

## DIRECTIONAL CENTERS IN ITALY

The following articles are abstracted from «Casabella» Number 264 which is devoted to plans for new «directional centres» for three Italian cities: Milan (pp. 8-19); Rome (pp. 20-36); and Padua (pp. 36-50). Abstractions are taken from the Milan and Padua plans and the introductory commentary by Aldo Rossi (pp. 2-5).

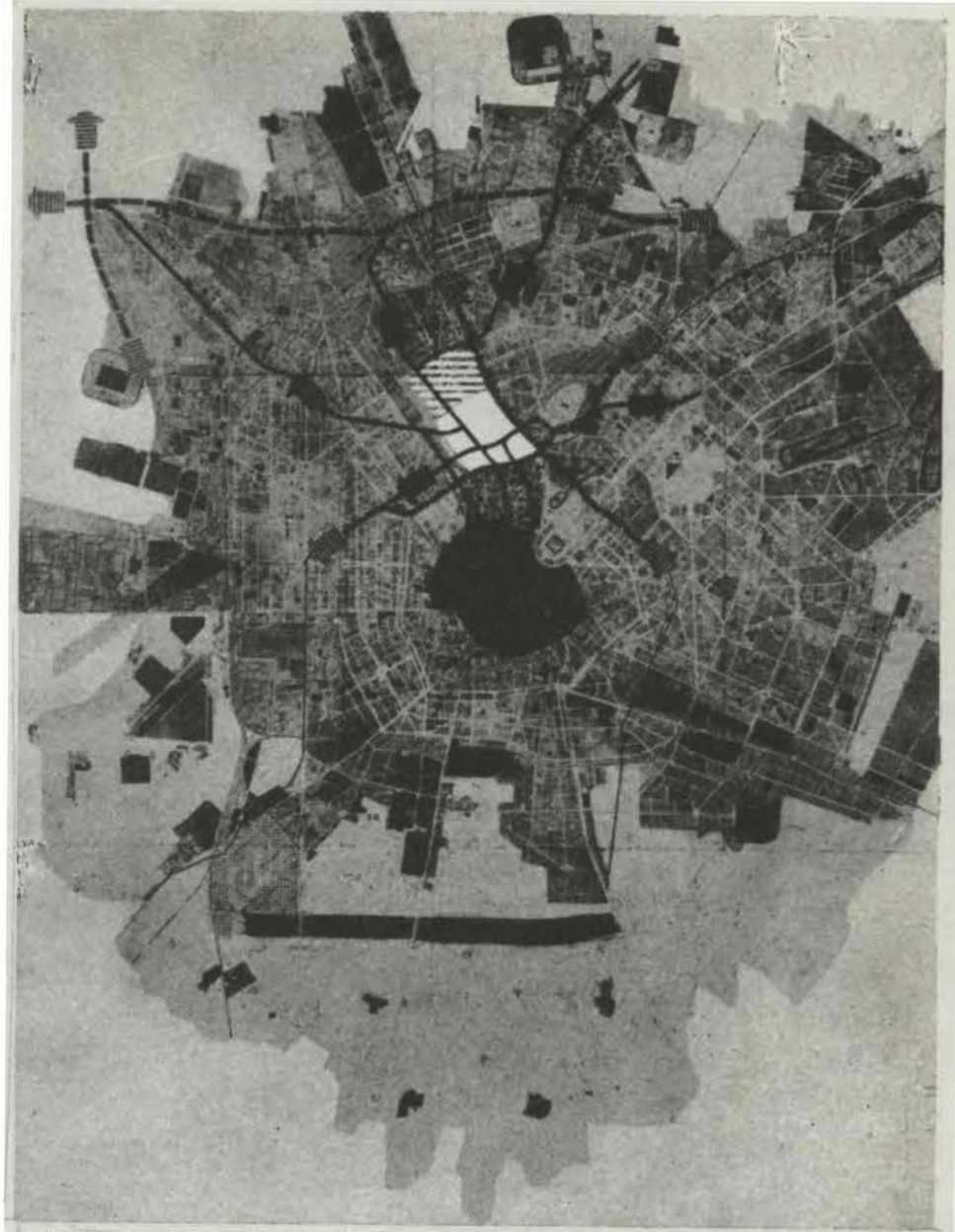
### NEW PROBLEMS

We don't think it is possible to examine the real progress achieved by Italian cities without the much broader control and testimony from countries in a phase of economic and cultural expansion; without our trying to introduce our own culture in this much broader network of changes and interests.

Take Milan, for example. For those who know it well and even those who know it less well, this city seems to be undergoing an incredible transformation. Finding itself in an uncertain position between its ambitions with respect to capital and its incapacity to give itself a character by dealing with large-scale plans for utilization of space, Milan has opted for a hurried reconstruction.

The version shown here leaves one rather perplexed, as it is not easy to make out what principles it is based on: in the interior of this plan, in fact, one could make a number of shifts without changing the results. On the other hand, even the rather extensive scheme for the green belts is not very convincing, since, among other things, there is considerable doubt as to the possibility of actually realizing it so that it has the precise value of a compact green belt without it slipping into the character of one of the squalid «green areas» of the city, a miserable vestige of green in a landscape of cement.

However, much less acceptable is the now rather regulation criticism made by so many about the inefficiency of the position of the Directional Centre: that is, a position which, owing to its nearness to the historical center, almost turns out to be an extension of it and not an alternative. Actually, what one reads in the report is interesting because it suggests the possibility of creating new directional nuclei on the north-east fringes of the city, «which in turn might bring about a third directional grouping coordinated with the future city-region.» Also the decision to study the zones contiguous with the new center «to prepare them for a possible complementary function with the center, or



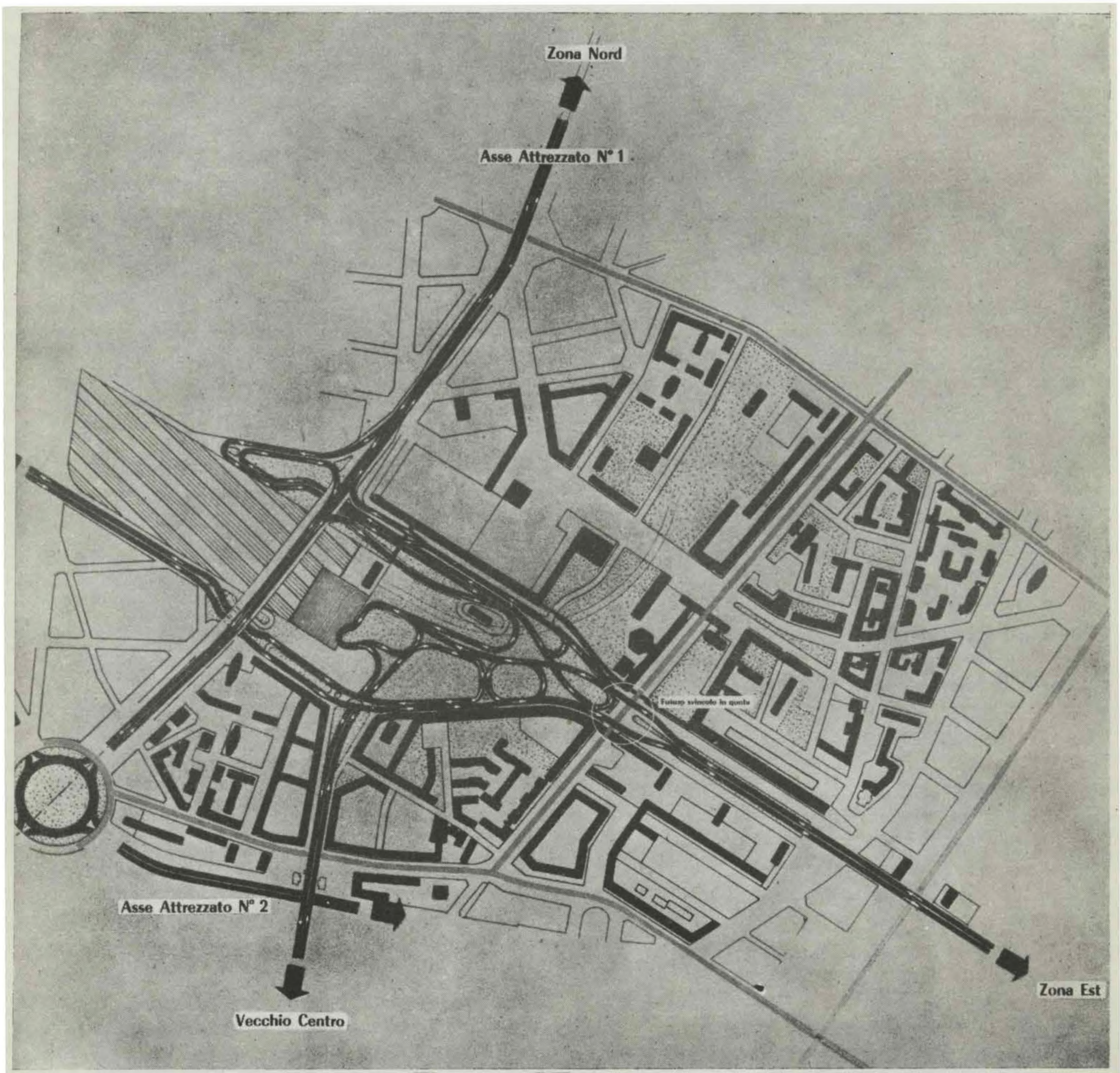
Milan Directional Center: At the intersection of the two traffic lines with a bias pattern, the area of the business center (light shade) and the anticipated extension (light hatching). The dark spot identifies the historical centre of the plan. Along with the traffic lines and main connections with the city and the territory (uninterrupted dark lines) the two main North and East tangential lines are shown here.

to coordinate them with the center as part of a town plan» is praiseworthy and will be all the more so to the extent that it is realized.

In all projects, for Milan, Rome and Padua, even when their premisses are different, one feels the desire to define the characteristics of the future proposal by establishing a series of precise elements of a structural kind around which the new centre takes shape while, at the same time, it is all prepared for grafting on to the future city.

On examination, this need or desire to establish a few infra-structures capable of guaranteeing the development of the city by stages—offering in the meantime the greatest freedom compatible with a given limitation—has become of the greatest importance in the application of Italian city development in recent years; from the projects and

writings of the principal town-planners to the writings of younger men, this concept has been reasserted and sought after. This is clearly to be seen also in the situations and constructions published here: on the one hand it becomes part of the administration's policy of city development for Milan; it is formulated as a possible development



Detail of the new plan for the business center, Milan.

for the future; it is offered as a preview of a future reality in the Padua project.

However, in comparison with the first versions of these theories (which, in their search for key-points and junction points of development, gave no attention to a continuous plan of development for the city) the debate has taken on another element which has been developing in recent years and now characterizes present-day city development.

We are referring to the *new dimensions of the metropolitan area*, to the existence of the city region as an objective fact which must be taken into account if one is not to work abstractly on a city which is more or less traditional, more or less capable of redevelopment, but in any case no longer definable within its traditional, geographic, economic and physical limits.

For the moment we have achieved a new, broader and more dynamic vision of the city: the concept which tends to leave behind the contrast of city and country found in the old terminology, as well as the by now academic distinction between the condensed and spread-out city, between the garden-city and the cement city.

If instead of seeking a new synthesis, and elaborating new models, this should mean returning to dispersive conceptions, towards a hypothetical country-town community (in which the city and the village would have the same importance and their differences would disappear), we shall have taken a step backward.

The subject is still open on a number of points and these should be the object of further study:

1. The importance of economical, sociological, and statistical studies in modern city-development, and the need for contemporary work in several of these disciplines during the working out of plans. Every hypothesis has to be tested and advanced through these various tests. The preparation for a plan and the survey, as handled so far in Italian town-planning, offers no further possibilities for development. Moreover, it is in the very study and cultural awareness of the value of other disciplines that the architect will find independence in his own work.

2. The thorough study of the relationships between a political choice and a choice in town planning: in the sense of a political awareness of the

work of town planning, of the capacity on the part of town planning to propose precise solutions, without falling into the mistake of believing itself capable of absorbing in itself—in the act of planning—the value of a political choice; which alone can bring about the transformation. On the other hand, the exclusion of the concept of planning as a purely technical and objective fact, as an instrument capable of being used indifferently for any political solution.

3. The resolve to face the problem of the new forms of the city: this means the capacity for elaborating and giving life to new spatial models in keeping with modern reality. For the moment the plan for the city-region requires that we act on the development and form of the city by strengthening the infra-structures binding the city to the territory.

In this sense, a few elements such as road networks, transport, and commercial centers are becoming more and more important: that is, all the elements through which it is possible to carry on a precise policy for a city. Along with these big factors, residential, recreational, and cultural structures can then be arranged in an original way.

The residential problem—which is more determined by the general solution adopted for the city—must be taken into consideration as it stands today: as a dynamic element doomed to a short life and a rapid consumption both from the economic and the technological and psychological points of view.

The bond between man and his home, considered as a bond between man and his environment, is less and less true; but the awareness of the bond between man and the surrounding society must be continually strengthened.

For this reason the commercial centers, universities, cultural centers, and public buildings, will once again assume a formal importance: they will be the monuments of a vaster metropolitan territory cut across by a huge network of public transports capable of increasing and multiplying the shifts, contacts, and participation of all men in the spirit of the new city. The architect now humiliated by speculation, will once again try his mettle on the great civil themes, and with the boldness of more and more advanced technology trace the progress of civilization.