

The challenges of planning in the unequal cities. "Urban poverty workshop" for innovating urban planners education path.

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SPACES OF DIALOG  
FOR PLACES OF DIGNITY:  
Fostering the European  
Dimension of Planning  
11 - 14 July 2017 Lisbon



***BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS***



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## **30<sup>th</sup> annual AESOP 2017 Congress**

### **Lisbon, Portugal**

In an uncertain world that is rapidly changing economically, socially and culturally, cities and territories have become the common ground for resilient breakthroughs in the policies and practices of planning and design.

These extreme times urge us to shift towards renewed actions in urban and less urbanised territories. Societal changes, disparities in population growth and incomes and consequential impacts on the sustainability of social services and labour markets, climate change and extreme natural events, complex social-economics trends, challenge us to debate and seek paths that lead to a progressive common future.

The planning and urban minded communities are invited to join efforts under the flag of the next congress topic – SPACES OF DIALOGUE FOR PLACES OF DIGNITY: Fostering the European Dimension of Planning.

A few of the ideas we may want to provide a platform for discussion include developing people's wellbeing, promoting integrated and flexible planning approaches, encouraging collective engagement in urban and environmental management, inclusiveness and multiculturalism.

From one of the most western cities in Europe we believe that we may address potential European urban futures and the need for opening effective dialogue and cooperation with other corners of the globe.

We look forward to welcoming you in Lisbon and engaging with you in discussing these challenges.

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## ID 1605 | THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING IN THE UNEQUAL CITIES. "URBAN POVERTY WORKSHOP" FOR INNOVATING URBAN PLANNERS EDUCATION PATH

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**ABSTRACT:** The recent shift from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals scored a point of no return in the international debate on development, stating that the separation between the rich part and the poor part of the population is no longer with the North and the South of the world, but between nearby areas in always more highly polarized contexts. In this framework, a deeper knowledge of the spatial dimension of poverty and of its spatial implications is required; especially in the Italian Faculty of Architecture where urban design and plan-making are frequently still considered "the real core" of the discipline with the general under-evaluation of the wicked problems. On the contrary, in the United States, thanks to the passionate work of Ananya Roy, this knowledge found its place, first in the university program at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development of UC Berkeley, and then in Los Angeles, being highly appreciated both by students, scholars and NGOs. According to this awareness, the first workshop "Urban Poverty. The praxis of planning in unequal cities" organized in September 2016 at the Sapienza's Faculty of Architecture in Rome, gave the opportunity for discussing and testing theory and practices of urban research and city planning with issues of poverty, in particular regards of western cities

and the city of Rome. This first experiment offered the opportunity to think about the interdisciplinary and/or international teaching aimed at preparing students for today's and tomorrow's planning challenges in the unequal cities.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The impoverishment of society, the growing awareness in the importance and urgency of a "new urban question" have stimulated a more explicit attention to the social and spatial inequalities within the cities, and then, to the limits of urban design and planning theories and practices. In this framework, a strong rethinking of the social role of the planner seems inevitable in a condition of increasingly uncertain and fragmented representation and expertise. In fact, as it has been repeatedly noted, planners have too often failed to treat with the so called "wicked problems" (Rittel, Webber 1973), especially at the time in which cities were developing the growing polarization of society, and the problematic fragmentation in the urban spaces (Madanipour 1998; 2014). As it has been recently noted "spatial ordering for the construction and management of cities and territories have had (and have) significant consequences with regard to the relationship, integration or exclusion, between rich and poor" (Secchi 2013). In this context, urban planning seems to have strong and specific responsibilities with respect to the worsening of inequalities and, therefore, interventions aimed at defining new structures and new policies that may not be important starting points for their elimination and contrast. Today, the meaning of the "new poverty" can be understood in relation and in opposition to the sense of poverty more common in the past. These "old poverty" were defined, above all as the lack of economic means: they showed (and they show still today since they are not completely disappeared), duality in society and can be described as a contrast between "high" and "low".

Poor, in this sense, is one who has a "low" income statement and that, therefore, is a social condition overall "low". These "new poverty", however, are described as another form of duality like "inside" and "outside", that does not end only in the now inadequate spatial polarization between centre-peripheries. In fact, they are more properly defined in reference to the possibility of access and participation in social life: poverty means first of all "marginalization", then "exclusion" and, increasingly, "segregation".

Distinction and exclusion are inseparable aspects of the modern city (Secchi 2013, 42) that remain in the post-modern one as peculiar forms produced by the concentration of a specific unit and type of subjects, within the matching between recurrent social and spatial morphologies. In this perspective, the new urban poverty is represented, not only as a "condition," or a "status", but from "processes leading to the margins" and, then, to the exclusion from social life, while the urban life becomes inadequate. So, it's quite clear that they ask directly to the planning about their responsibility, since they are based on a duality concerning the inside and the outside, the included and the excluded, the accessible and the restricted/limited, by drawing and redrawing, more or less intentionally, the contemporary urban spaces through boundaries.

Nevertheless, according to some authors (Chiappero, Moroni, Nuvolati 2011) "studying the relationship between the territory and nowadays poverty is not only a substantive contribution to knowledge of the discipline, a contribution to the investigation about the relationship between urban design and planning's effects, and social outcomes" (considered as one of the main technical tasks of urban planning); it is also a task that can provide a useful contribution to better design the "spatial matrix" of public policies about poverty (Patriarchi 2014). Policies on which Western governments have often invested considerable resources but, certainly, with results largely unsatisfactory. In fact, at first under the influence of the major acquisitions of the Modern Movement, poverty and hardship have been considered mainly with reference to the economic aspect, responding (spatially and socially) in a rather standardized way.

Subsequently, these matters have been handled through policies or individual area (place or people-based), but rarely have been linked with positive forward-looking idea of processing and/or development (local and otherwise). Therefore, in order to think new guidelines for innovative theories but, also, for policies and urban design tools to fight urban poverty, social and spatial segregation, marginalization and exclusion, it seems necessary to restate what is widely perceived – for progressive simplifications – as a theme anchored to the "individual" size (limited to single buildings or to specific populations), in an "urban theme", absolutely crucial for this phase.

Since the late '70s the Italian and European cities fall the most critical consequences of economic restructuring and related labour changes, the ongoing downsizing of national welfare systems. With the Crisis, the spread of social vulnerability and poverty have been accelerating also by intertwining: - precariousness/insecurity/uncertainty of labor and income, - increase in migration, - demographic changes, - aging population - weakening of family structures and resulting tensions on "the care" (de Leonardis 2016) On cities and their governments flock: - dynamics of social embrittlement - trend of impoverishment of the middle classes, - growing inequalities and social polarization. Within this context, the workshop was focused on the challenges of doing research, planning and design urban policies considering urban poverty and the unequal cities as crucial. In cities, inequalities are, at the same time, "within" and "among" individuals, families & social environments. Inequalities are not only about difference of income but there is a spatial dimension of poverty we have to consider as urban planner.

## 2 THE WORKSHOP

In 2016 took place the first workshop "Urban Poverty. The praxis of planning in unequal cities" organized within the Faculty of Architecture in the Sapienza University in Rome. The deprived urban area is one of the feature that people observe (also urban planners and architects) but they are exactly the environmental and physical aspects of poverty. Theoretical and practical implications of labelling urgent problems of our cities in terms of "urban poverty" for better intervene on them, interplay between the international debate and domestic problems seems a promising direction.

Thus, starting from the work of Ananya Roy, the workshop tried to underline theoretical and practical implications of reading/defining/labelling urgent problems of our cities in terms of "urban poverty" to understand and define new directions of development and multi-scalar actions for the city and to fight inequality in our cities. It will take advantage from the collaboration of experts in different but complementary disciplines, for:

1. Identifying a new framework for "urbanpoverty" studies;
2. Dealing with urban poverty using an interdisciplinary point of view;
3. Promoting interdisciplinary actions;
4. Putting together theory and practices for intervention;
5. Developing critical thinking in future and contemporary experts.

Courses were organised in three parts:

1. Theories – new keys/framework for interpretation of the urban poverty phenomenon Ananya Roy opened discussion about urban poverty to new meanings, points of view, research fields, encouraging new theoretical debates;
2. (Miscellaneous – tools from case-studies and experiences Case studies from Italy were illustrated by D. De Leo, S.Monni , G. Giunta , D. Esposito that focused interest on analysis and intervention tools;
3. (Field Work – proposals V Municipality of Rome was the selected area for the field work. Participants had the opportunity to explore the context and speak with associations' members, inhabitants and delegates from the Municipality, to identify specific problems and issues related to "poverty" in this area. At the end of the workshop participants presented to delegates their proposals. According to Roy, the actual reference model tends to impose "subjective concepts of development, modernization, civilization, aid and certain aesthetics of poverty". For many people the way of thinking has been influenced according to the ruling economic model and to the Western approach. Indeed, the world economy and the capitalism are ruling the global relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account macro phenomena to understand local problems. Urban poverty became a global issue particularly affecting cities where more than 50% of the world population lives: poverty exists just because wealth does. "Poverty is not just about economy, is about power and about political appearance". "Capitalism and neoliberalism lead to concentration of wealth and growing inequality: just a democratic world can counterbalance and contrast the system" (Roy). While wellness and wealth increased on the whole, the benefits of this growth have not been shared homogeneously, producing or reinforcing

unequal distribution. This phenomenon is evident in the countries of the South, but is becoming alarming in the North too. This is probably another reason of the growing attention of this topic in the West. However, inequality is often considered as a problem to be solved or eradicated, without taking into account the bigger scale relationships that have caused it. Since the intensification of those inequalities could be attributed to the socio-economic model, the small-scale interventions could not be enough; and the weakest and the most marginal population are the one suffering more. For sure, as it has been underlined, "new indicators should be introduced, such as capabilities and quality of life" (Monni).

## 2.1. THE MAIN TOPICS

During the workshop some topics emerged from lessons and discussion. First of all, professors Roy and Monni and moreover Giunta underlined how the economic principle encourages competition between constitutional values, such as equality, liberty, dignity and so on. According to him, "to promote urban development, personalization is fundamental, along with understanding the perceived needs, expectations and capabilities". So people are the core of the question.

The goal seemed to "break the dichotomy between economic and socio-cultural dimension, between State and financial market", imagining a model with new balances and mutual advantages. In this process of metamorphosis ethic and aesthetic are strictly linked, and the concept of beauty as a privilege for wealthy has to be fought.

Moreover, another topic discussed during the workshop has been common attitudes (of power representatives) towards urban problems or considered as such: elimination, removal and exclusion are usual approaches. In doing so, just the symptoms of issues are treated, forgetting or ignoring the complex system of causes and effects. Therefore, if poverty is just a consequence of a multifaceted structure that includes space, society and economy, the focus should not be on symptoms of inequality and poverty, but on causes and effects that create those. The author Marie Huchzermeyer (Huchzermeyer 2011, 36-39) describes well the difference between a rights-based approach and the operational approach focused only on symptoms promoted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The two different methods are described and compared to explain alternative modes of treating informality in South Africa. The core of the question is the "focus on causes and complexity of poverty/informality", through the promotion of "accountability of governments to organized citizens" and treating the "poor as agents", identifying "duties for the state" and therefore creating "political implications". Moreover, issues about "colonialism of power" were discussed: all the approaches linked to it are founded on the "will and need to improve" the others. Instead the purpose should be the "will to promote justice – that is about distribution of resources" (Roy). The concept of justice is related to the right to the city promoted by Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1968) and many others after him. "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (Harvey 2008, 23).

Finally, poverty was assumed as a multidimensional problem of People+Place+Policies/institutions, by trying to underline the responsibility of academic and professionals since space matters in producing of social problems but also in the protection of rights and in the creation of citizenship opportunities. We assumed that, especially in the last few years, we saw poverty become more and more visible and serious in our cities in different ways. By avoiding the frequently common trap in the public debate about Absolute or Relative Poverty, recently, Lea Ypi (2016) assumed clearly:

> Absolute poverty as Poverty

> Relative poverty as inequalities

[[Rel. Pov.>> inequalities >> Abs. Poverty]]

Inequalities is not only a difference of income but a difference in the place prosperity accessibility as difference between public material fix capital and real accessibility to the material and immaterial capital of

each urban spaces. For economics statistic, inequality is a difference of income, a statistic territorially aware could emphasize the place prosperity inequalities as difference between capital public fix material and accessibility to the material and immaterial capital of urban spaces. Poverty is not only an internal problem, a problem of persons/individual income but a problem of urban conditions, availability and accessibility, and then a problem of place and space. Space matters in: producing of social problems but also protection of rights & creation of citizenship opportunities. In nineteenth-century reformers assumed the importance of place, so interpretations which treat poverty ONLY as a spatial problem run the risk of overemphasizing the causal power of concentrated poverty or residential segregation and missing the political-economic forces that produce uneven geographies. So, there is not concentration here but see it to try to deal with theoretical challenges by posing the problem of power!!!

### 3 LEARNING AND CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the first edition and while we are organizing the Summer School on the same subject, few learning and first conclusion can be underlined:

1. We couldn't evade the difficult questions of political economy by focusing on the promise of educational expansion and/or housing reforms, because a single solution is not available or easy to be found it BUT we could work together around the possibility to do better: to understand more and improve skills and tools in theoretical and practical work.
2. Relevance of practices: significant changes will not come about as a result of elite goodwill. Real change requires countervailing centers of power. The trade union movement/ASSOCIATIONS decimated by decades of attack, still remains vital, although weakened. Community organizing networks provide the second center. Building from the grassroots to players on the national policy scene, they have mounted some of the most effective.
3. A not exclusive but place-based (such as "people IN places") orientation.
4. Co-production of interdisciplinary knowledge: more attention in each field of studies by underline the responsibilities of each specific knowledge and a path for the co-production of a new interdisciplinary knowledge as a combination of different.
5. Finally, Definitions of poverty as a lack of resources often stop short of focusing on the sources of unequal income distribution, here we try to underline a different idea of resources, especially the relationally resources by looking at the local ASSOCIATIONS AS RESOURCES: As a matter of fact, the urban poverty complexity could be better interpreted taking into account associations like neighbourhood committee in Tor Pignattara and the Foundation od Community in Messina. The challenge now is to understand how involve those resources in the urban design process."

In conclusion we can assume that poverty is a problem of correct interpretation of the phenomenon from power representative and from planners, that should be responsible of intervention. Correct interpretation of theory but also interpretation of manifestations of inequality allow to identify meaningful phenomena and data to consider to support actions.

In few words, the workshop produced critical knowledge, helpful to analyze and discuss a real wicked problem such as the case of "Villaggio Falcone" a very deprived neighbourhood where we practically tested the utility of theories and practices coming from different context. The fragmentation and differentiation of urban space with reference to the social characteristics of the populations established, as well as the segmentation of the housing and the labour market. However, it seems possible to say that, even in European cities, urban poverty:

1. remains a significant problem, common and persistent in urban areas of different types;
2. it is a multidimensional phenomenon and not one-dimensional;
3. as many social phenomena, it is not coming out from the simple interaction between individuals, but manifests itself as a complex phenomenon to the scale of the urban areas, city regions and cities. Finally, the workshop, from one side highlighted that it is more important to guarantee proximity between administrations and citizens (control can't be considered only punishment) than to do make-up actions on problematic situations. From the other, it showed one time more that for very complex issues, the co-production of interdisciplinary knowledge is required. And it means at least the combination of researchers' attitude of:

4. statistic's researcher knowledge, that ask to themselves: how many people are involved in this or that problem?
5. sociologists, that ask to themselves: who are this people?
6. but also architects and planners that are able to understand and ask to themselves: where this people live and how are their living conditions? Since it's not a disciplinary issue we need to educate students about these issues and in the ability to coproduce knowledge and proposal with Statistics, Sociologists and Urban and social Planners with responsibility and accountability in order to change the world by promoting justice.

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## ID 1639 | COMMUNITY GARDENS AS TEMPORARY USES FOR VACANT LAND REVITALIZATION: THE CASE OF RIGA

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

As some European cities are undergoing economic and population decline, at the same time showing urban sprawl, the number of vacant land inside the city centers is rapidly growing. Under complicated construction regulations, development of vacant land inside the city center is often related to high construction costs and time investment, forcing land owners to postpone site development. Vacant land in the city center, providing space for garbage collection and even affecting increase in crime, results neighbourhood degradation.

Concerning common uncertainty regarding future development of vacant land, temporary uses appear to be good solution to outdoor space revitalization, helping to improve quality of life of local residents. As show various case studies from different European countries, community gardens appear to be common solution for the temporary use of vacant land. According to previous research data, community gardens contribute to social cohesion, promoting integration and strengthening sense of neighbourhood belonging.

