

*Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Ingegneria Civile e Industriale  
in collaboration with Università di Roma Tre, Dipartimento di Architettura*

Rome, 15th and 16th March, via Eudossiana 18, Aula del Chiostro  
Facoltà di Ingegneria Civile e Industriale

## **Urban regeneration from city centre to peripheries** ***Rome, Hamburg, London and Brussels***

Over the coming decades the regeneration of urban peripheries will be the great challenge facing all cities throughout and beyond Europe, be they large or small.

However the “problem of the peripheries”, in terms of urban decline and social exclusion, concerns not only areas located on the physical fringe of the city, but the city as a whole. “Periphery” is a term that can be applied, in different ways, to any area, sector or neighbourhood characterized by elements of degradation, dereliction and illegal development – areas where a lack of quality and liveability is manifest to varying degrees and in the worst cases creates conditions of emergency.

On the outskirts of the city “periphery” means neighbourhoods in which the city/urbanization is incomplete and public spaces, services and commercial activities are lacking. Here official planning has either never arrived or has failed to consider the scale on which the city is experienced by its inhabitants, instead passing directly from the simplistic and segmented vision of zoning to the physical shaping of the city.

In the city centre the urban “periphery” takes different forms. Here public spaces, services and commercial activities are not lacking but urban decay and social deprivation are often present to varying extents – phenomena which if unchecked can foment “urban maladies”. As has already been the case in many urban realities, from Brussels to Bari.

Any attempt at regeneration therefore requires an awareness of such urban phenomena and of the signs of degradation that are likely to mutate into emergencies. Through prevention and maintenance, in both city centre and suburbs, it is possible to allay the negative effects of marginalization. This is the “broken windows” theory elaborated by two American criminologists to illustrate how context influences the liveability of places. “If in a neighbourhood a vandal breaks one window and no one bothers to repair it, it is highly likely that someone else will soon do the same or worse. Which is one way of saying that not even minor emergencies should be tolerated.”<sup>1</sup>

There is therefore a need both for a broader vision of the topic of “peripheries” and for regeneration strategies to feature an integrated approach, as advocated by the Leipzig Charter<sup>2</sup>. Places, economic activities, inhabitants and natural resources must be considered interrelated elements within the framework of a sustainable approach to development.

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<sup>1</sup> Gianrico Carofiglio, “La mia città controcorrente verso il futuro”, la Repubblica, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012

<sup>2</sup> Cf. “Integrated Urban Regeneration in the European Union”, Toledo Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development, June 2010

In line with the principles of sustainability, “The first thing to be done,” as Renzo Piano<sup>3</sup> states, “is not to build new suburbs,” but “to complete and intensify the city, building on the already-built,” circumscribing the city and definitively delineating its boundaries through the creation of a green belt.

Piano uses the metaphor of “darning”, meaning a “stitching together and re-fertilizing” of the urban fabric, “seeing the green spaces as connective tissue,” and “building places for people, points of encounter, where values are shared, where we celebrate a ritual called urbanism”. Because, “No project for the requalification of the peripheries can limit itself to the physical requalification of the areas involved.” So, whether the peripheries, “are or are not to become pieces of city, whether they will or will not become both civic and civilized,” concludes Piano, will also depend, “on the affection, perhaps even in the form of anger, on a sense of identity and on the pride felt in being peripheries”.

The Conference aims to examine examples of approaches that have been applied in contexts characterized by “urban maladies” of varying intensity and nature.

London’s experiences will be represented by the illustration of experiments inspired by the principles of Urban Renaissance<sup>4</sup>. The city has adopted a strategy focused on major renovation and maintenance projects, with much care dedicated to public spaces and to the renovation of existing buildings. The city’s approach has featured a number of very interesting but policies have also been tailored to boost market values and to facilitate the commercialization of spaces.

Hamburg and Brussels offer examples of the complexity of interventions regarding sensitive areas where the problem of marginalization has reached emergency levels and where the process of regeneration has involved an integrated and participatory approach.

In Brussels the emergency regards “peripheries” in the city centre and the instrument being used to tackle this emergency is the “Neighbourhood Contract”, a tool that focuses on small areas, combining urban, social and economic interventions.

Hamburg’s case concerns the island of Wilhelmsburg, a 35km<sup>2</sup> area to the south of the city that faced numerous problems. Here redevelopment has been overseen by the City of Hamburg with the “Leap across the Elbe” project, an inclusive initiative that has involved residents, the IBA- Hamburg and the International Garden Show (IGS). Over six years of planning activities have resulted in sustainable urban development plans and a wide variety of social and cultural projects.

As a backdrop to all this, Rome’s experiences will be explored through the examination of an example of an urban periphery teetering between a need for better management and intermittent moments of real emergency: San Basilio.

What keeps San Basilio in a condition of unstable equilibrium but also of vitality is the sheer variety of diverse conditions to be found in the neighbourhood. Urban quality and degradation, social emergencies and “normality” co-exist here, without integrating. And yet collapse has, so far, been avoided. With adequate resources lacking, any form of intervention has been small in scale or intangible (like the “community building” initiatives), but some positive results have been achieved.

The combination of the themes outlined here and the various case studies may suggest new points of view and might offer food for thought regarding what Lewis Mumford<sup>5</sup> called the “culture of cities”, the hope being – to paraphrase Italo Calvino<sup>6</sup> – that happy fragments of city might begin to form and fertilize the unhappy cities that lurk between the centre and the periphery.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. [renzopianog124.com](http://renzopianog124.com)

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Urban Task Force, “Towards an Urban Renaissance”, London 1999

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lewis Mumford, “The Culture of Cities”, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1938

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Italo Calvino, “Le città invisibili”, Edizioni Mondadori, Milan, 1972

# Programme

## *The Workshop*

### ***Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2:30pm, "Piazza della Balena", San Basilio***

The first day of the Conference will consist of a workshop/fieldtrip in San Basilio, the Roman neighbourhood that has been chosen as one of the case studies to be included in the comparison of realities, approaches and results that will take place over the course of the Conference.

For many years now Roman university courses in urban design and planning (the degree course in Architecture and Architectural Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering, Sapienza University, and the courses of the Faculty of Architecture at the Roma Tre University) have addressed the theme of urban renewal and of "problems" connected with the periphery through studies and experimental projects involving this particular neighbourhood.

The activities undertaken in San Basilio (in the case of the degree course in Architecture and Architectural Engineering) have seen students, lecturers and local stakeholders such as the Unrra Casas association, the Metropolis Europa association, and the Centro Culturale Aldo Fabrizi actively involved in generating proposals for projects aimed at the requalification of the neighbourhood and the organization of and participation in informal meetings and seminars.

The fieldtrip has various objectives:

- to reinforce the relationship between the universities and the local area;
- to underline the suburb's potential as a source of knowledge and experience and a site for active experimentation;
- to acquire and compare images of the local environment in order to build up a clearer picture of real conditions in the neighbourhood;
- the active involvement of experts from other universities who will contribute suggestions for possible images, interpretations and projects.

With this in mind, alongside the scholars who have been invited to participate in the conference, students, local inhabitants and representative of local associations have also been invited to take part in the fieldtrip.

Images and stories recounting the local urban reality will be collected and recorded during a group walk through the area. The resulting drawings, photographs and notes will then be presented and discussed over the course of a meeting to be held at the San Basilio Centro Anziani (the local old peoples' social club). The results of this work will offer the basis for the development of ideas and proposals for the future of the neighbourhood.

## ***The Conference***

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 10:30am, Facoltà di Ingegneria Civile e Industriale [the Faculty of Civil and Industrial Engineering], Aula del Chiostro, via Eudossiana 18**

**The study day is organized in collaboration with Roma Tre University's Department of Architecture.**

The objective of the second day of work is to address the “question” of urban regeneration, from San Basilio and Hamburg to London and Brussels, investigating a selection of specific themes concerning the economic and cultural situation that, in some cases, lies behind interventions contributing to urban renewal, the planning and requalification of public spaces and the participants involved in financing such processes.

The speakers participating in the Conference will contribute to an open discussion which, it is hoped, will generate an enthusiastic debate. The Conference is intended to offer an opportunity for speakers to compare and discuss ideas, both illustrating important aspects of the case studies presented and commenting on the experiences illustrated by others.

## ***Conference schedule***

*10:30am*

Welcome and introductory remarks by the Head of the Faculty of Civil and Industrial Engineering (Roma Tre University), prof. Fabrizio Vestroni

Welcome and introductory remarks by the Director of the Department of Civil, Building and Environmental Engineering (Sapienza University), prof. Antonio D'Andrea

Opening words, prof. Fabiola Fratini

- prof. Paolo Colarossi, Sapienza University, Rome, “Cure ricostituenti di spazi pubblici per fare belle le città” [*The restorative cure of public spaces to render cities beautiful*];
- prof. Ingrid Beckner, HafenCity Universität Hamburg, “IBA Amburgo: esperienze, risultati, conseguenze” [*IBA Hamburg: experiences, results and consequences*];
- prof. Claudia Mattogno, Sapienza University, Rome, “San Basilio, l'infraordinario dei territory intermedi” [*San Basilio, the infraordinary in intermediary places*];
- Massimo Alvisi (architect), coordinator of Renzo Piano's G124 group, “Verso una nuova sostenibilità” [*Towards a new sustainability*];
- prof. Fabiola Fratini, Sapienza University, Rome, “Riqualificare San Basilio tra percezione e progetto” [*Requalifying San Basilio: perceptions and projects*]

*There follows an open debate regarding the various themes addressed and to which lecturers, students, local associations and the inhabitants [of San Basilio] are invited to contribute.*

*1:30pm lunch break*

*2:30pm*

- prof. Matthew Carmona, The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, “London: 15 Years of Urban Renaissance?”;
- prof. Bernard Declève, Université de Louvain la Neuve, “Microubanistica e rinnovo urbano a Bruxelles: l'esperienza dei Contratti di Quartiere” [*Micro-urbanism and urban renewal in Brussels: the experience of the Neighbourhood Contracts*];
- dr. Yodan Rofé, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel, “Public open spaces in urban areas”;
- Prof. Antonio Cappuccitti, Sapienza University, Rome, “Partnership pubblico-privato per rigenerare le periferie di Roma” [*Public- and private-sector partnerships for the regeneration of Rome's peripheries*];-
- dr. Sergio Porta, Professor of Urban Design, Department of Architecture, University of Strathclyde Glasgow, “Il Masterplan come strumento di partecipazione informale alla rigenerazione urbana” [*Masterplanning for change*];
- prof. Marco Cremaschi, Università di Roma Tre, “Things on Earth”: More Urban Projects than Are Dreamt of by Neo-Liberalism”;

*Concluding remarks*