infrastructure project itself.

The need to rethink institutional consultation procedures results from consideration on the utility of institutionalising¹ forms of public debate on infrastructure projects that are being planned and which must be regulated to guarantee the legitimacy, transparency and participation of parties involved.

In Italy, institutional procedures and consultation processes for large infrastructure projects refer to the contents of the “Legge Obiettivo”.

The “Legge Obiettivo” (national law n. 431/2001), as part of an institutional reform of decision-making process for large infrastructure projects is aimed at guaranteeing the feasibility of programmed strategic infrastructures with simplification of the procedures that increase the power of the national government over that of local government. This has also meant shifting the equilibrium of planning power in favour of the national authority. The decision-making process for large infrastructure projects has thus moved from a decentralized legal context to a more centralized one.

The limits of this law are evident right now with the introduction of a new central and top-down structure in the decision-making procedures. The law has wiped out discussion at local governmental level and also with local communities, thus causing contrary effects to those of its intended goals.

The law has also “strengthened and consolidated the rhetoric of the large project as a value in itself, therefore it is not negotiable” (Ponti, 2007), with important consequences on justification tools and legitimization of the project which would exclude ex-ante comparative evaluations on different technical solutions, since in this case the utility of evaluation is predetermined and coincides with its usability in the process of legitimization.

The evaluations are oriented towards a process of presumptive legitimization of the project, often assigned to a technical team which is essentially responsible for the analysis of economic and technical feasibility of the infrastructure and which often the same staff that proposed the project.

This leads to enhance the assertive nature, rather than evaluative nature of the analysis, which often takes only formal charge of alternatives and does not follow on from a comparison with local communities, which is recognized as necessary by the same players who make, plan and manage large projects, because “it saves time and money”.

If the “Legge Obiettivo” is a “naive solution destined to fail”, some limits are also found in negotiation processes relative to single projects, thus reducing the consensus process to the “for and against discussion position” on the definition of solutions.

These have often focused on incremental interventions, “juxtaposed” against the project and partitioned between various municipalities, with a not fully transparent distribution.

These practices often imply additional interventions and costs are incurred by various municipalities involved, have the objective of improving the acceptability of the large infrastructure at local level, and point out the limits of direct negotiations that are influenced

¹ That is to consolidate them within routine governance processes and to raise them to a further level of broadly shared cultural values and standards.

by private interests, and the inherent difficulty in including the clearing devices in a territorial framework capable of dealing with negative externalities that a large project may produce for the local landscapes.

In these cases, another major issue is that of transparency in the involvement process of different stakeholders, that often have a composite nature, which must necessarily be considered if we are to understand the causes of disputes and re-construct a shared process.

Given Italian cases, for example the Lyon-Turin HSR in Val di Susa, show the divided nature of the coalitions that form around a large infrastructure project, which is unlikely to become "the project of all concerned", but rather can aspire to become a part of the project, accepted by others.

These conditions point out the need for critical reflection on the governance of infrastructure in Italy as well as the need to address the problems that affect the political feasibility of infrastructure projects, including:

- a decision making process in which the new infrastructure is interpreted as a strategic tool in itself, therefore not negotiable, for which the ex-ante evaluations about the mobility demand and the territorial impact, or the congruence with strategic territorial programs, play a minor part;
- less importance of the ex-ante evaluations, in comparison with the alternative hypotheses which are also useful for knowing the distribution of the negative and positive externalities created by the infrastructure project and which clearly define devices and recover all the surplus values and reach out to all the positive externalities created by public investments;
- the weakness of direct communication among a plurality of institutional and non-institutional payers involved in all different steps of the project (idea, design, assessment and management), putting to the test the available tools and procedures;
- the gap between the institutional view of the relationship, among all the institutions which have competency in planning and designing the infrastructures, and real interconnection of skills and links between national institutions, planners, infrastructure designers, technical authorities and local communities;
- complexity in administrative procedures that stretch the time of design and construction of the infrastructures, combined to excessive variability of regulatory systems and also to fragmented clusters of objectives.

In this context, the need to rethink the consultation procedures available, as well as the procedures for structured involvement of different actors in the preliminary steps of the project, has led some regions, such as Liguria and Tuscany, to propose, with regional laws, consultation procedures to enable effective integration of pre-assessment on the infrastructure project, not only from the local authorities but also from different stakeholders (Lewanski, 2007; Pucci, 2008).

The way in which the institutionalisation of procedures for planning major infrastructures has been addressed in some Italian regional laws (as for example in Tuscany and Liguria), thus modifying the national institutional framework for consensus building in infrastructure

projects, represents an interesting perspective of the large infrastructures feasibility problem in Italy.

Although, characterized by common purposes such as the rules for the guarantee of transparency and participation in complex processes of transformation of the territory, these initiatives have nonetheless substantial differences.

The Liguria Region (with the law 39/2007) has in fact promoted a tool for an integrated strategic programme coordinated by the region " with the local authorities concerned and with contracting of the works, their implementation, with the upgrading of relative territorial contexts by ensuring the sustainability of choices and offsetting any inconvenience by solving the problems of local communities involved "(Article 3).

The Tuscany Region with the Regional Law "Regulations on the promotion of participation in the formulation of regional and local policies " (n. 69, December 27, 2007) proposes a new institution of participation as an ordinary form of government (Article 1), namely:

- Public regional debate (Chapter II, Art. 7-10) on large transformation projects and public works of significant environmental and social impact for the life of the whole regional based on community which is divided on detailed rules, lasts for six months and is organized and conducted "under the responsibility of a third monocratic" independent and neutral subject, such as the Regional Authority for Participation;
- Strategic actions to support local processes of participation which are promoted both by public institutions that citizens and other players who may propose a participatory process on a specific object and which may last up to six months, indicating methods and tools and ensure inclusiveness;
- The strengthening of participation, in given instances, in regional policies and planning procedures in the region of Tuscany.

The innovations of the Act regard not only new special procedures for public debate on important regional projects with remarkable preliminary draft socio-territorial impacts, but more generally, a re-organization of inter-governmental and intersectorial decision-making system with reference to the role assigned to the consultation process whose requirements have to be inclusiveness, transparency, equality of access to information, and preliminary sharing of rules of debate.

In this context, the public debate for the new highway in Genoa, as the first case in Italy of a public inquiry for a large infrastructure project, can represent a non-institutionalized deliberative process in which some shared principles may be accompanied by relative openness to the priorities of the issues to be dealt with to the sources of technical knowledge necessary for the activation of it and to the actors involved. To move further in this direction of work would lead to the construction of specific path to each project, with a greater degree of transparency and legitimacy.

2. THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON “GRONDA DI PONENTE” HIGHWAY IN GENOA

The public debate on “Gronda di Ponente” Highway in Genoa was promoted in December 2008 with grass roots action by the Mayor of Genoa, in accordance with the general contractor (Autostrade per l'Italia - Aspi), in a local situation of conflict as a consequence of choice between five different layouts for new highway project.

As the consultation process was an initiative of the municipality, the role in the process of the national authorities was marginal: only ANAS, national technical and regulatory agency responsible for large infrastructure planning, has participated as an observer in the public debate, without any active role.

The Gronda di Genova motorway project was designed in 1980 to solve traffic congestion on the A10 motorway (Genova-Ventimiglia) that runs through the dense urban sprawl of Genoa. The highway - proposed by Autostrade per l'Italia and approved by Liguria region, Municipality of Genoa and Province of Genoa in 2006 – crossed the Valpolcevera area, which is a densely urbanized district, with very important industry (e.g. Ansaldo Energia) and also a densely residential area, wedged between industry, oil depots, abandoned refineries and large infrastructure.

The case study is very similar to other contested and unrealized infrastructure projects in Italy. Indeed, it is an infrastructure project:

- with various project layouts and solutions, which over the course of the years, with subsequent adaptations have sought to reduce negative impact and follow the demand of local requirements²;
- which was immediately challenged by the Valpolcevera inhabitants and by the entrepreneurs, directly affecting the project and forcing reallocation or partial interruption of production for long periods of time to the extent that work was stopped for about 8 years;
- for which the general contractor (Autostrade per l'Italia) has benefited from the power of the discretion introduced by the "Legge Obiettivo";
- which takes advantage of deregulation that applies to ordinary procedures with a simplification of process so that only the provisional project is submitted for general evaluation, and subject only to partial technical studies³.

The Gronda di Ponente case-study presents some typical anomalies of the decision-making processes for large infrastructures in Italy where, often, the difficult management of conflict influences the feasibility of infrastructures. The conflicts are linked not only to the known distributive asymmetries regarding any infrastructure in relation to irreversibility of the works and the iniquitous distribution of the costs-benefits, but also to the asymmetry in the rules between National government, Technical Agencies and Private Company (such as ANAS

² The project layouts and solutions include: “Bretella Voltri-Rivarolo”, the preliminary project under route of Polcevera river, passed in 2006 with the "Accordo di Programma" and the new layout decided later subsequent to public debate.

³ See the traffic scenarios used by Aspi as an argumentative tool for explaining the usefulness of the project in the traffic congestion solution; during the public debate scenarios were also over estimated and Genoa's growth rate was considered optimistically. See, also, the topics for the treatment and the storage of asbestos waste or the impact of the road building sites.

and ASPI in Italy) and local administrations, on the one hand, and local communities on the other. This asymmetry is made more important with the "Legge Obiettivo" (l.n. 431/2001) that, by introducing new centralized procedures in decision-making process, resets the stakeholders involvement with contrary effects on the consensus building.

The challenges to the Gronda di Ponente Project are composed of "claims of process" and "claims of contents" too.

The conflicts concern both the less inclusive way which Gronda di Ponente Project was planned by Aspi as non-negotiable requirements even within the public debate too, had as starting order the objective of discussing "which path to choose" between five pre-selected alternatives for the project and not the usefulness of new highway in terms of the effectiveness of the technical performances of new infrastructure with regard to mobility demand, as well as the land-use, social and economic impacts, linked to new highway, in an urban context increasingly subject to subtractive processes.

If the contents claims are what emerge more strongly from public challenges, because they are linked to a localized claim and directly touched by the works that loudly shout to rethinking the project, then the claims are composed of requests and needs that go beyond the over-simplified interpretations of the Nimby syndrome. They open a "black box" and reveal the inefficiencies of the decision-making process of large infrastructures which are common to the Genova case study too.

Among these we find:

- a persistent rhetoric about the infrastructure project such as "growth factor", with consequences on the role of studies and pre-assessment in design phase and in elaboration of alternative hypotheses;
- the difficulty faced by the local administration on the infrastructure system understood as a "territorial project"⁴ that deals with the role played by infrastructure in the land organization process, in local context of Genova in which the town planning scheme is under construction, except in the cases for appeal on compensatory measures required by law (Legge Obiettivo), on which are based negotiations started with the uncertain results for the community and that reproduce the fallacies of the so called "financial derivative" (Ponti, 2007);
- the anomalies in the contents and in the timing of important studies for an evaluation of the feasibility of the infrastructure project, as economic feasibility evaluations or Cost-Benefit Analysis that, as foreseen by Legge Obiettivo, is carried out on the final project with the outcome that it has lasted many years (8/10 years);
- weak regulatory authorities (Anas) who often pursue control practices that are geared more to compliance with formal procedures and powers rather than

⁴ In recent years not only engineering and economics, but also architecture and urban studies, have been dealing with the role played by infrastructures in the land organization process. Planning infrastructures and the debate on infrastructural policy and plans share the need to try out some procedures which are able to enhance the infrastructure's territorial dimension, in order to go beyond a merely technical and performance-driven approach, adopted at both the analytical and the design stage. On the widespread interest in a new infrastructural dimension focusing on territory, no satisfying operating result match: thinking about the infrastructure system as a "territorial work" (Dupuy, 1991) is not enough for producing skills and practices that go beyond the practice of "decking out" the infrastructure landscape using architecture (Smets, 2001); a new approach is needed in order to get over both a mere *ex-post* intervention for reducing the infrastructure impacts, and the idea that the lack of an integrated approach between planning and policy is due to some limited and short-sighted infrastructural policies.

identify clusters of objectives and the achievement of expected outcomes in terms of content, timing, costs.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC DEBATE

The public debate on the Gronda di Ponente Project – which took place in Genoa from February to May 2009 – was the first “*débat public*” in Italy for large infrastructure and founded on the French methodology tested by the *Commission nationale du débat public* on over forty concluded public debates in France.

From a procedural point of view and with reference to the rules of the public debate, the French model was respected. The debate comprised:

- a preparatory phase with useful information on the project;
- an information phase in which a website was set up and a timetable of meetings prepared for public presentation of the project;
- a thematic in-depth phase on relevant issues arising from the project (on issues relating to traffic and mobility, work sites, the impact on households and business, compensation measures, the study and disposal of excavated materials).

The top-down (from the advisers to the citizens), the bottom-up (from the citizens to the advisers) and the horizontal (between the citizens) communication by the web-site also was assured⁵. The workshop on traffic and mobility dealt with scenarios of mobility demand, railway and roads projects for Genoa and the economical feasibility evaluation of the Gronda di Ponente Project, in addition to technical meetings on the new hypothesis of road layouts emerging from the public debate, as well as the setting up of a “Guarantee Panel” (“tavolo delle garanzie”), with the objective of establishing a Local Observatory, following the settlement of issues relating to the new highway⁶.

On the contrary, in terms of contents, setting the basic approach of French *débat public*⁷ in the Genova case study, it was partly contradicted. The initial order of the Committee, appointed by the Mayor of Genoa and consisting of three experts supported by a technical team⁸, only included the discussion on the five alternatives for the new highway project in Valpolcevera area (fig. 1).

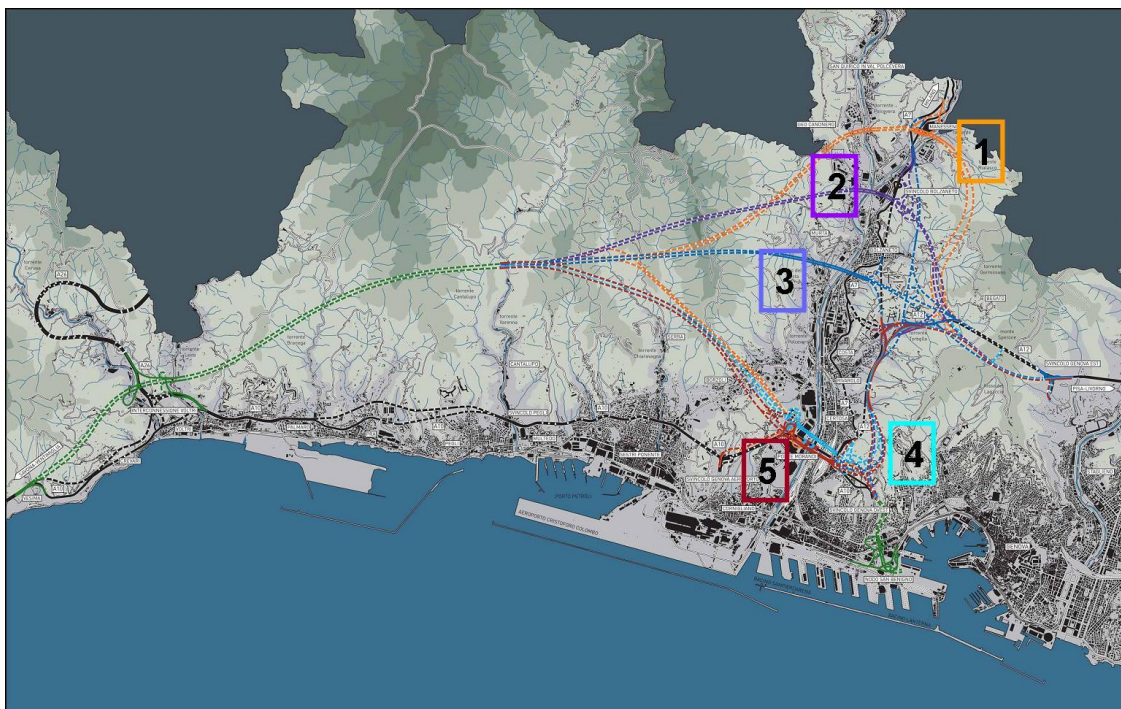
⁵ Over 52,000 contacts in three months; on average about 300 users per day have been linked to website to visit one or more pages, download documents or communicate via online forum.

⁶ Some quantitative data on the consultation process could help to illustrate the size of the effort: 6 meetings for public presentations of the technical information on the project and 7 thematic meetings; 3 workshops on traffic and mobility; technical meetings on the new hypothesis of road layouts emerging from the public debate; 45 “Quaderni degli attori” (Stakeholders papers), 29 technical experts involved in thematic meetings, 400 news published in 3 months in the local newspapers.

⁷ The French *débat public* is an open preventive public debate on a large infrastructure before projects are defined, also it envisages the event of non-realization the project, as well as change to it.

⁸ The Town Council of Genova designated Luigi Bobbio as a Chairman of the Board (expert in deliberative and participatory processes, University of Torino) as well as Andrea Mariotto (expert in participatory processes, luav), Paola Pucci (expert in mobility and infrastructure policies, Milan Politechnic) and Jean-Michel Fourniau (expert in transport policies, Inrets). The technical staff was composed by Andrea Pillon (Avventura Urbana), Gianfranco Pomatto (University of Torino), Stefano Bonabello, Laura Longoni, Monica Penco (Dipartimento of Political and Social Sciences, University of Genoa) and the staff of the Municipality of Genoa.

Fig. 1 – The five layouts for the Gronda di Ponente



During the debate, the initial order to proceed of the Board was expanded and debate also included the reasons of the infrastructure project too. In the public debate, opposing positions on the efficacy of the Gronda di Ponente Project to solving a shared problem of congestion in the Genoa roads network emerged and were compared.

If traffic congestion - the only topic with shared opinions between the different parties involved - was a recurring subject as a premise in the arguments of the subjects involved in the public debate; its non-converging solutions treatment suggested (tab. 2) promoting an in depth study, through a traffic and mobility workshop.

Tab 1 – The players involved in the public debate. Aims, tools, resources

Players	Aims	Tools	Resources
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of a transparent and open debate that clash with the “monopolies” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adjustment and flexibility in the rules; ▪ Relationships within the local community and legitimization are facilitated 	Rules of the debate
Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduction of impact of the new infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Technical authority, engagements on the implementation rules; – New solutions for the project 	Information, Technical authority, Decision-making power
Autostrade per l'Italia –ASPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support of realization of the new infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Information, availability of the partial revisions, engagements on the implementation of the project. – Territorial knowledge and relationships 	Information, Technical authority, Decision-making power
Committees against the Gronda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Radical opposition to the new infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alternative solutions, bringing out the resources and the others acquiring - Facilitating relationships with the local community and legitimization of the debate; - Information and legitimization as interlocutors 	Knowledge of the urban context, relationships and local consensus
Environmental Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of sustainable mobility, strengthening the relationships with the other players; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legitimation for the debate – Information and relationships 	Technical authority, relationships and consensus
Inhabitants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduction impacts of the new infrastructure; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of the urban context and legitimization; – Information, new solutions for the project, engagements on the implementation rules 	Knowledge of the urban context, “Political” resources
“Players in favour of the Gronda”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support for the realization of the new infrastructure; – Increase in consensus in public opinion and putting pressure on the decision-making players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preservation of relationships with the decision-making players; – Acceptance of public debate; 	Technical authority, Access to media Financial resources
Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promotion of new solution for the infrastructure project, rethinking the congestion problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical authority; – Information and visibility 	Technical authority,

Even if the workshop on traffic and mobility did not create a change in the positions, all the same it helped to focus attention on the following topics:

- What, at the beginning, were introduced by Autostrade per l'Italia as the assessments of traffic demand, later on, were redefined by Aspi in terms of “target scenarios”, hence no longer a forecast but a useful projection for testing the

transport efficiency of new infrastructure, designed in a scenario which is purely hypothetical, with relation to a strong increase in traffic;

- What, at the beginning, sounded as a growth forecast of the port business, later on was defined by the Port Authority in terms of increase in the potential capacity, indicating not so much a prediction about the future, but rather a goal to reach ;
- What, at the beginning, was considered not very clear, mostly with reference to the data sources and their treatment in traffic models, could, even if partially, become the subject of debate by the different positions.

Tab. 2 – If the congestion is the problem...the solution is not always the Gronda di Ponente Highway

The congestion	The Gronda project is	For who
It is a safety and efficiency problem of the motorway system of Genoa with negative effects on the North-West motorway networks of Italy	An infrastructure that cannot be postponed for good traffic, circulation and safety in the motorway network	Aspi
It creates problems for the functionality of the mobility and negative impact on the environmental and liveability	A necessary link in a planned scenario of re-organization of the road, railway and public transport network in Genoa;	Municipality of Genoa, Province of Genoa, Liguria region
It is a problem for the economic growth	A necessary infrastructure , given new resources for growth of the Genoese economy	Confindustria, Cciaa, Port Authority, Cgil, Cisl,
It is a problem in terms of health, standards of living and liveability	A wrong solution for an unmanaged problem (congestion).	Coordination Committees, Environmental, INU Liguria
It is a resource		Committee for peaceful decrease in population density

Through the treatment of traffic and mobility topics, a critical dimension of the project was introduced, with which the justifications about the utility of new highway and resolution of traffic congestion of the A10 motorway - supported by Aspi, Genoa Municipality, Chamber of Commerce, Port Authority, Managers of industries, trade unions such as Cgil and Cisl – are compared with alternative hypotheses and constitute not only banal proposals to move the new highway away from the Valpolcevera area, but also to rethink the transport policies in a integrated programs for a more effective mobility governance in the Genoa and Liguria regions.

4. A TESTED PROCEDURE

In Genoese case study, clear reference to the French procedure of *débat public* undoubtedly provided some advantages; such as assuring the conditions for organizing and promoting a transparent and democratic public debate around the implementation of a large public work with rights of access and accessible information to all by means of time and method for fixed debate and adaptation to situations of conflict that, on at least three occasions, conditioned the deliberative process.

Even if the public debate of Genoa is based on the French *débat public* procedure, this approach is not an institutionalised procedure in Italy and in the Liguria Region too, where the inter-institutional consultation tool such as the PRIS - *Programma regionale di intervento strategico* (Liguria Regional Law n. 39/2007) is available.

The French procedure, chosen by the Mayor of Genoa, allowed the process to be managed without preliminary agreement with the Liguria region and Province of Genoa, of which the previous Mayor of Genoa was not in favour. This non-institutionalized tool did not give restrictions to the local administration on the acquisition of the results that emerged from the public debate.

Even if the model tested in Genova was an effective tool, all the same, the lack of a legal agreement caused some problems, such as:

- debate order with only about five alternatives of the highway route, rather than public interest of the new project with the aim of resolving the congestion problems of downtown Genoa;
- the appointment of the Chairman of the Board by local administration with repercussions on the position of neutrality of the Board that the legitimization process started up;
- a very short preliminary period for the proceedings (1 month), following the requirements of local administration, that failed to address some important topics in depth (such as the relocation of inhabitants because of infrastructure works);
- the lack of involvement in the public meetings of the subjects in favour of the project and of economic players (Chamber of Commerce, trade and industrial associations), that made use of other arenas to communicate their position (advertisements in newspapers and local television).

In this context, the importance of institutionalising forms of public debate on infrastructure projects that are being planned, derives from the need not only to guarantee their legitimization and transparency and the participation of the players involved before the highway project has reached the design stage, but also to allow the possibility of repeating of the initiative, so that it not be linked only to voluntary initiative of a single administration.

Procedural innovations, even if they don't guarantee getting through anomalies, as revealed in public debates conducted in France and that we found in Genoa too⁹, all the same allow for the participative process executed on individual infrastructure and often lead to negotiated solutions which are more easily influenced by special interests.

⁹ Amongst these, an imbalance in the participation in public debate in favour of the opponents of the new infrastructure, only partially mitigated by in distance and on-line participation of positions in favour of Gronda, as well as an imbalance in the access in public debate in favour of the organized players in regard to the individual inhabitant.

5. ACQUISITIONS THAT GO BEYOND THE CHOICE OF THE ROAD LAYOUTS

Public debate has allowed:

- the spread of information, and easily accessible studies and projects on Gronda di Ponente Project made by Aspi, as well as technical evaluation by external experts, “alternative” propositions or critical positions on the contents of the formal documents which are useful to support an open and reasoned deliberative process that produces knowledge;
- the intensification of knowledge, even if in asymmetrical way, and favouring the general contractor (Aspi) which could count on the “contextual knowledge”, thus improving some route road hypotheses and searching for technical solutions that have less impact on the landscape (i.e. A7 motorway doubling, the Voltri junction, site solutions);
- the invitation of the general contractor (Aspi) to discuss on a topic traditionally of their competence, performing an unusual step for an important private company;
- “testing out” the technical justifications of the project, but also the monopoly of technical expertise in the infrastructure designs in Italy, with the support of the traffic and mobility workshop;
- encouragement of participation of citizens that from a number of associations as a means of discussion for reactive and proactive challenge¹⁰;
- the stimulation of critical aptitudes and design propositions of stakeholders that new infrastructural solutions offer, as tested by Aspi; if even in given instances they have taken joined value for the project of Gronda di Ponente (i.e. adjustment of the A7 motorway from Bolzaneto to Ponte Morandi), according to Forester (1989), they are both instrumentally productive and socially reproductive¹¹;
- the emergence of contradictions that could have shelved the debate, with contributions also from the external advisors that took part in workshops on the topic;
- the definition of guidelines for realizing a Local Observatory, following the implementation of the project.

The new project for Gronda di Ponente Highway as proposed by Aspi, following the road layout chosen by the Municipality (layout n.2 ; fig.1), is an outcome of a political decision, taken after public debate.

¹⁰ The public and thematic meetings were followed by an average of 300 people, with peaks up to 500 people; 45 Stakeholders papers was published on website.

¹¹ “Designing as making sense together” (Forester, 1989), because the notion of designing is a shared interpretative sense-making process between the participants engaged in practical conversation in their institutional setting .

6. OPEN QUESTIONS BEYOND THE CASE-STUDY

Beyond the substantial result, namely the choice of layout for the beginning of the preliminary project did not arise from the public debate; however, the public debate reached important conclusions, in an innovative way because an unusual deliberative process was implemented in that there was interaction between institutional players, citizens and environmental associations which also required the implementation of integrated mobility policies, contrasting the “great work” logic, and addressing multimodal policies with the objective of avoiding a possible traffic increase generated by the new highway.

The Genoa Public Debate offers many suggestions on some unresolved problems that affect the political feasibility of infrastructure in Italy, particularly as concerns the management of conflicts and, then, the importance of the procedures for public debates in the decision-making process for the large infrastructures as well as:

- giving the opportunity that the contested project can be really refused, or however, deeply changed through a public consultation which implies the usefulness of participatory devices to ensure the effective opportunity to influence the content, but also to ensure feasibility of the project itself;
- institutionalizing public debates, making the consensus-building around the infrastructure project easier, reducing the conflicts, and ensuring the feasibility of the infrastructure, but also affecting and improving the quality of the project;
- providing of feasibility studies and ex-ante analysis, referred also to the evaluations of alternative hypotheses for possible solutions, that may be compared and tested by a third party, well as integrated policies for the infrastructure project which can be embedded into strategic planning frameworks of land-use and mobility practices in the contexts in which they operate;
- restraining the adverse effects of the “financial derivatives” (Ponti, 2007) and also giving more responsibility to local administration in the large infrastructure choices, the costs of which the local authority does not contribute to (the cost is incurred by national authorities), despite the advantage of clearing devices fixed at a lower municipal scale¹², with an uncertain outcome for the territory and the local community .

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¹² Funding for the clearing devices may not exceed 5% of the cost of the work, as required by the "Legge Obiettivo".

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