

## Integrated project for New Lugano

**An integrated approach is the key to a better understanding of the territory of New Lugano and to achieving a global vision of the new urban reality. The researchers of the Institute for Contemporary Urban Project (known in Italian as i.CUP), of the Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio, have put forward several interpretative analyses of the territory, in which due account is taken of geo-morphological, economic, ecological, infra-structural and town-planning elements. The 'New Lugano' project, conducted jointly with the Institute for Economic Research (known as IRE), is subsidised by the Department of Local Authorities of Cantone Ticino and by the City of Lugano.**

New Lugano (Nuova Lugano in Italian) is the name given to the outcome of the merger process in which the City of Lugano has joined up with the communes dotted around its periphery or suburban area. The name calls attention to the combined notion of 'aggregation' and 'urban agglomeration'. Indeed, the phenomenon of council mergers brings to light novel needs and almost a sense of inevitability, for example in the field of transport and telecommunication, to the effect that today's urban structures have become far more complex and articulated. The new circumstances in which an industrial economy is being replaced by an increasingly service-intensive economy, has profoundly transformed the productive and economic fabric of the city. The progressive changes affecting its infrastructure denote a more isotropic territory and a different new degree of complexity, which is to be absorbed into the planning and design of the city, by means of new analytic and interpretative tools. Professor Josep Acebillo, Director of the Academy of Architecture at Mendrisio, in charge of this research programme, describes the situation as follows: "Today, town planning is no longer what it used to be twenty or thirty years ago. The difference is relevant: the new economy has blown in like a wind of change over the territory, sweeping away the industrial economy; this wind of change has stirred up the need to see the territory as something far more



A bird's eye view of Lugano and its neighbouring region

complex than it was under the old industrial economy, especially in a globalised context". A similar context of transformation calls for a project-based approach. "In the past, when city planning was mostly a question of quantitative expansion, the approach consisted in developing a plan. Conversely, when a city is no longer concerned with growth, but rather with renovation or transformation, which is indeed the case with New Lugano, the working method must be the single project, not the plan", explains Professor Acebillo. The "New Lugano" research project aims to explore the built-up area as a whole and in its complexity, by interpreting geo-morphological, territorial, economic, ecological, infra-structural and town-planning data. This is what is meant by "culture of the territory", the core discipline of i.CUP, the Institute for Contemporary Urban Project founded by Professor Acebillo. The architect Enrico Sassi, coordinator and deputy director of i.CUP, declares: "This research project is ultimately devoted to achieving a reading of the urban context according to different scales and dimensions. We need a sort of decoding tool that may serve to inform and support politicians and policy-makers".

**Josep Acebillo** (picture) is the director of the University of Lugano's Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio and of i.CUP. A graduate in architecture of the Technical University of Catalonia, he has taught in several Schools of architecture. He has worked on several town-planning programmes and has been awarded major international distinctions. He is also director of the Barcelona Regional Metropolitan Agency for the urban-planning and infra-structural development of the City as well as a delegate for infrastructure and town-planning of Barcelona.

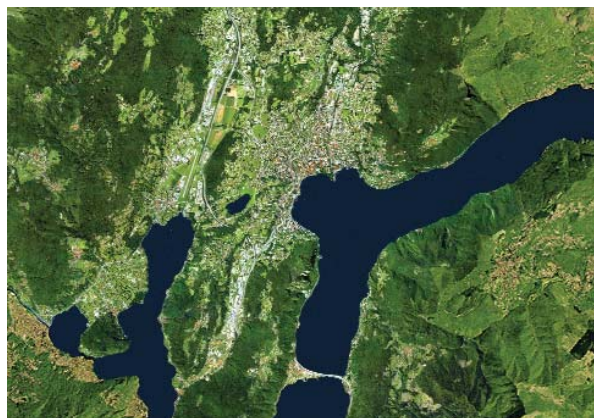


## A technique that blends in with the territory

The "New Lugano" project aims to identify not only what changes have affected the city as a result of a series of aggregations, but also the implications of such changes in terms of its global development. The method adopted, an 'integrated' method, encompasses various analytical readings of the urban experience. The first of such readings, carried out by i.CUP, looks at the geo-morphological features that shape the territory, for example water. "Through the water theme we have been able to define a unit: the eco-system of Lake Lugano with its catchment area, i.e. the natural boundaries marking out a lacustrine system that collects all the rainwater falling within it. Here is a first sphere of interest that we have decided to study", explains Enrico Sassi. The project, however, far from merely providing a morphological reading, sees the territory as a superposition or overlapping of spatial elements, of socio-economic flows and parameters. The economic surveys carried out by the Institute for Economic Research (Istituto Ricerche Economiche - IRE) have generated a series of thematic charts showing the economic activities, financial assets and demographic data of the Swiss population resident in the catchment area. This is how Siegfried Alberton, head of research at IRE, describes it: "Trying to make sense of the economic structure of New Lugano we can observe and isolate its specialisms and its position in the framework of interregional, Swiss, and international competitiveness. Thus we pin down its strong points, its strategic hub, and its economic and territorial potential". The research, moreover, explores in detail the urban context, the public spaces, amalgamating any strategic plans in progress into its comprehensive analysis of the territory.

### Research at i.CUP

The Institute for Contemporary Urban Project (i.CUP) conducts its specific research in the following fields: culture of the territory, strategic planning, and systems, infrastructure and architectural design. The scope of its projects is both cantonal and international. Equally fundamental to i.CUP's mission is the promotion of researcher training and knowledge transfer to students. i.CUP cooperates with academic research institutes and international institutions (for instance Barcelona Regional, the Metropolitan Agency for urban development, and the City Programme of the London School of Economics), national and regional (such as the Institute for Economic Research, of the University of Lugano - USI, and the Earth Sciences Institute of Ticino's University of Applied Sciences -SUPSI).



A satellite shot of the Lake Lugano region (photo: endoxon)

The latter include: the New Cornaredo District, the University Campus, the Campo Marzio (a fair and exhibition complex) - which stand on either side of the Cassarate river and define its emerging tertiary urban functions - issues such as 'Pian Scairolo', 'Palace', 'Palacongressi', or the main railway station and the related plans for covering over of the 'Massagno Cut'. We have also examined questions related to mobility infrastructure and the location of Lugano on the international north-south and east-west communication axes. It is true to say that, if they want to be economically, socially, and environmentally competitive, present-day cities must build themselves increasingly according to a pattern of internal and external relations, where dynamics of flows and mobility issues have become extremely relevant. The findings and tools supplied by the i.CUP research team will help the relevant authorities to gain a global picture and perspective, from an economist's viewpoint but also from the viewpoint of urban structure management.

### For further details:

Arch. Enrico Sassi  
i.CUP - Institute for Contemporary Urban Project  
USI - Accademia di Architettura  
Villa Argentina; CH- 6850 Mendrisio  
Tel. +41 91 640 48 61 ; e-mail: [esassi@arch.unisi.ch](mailto:esassi@arch.unisi.ch)

### Web addresses:

<http://www.arch.unisi.ch>  
<http://www.ire.eco.unisi.ch>  
<http://www.lugano.ch/dbpa/welcome.cfm>