Human beings are ‘dissipative systems’. They need to intake (to ‘consume’) a certain amount of organised matter-energy (and information) per unit of time. Yet human beings are also ‘conscious systems’ that turn the most elementary acts of consumption into symbolic acts attaching specific value to how the consumption is performed and to the type of goods that are consumed. As ‘dissipative systems’, profoundly different types of goods are equally appropriate for the maintenance of their metabolism. Instead, as ‘conscious (and self-reflective) systems’ different goods (and constellation of goods) are valued very differently. Therefore, only culture can explain the consumption patterns observed. In turn, culture is continuously evolving, and the consumption pattern is continuously changing. Since consumption is constrained by the social structure in which individuals are embedded, the social sciences – economics, in particular – cannot avoid addressing the distinction between the desired and actual pattern of consumption – because the relationship between these two patterns has emerged as crucial in modern society: what consumption patterns do individuals aim at within the here/now coordinates? what constrains the consumption patterns of individuals? Categories like ‘utility’, ‘welfare’, ‘quality of life’, ‘happiness’ have been proposed to conceptualise the relationship between the desired and actual consumption patterns. The category of ‘well-being’ is the most recent attempt to specify this fundamental relationship better.
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Alberto Vanolo is research fellow and lecturer in politic-economic geography at the University of Turin. His research interests fall within the fields of urban studies and economic geography, including issues such as the geographies of globalization, the contested image of the creative city, and the political geographies of the smart city. His latest book is *Urban Political Geography. A Global Perspective* (Sage, 2012; with U. Rossi).
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S H R I N K A G E

Stefano Moroni is associate professor at the Politecnico University of Milan. He has published widely in planning theory and ethics. Recent works: Ethics, Designing and the Built Environment (Springer, 2013); with C. Basta La cities responsible. Riposono istituzioni e maschere civiche (Carocci, 2013). Cities and private planning: property rights, entrepreneurship, transaction costs (Edward Elgar, 2014; with D. Andersson).

Diversity is a concept that cuts across a very large number of disciplines and fields, ranging from natural sciences and ethology to ecology, genetics, social studies, philosophy and urban planning. More in general disciplines that deal with the connections between space and society. More and more frequent is the landscape of postmodern literature, the word ‘diversity’ joins or replaces the dialectic between identity and difference, surpassing even the concept of otherness. In turn, it occupies the third space in-between two concepts, to overcome the oppositional logic (related to the couple) of identity/difference. In the past two decades ‘diversity’ has become an important theoretical construct and operational ‘object’ used by urban designers, planners, sociologists, social justice and equity advocates. Moreover it has served as a narrative goal in city planning and a powerful theoretical factor in planning policy. Taking the above into account, the reasoning extends over four steps as follows: (1) analysing key literature on socio-spatial diversity; (2) theoretical focusing on ‘urban diversity’; (3) critiques on theories and practices inspired by the concept of ‘diversity’ that might lead to a different understanding; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisation processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

The history of modern urban planning is intimately bound up with the issue of urban expansion. Drawing from a toolbox that includes forms - grids, axes, rings, wedges - development rights and forms of building taxation, urban planners have proposed growth models for urban areas where it has been necessary to organise spatially the increase in productive activities and operators, to create new districts for new residents, to increase public amenities and infrastructure. But the history of our cities has not always coincided with a history of linear growth. Rather, it has been an alternation of growth and decline phases of concentration and dispersion of population, expansion and abandonment of urban areas, as shown by the de-industrialization cycle that has affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason – and even more so today, in the context of contemporary demographics and economic trends – that planners must spatially organise a series of dynamics that move in the direction of those that were traditionally the preconditions of planning. The seminar conducts critical reflection on the relationship between urban planning and shrinkage by assessing some of the key premises of this debate and some tools and plans – which have been developed to manage the shrinking of built space in urban and territorial situations characterised by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

Federico Zanfi is research fellow and lecturer at the Politecnico University of Milan. His research focuses on ‘post-growth’ transformations in Italian urban contexts, with particular emphasis on illegal settlements, diffuse urbanization and middle-class housing in the main metropolitan centres. His most recent book is Sogna di case. Abbandonare l’Italia del boaro (Donzelli, 2013; with F. De Plin, B. Bonomo and G. Caramellino).

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Francesco Chiadelli is research fellow at GSII. His research focuses on themes of planning theory, urban conflicts, urban poverty and informality. His papers have appeared in a number of international journals, such as The Journal of Spatial Planning and Applications, Cities,Journal of Urban Planning, Vol. 11/2011; with G. Manella and L. Tripodi).
Within the critical social sciences, two main theoretical approaches have been taken to the conceptualization and the empirical analysis of neoliberalism. First, in political economy scholarship, neoliberalism has been understood as a hegemonic node of societal governance and a capital accumulation strategy, which resorts to supply-side economic policies in order to improve the competitiveness of firms and regions. Second, in the literature shaped by Foucauldian thinking, neoliberalism has been interpreted as a governmental rationality and an art of government conducted in the name of ‘freedom’ and ‘accountability’, seeking to turn citizens into responsible, disciplined and active individuals through the functioning of increasingly more sophisticated and rationalized systems of evaluation, surveillance and control. Both these approaches have played a distinctive role in the field of urban studies. In this lecture, we will challenge the conventionally dualistic understanding of neoliberalism, showing how these two dimensions naturally reinforce each other. In so doing, we will reconstruct two commonly used definitions associating cities and neoliberalism: urban neoliberalism and neoliberal urbanism. Here we differentiate between these two terms: they are not identical, but rather mutually exclusive. Furthermore, in many cases they are treated as if they instantiate completely different – at times even conflicting – issues. The aim of this seminar is to move towards a general theory of self-organizing commons, taking account of this assortment of discrete phenomena as inter-related issues that are by no means at odds with one another.

Over the past twenty years there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the phenomenon of homeowner associations, as well as a related interest in co-housing, proprietory communities, residential cooperatives, commons, and other non-governmental planning phenomena. What tends to happen is that each of these phenomena is dealt with individually, that is, independently of one another; furthermore, in many cases they are treated as if they instantiate completely different – at times even conflicting – issues. 

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Ugo Rossi is research fellow and lecturer at the University of Turin. His main research interests fall within the field of critical urban politics. He is co-editor of Dialogues in Human Geography and sits in the editorial board of the journal Archivi di Studi Umani e Regionali. He is the author of Urban Political Geographies: A Global Perspective (Sage, 2012; with A. Vanoli). His work has appeared in a number of academic journals.

Stefano Moroni is associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan. He has published widely in planning theory and ethics. Recent works: Ethics, Design and the Built Environment (Springer, 2013; with C. Bastia) Lo città responsabile. Rinnovamento urbariale e maschio civico (Carocci, 2013); Cities and private planning: property rights, entrepreneurship, transaction costs (Edward Elgar, 2014; with D. Anderson).

Diversity is a concept that cuts across a very large number of disciplines and fields, ranging from natural sciences and ethology to ecology, genetics, social studies, philosophy and urban planning: more in general disciplines that deal with the connections between space and society. More and more frequently in the landscape of postmodern literature, the word ‘diversity’ irrespectively to the dialectic between identity and difference, surpassing even the concept of otherness. In turn, it occupies the third space in-between two phases, concentration and dispersion of population, expansion and abandonment of urban areas, as shown by the de-industrialisation cycle that has affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason – and even more so today, in the context of contemporary demographics and economic trends – that planners must spatially organise a series of dynamics that move in the directives of socio-spatial change that were traditionally the preconditions of planning. The seminar conducts critical reflection on the relationship between urban planning and shrinkage by assessing some of the key processes and conditions of urban transformation pattern and within a deeper historical account.

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Giovanni Semi is associate professor in Sociology at the University of Turin, Department of Culture, Politics and Society. His main research interests are international migration, urban space transformations and gentrification issues. Forthcoming are two books on Conurbation and the middle class (with R. Sassatelli) and on Gentrification, both published by Il Mulino.

Castilla Perone is research fellow and lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florence. She has published articles and books on spatial planning, participatory design, and urban policies for managing diversity. Recent publications: Giachi di pallore. Partecipazione, piani e politiche territoriali (Utet, 2013; with M. Morisi), Everyday Life in the Segregated City (Research in Urban Sociology, Vol. 11/2011; with G. Manelli and L. Tripodi).

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In recent decades, the issue of informality has become particularly prominent. This is due in particular to the importance of informal settlements (i.e. slums) in many cities of the Global South as theoretical objects, highlighting the role of contact zones, liminal spaces and interconnections between the two in spite of their supposed distance and difference.
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In gentrification studies most of the empirical literature draws on in-depth analysis of single case studies or on multi-site and synchronic comparative analyses. One of the most important and recent attempts to frame local examples of urban transformation within a broader temporal scheme is Hackworth and Smith’s gentrification waves model, put forward in 2001 in order ‘to understand (at a minute) the context for changes to the process as a whole’ (2001: 466). The process as a whole was gentrification. In the last decade this model was fruitfully used to ground spatial processes within a temporal waves, each stage highlighting a different mix of market and public actors. Yet, the definition of stages is not sufficient to make this matrix an historical one, thus providing a deep sociological understanding of how gentrification happens. In turn, it occupies the third space in-between two concepts, to overcome the oppositional logic (related to the couple) of identity/difference. In the past two decades ‘diversity’ has become an important theoretical construct and operational ‘object’ used by urban designers, planners, sociologists, social justice and equality advocating. Moreover it has served as a normative goal in city planning and a powerful theoretical factor in planning policy. Taking the above into account, the reasoning extends over four steps as follows: (1) analysing key literature on socio-spatial diversity; (2) theoretical focusing on ‘urban diversity’; (3) critiques on theories and practices inspired by the concept of ‘diversity’ that might lead to a different understanding; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisations processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

Over the past twenty years there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the phenomenon of homeowner associations, as well as a related interest in co-housing, proprietary communities, residential cooperatives, commons, and other non-governmental planning phenomena. What tends to happen is that each of these phenomena – grids, axes, rings, wedges – development rights and forms of building taxation, urban planners have proposed growth models for urban areas where it has been necessary to organise spatially the increase in productive activities and operators, to create new districts for new residents and public areas, to define and to organise infrastructures. But the history of our cities has not always coincided with a history of linear growth. Rather, it has been an alternation of growth and decline phases of concentration and dispersion of population, expansion and abandonment of urban areas, as shown by the de-industrialization cycle that has affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason – and even more so today, in the context of contemporary demographics and economic trends – that planners must spatially organize a series of dynamics that move in the direction of those that were traditionally the preconditions of planning. The seminar conducts critical reflection on the relationship between urban planning and shrinkage by assessing some of the key propositions focused in top-down urban planning strategies and projects – which have been developed to manage the shrinking of built space in urban and territorial situations characterised by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

Giovanni Semi is associate professor in Sociology at the University of Turin, Department of Culture, Politics and Society. His main research interests are international migration, urban space transformations and gentrification issues. Forthcoming are two books on Consurrezione and the middle class (with R. Sassatelli) and on Gentrification, both published by Il Mulino.

Stefano Moroni is associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan. He has published widely in planning theory and ethics. Recent works: Ethics. Design and Planning of the Built Environment (Springer, 2013), with C. Basta) La città responsabile. Bonaventura intorno a mascotte civica (Carocci, 2013), Cities and private planning: property rights, entrepreneurship, transaction costs (Edward Elgar, 2014; with D. Anderson).

In recent decades, the issue of informality has become particularly prominent. This is due in particular to the importance of informal settlements (i.e. slums) in many cities of the ‘Global South’ (e.g. in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean). In recent years, the urban poor has been described as a new urban majority, whose spatial condition is defined by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

Camilla Perrone is research fellow and lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florence. She has published articles and books on spatial planning, participatory design, and urban policies for managing diversity. Recent publications: Giochi di potere: Partecipazione, pianificazione territoriale (Utet, 2013; with M. Morisi), Everyday Life in the Segregated City (Research in Urban Sociology, Vol. 11/2011; with G. Manenti and L. Tripodi).

Diversity is a concept that cuts across a very large number of disciplines and fields of work, ranging from natural sciences and ethology to ecology, genetics, social studies, philosophy and urban planning: more in general disciplines that deal with the connections between space and society. More and more frequently in the landscape of postmodern literature, the word ‘diversity’ joins or replaces the dialectic between identity and difference, superseding the concept of altereness. In turn, it occupies the third space in-between two concepts, to overcome the oppositional logic (related to the couple) of identity/difference. In the past two decades ‘diversity’ has become an important theoretical construct and operational ‘object’ used by urban designers, planners, sociologists, social justice and equality advocates. Moreover it has served as a normative goal in city planning and a powerful theoretical factor in planning policy. Taking the above into account, the reasoning extends over four steps as follows: (1) analysing key literature on socio-spatial diversity; (2) theoretical focusing on ‘urban diversity’; (3) critiques on theories and practices inspired by the concept of ‘diversity’ that might lead to a different understanding; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisations processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

The history of modern urban planning is intimately bound up with the issue of urban expansion. Drawing from a toolbox that includes forms – grids, axes, rings, wedges – development rights and forms of building taxation, urban planners have proposed growth models for urban areas where it has been necessary to organise spatially the increase in productive activities and operators, to create new districts for new residents and public areas, to define and to organise infrastructures. But the history of our cities has not always coincided with a history of linear growth. Rather, it has been an alternation of growth and decline phases of concentration and dispersion of population, expansion and abandonment of urban areas, as shown by the de-industrialization cycle that has affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason – and even more so today, in the context of contemporary demographics and economic trends – that planners must spatially organize a series of dynamics that move in the direction of those that were traditionally the preconditions of planning. The seminar conducts critical reflection on the relationship between urban planning and shrinkage by assessing some of the key propositions focused in top-down urban planning strategies and projects – which have been developed to manage the shrinking of built space in urban and territorial situations characterised by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

Federcio Zanfi is research fellow and lecturer at the Polytechnic University of Milan. His research focuses on ‘post-growth’ transformations in Italian urban contexts, with particular emphasis on illegal settlements, diffuse urbanization and middle-class housing in the main metropolitan centres. His most recent book is Storie di casa. Abitare l’Italia del boom (Donzelli, 2013; with F. De Pieri, B. Bonora and C. Caramellino).

Francesco Chiarelli is research fellow at GSSI. His research focuses on themes of planning theory, urban conflicts, urban poverty and informality. His papers have appeared in a number of international journals such as Planning Theory and Development. He is author of Informalità e conflitti di spazio nella città della Global South (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).
Within the critical social sciences, two main theoretical approaches have been taken to the conceptualisation and the empirical analysis of neoliberalism. First, in political economy scholarship, neoliberalism has been understood as a hegemonic mode of societal governance and a capital accumulation strategy, which resorts to supply-side economic policies in order to improve the competitiveness of firms and territories. Second, in the literature developed by Foucauldian historians, neoliberalism has been interpreted as governmental rationality and an art of government conducted in the name of ‘freedom’ and ‘accountability’, returning to form governance into rational, disciplined and active individuals through the functioning of increasingly more sophisticated and rationalized systems of evaluation, surveillance and education. Both these approaches have played a distinctive role in the field of urban studies. In this lecture, we will challenge the conventional dualistic understanding of neoliberalism, showing how these two dimensions mutually reinforce each other. In so doing, we will deconstruct two commonly used definitions associating cities and neoliberalism: urban neoliberalism and neoliberal urbanism.

Ugo Rossi is research fellow and lecturer at the University of Turin. His main research interests fall within the field of critical urban politics. He is co-editor of Dialogues in Human Geography and sits in the editorial board of the Journal Arechi di Stato Urbano e Regionale. He is the author of Urban Political Geographies. A Global Perspective (Sage, 2012; with A. Vanolo). His work has appeared in a number of academic journals.

Stefano Moroni is associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan. He has published widely in planning theory and ethics. Recent works: Ethics. Designing and the Built Environment (Springer, 2013; with C. Basta) La città responsabile. Rinnovamento urbano e masacro civico (Carocci, 2013), Cities and private planning: property rights, entrepreneurship, transaction costs (Edward Elgar, 2014; with D. Anderson).

Over the past twenty years there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the phenomenon of homeownership, as well as a related interest in co-housing, proprietary communities, residential cooperatives, commons, and other non-governmental planning phenomena. What tends to happen is that each of these phenomena is dealt with individually, that is, independently of one another; furthermore, in many cases they are treated as if they instantiate completely different - at times even conflicting – issues. The aim of this seminar is to move towards a general theory of self-organizing communities and account of this assortment of discrete phenomena as inter-related issues that are by no means at odds with one another.

Giovanni Semin is associate professor in Sociology at the University of Turin, Department of Culture, Politics and Society. His main research interests are international migrations, urban space transformations and gentrification issues. Forthcoming is a book on Consumption and the middle class (with R. Sassatelli) and a book on Centrification, both published by Il Mulino.

Diversity is a concept that cuts across a very large number of disciplines and fields, ranging from natural sciences and ethology to ecology, genetics, social studies, philosophy and urban planning: more in general disciplines that deal with the connections between space and society. More and more frequently in the landscape of postmodern literature, the word ‘diversity’ reappears or replaces the dialectic between identity and difference, surpassing even the concept of otherness. In turn, it occupies the third space in-between two concepts, to overcome the oppositional logic (related to the couple) of identity/difference. In the past two decades ‘diversity’ has become an important theoretical construct and operational ‘obect’ used by urban designers, planners, sociologists, social justice and equity advocates. Moreover it has served as a normative goal in city planning and a powerful theoretical factor in planning policy. Taking the above into account, the reasoning extends over four steps as follows: (1) analysing key literature on socio-spatial diversity; (2) theoretical focusing on ‘urban diversity’; (3) critiques on theories and practices inspired by the concept of ‘diversity’ that might lead to a different understanding; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisation processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

Casilda Perone is research fellow and lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Florence. She has published articles and books on spatial planning, participatory design, and urban policies for managing diversity. Recent publications: Giachi di potere. Partecipazione, pione e politiche territoriali (Urett, 2013; with M. Morisi), Everyday Life in the Segmented City (Research in Urban Sociology, Vol. 11:2011; with G. Mainella and L. Tripodi).

The history of modern urban planning is intimately bound up with the issue of urban expansion. Drawing from a toolbox that includes forms - grids, axes, rings, wedges - development rights and forms of building taxation, urban planners have proposed growth models for urban areas where it has been necessary to organise spatially the increase in productive activities and operation, to create new districts for new residents, to attract firms to public areas. In this way, our cities have been created and based on an urban logic driven by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

But the history of our cities has not always coincided with a history of linear growth. Rather, it has been an alternation of growth and decline phenomena: concentration and dispersion of population, expansion and abandonment of urban areas, as shown by the de-industrialization process that has affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason – and even more so today, in the context of contemporary demographic and economic trends – that planners must spatially organize a series of dynamics that move in the direction of cities and those that were traditionally the preconditions of planning. The seminar conducts critical reflection on the relationship between urban planning and shrinkage by assessing some of the key quantitative and qualitative indicators of urban decay and transformation processes, and by exploring the implications of the shrinkage phenomenon for urban form, structure and function.

Federico Zanini is research fellow and lecturer at the Polytechnic University of Milan. His research focuses on post-growth transformations in Italian urban contexts, with particular emphasis on illegal settlements, diffuse urbanisation and middle-class housing in the main metropolitan centres. His most recent book is Storie di case. Abitare l’Italia del boom (Donzelli, 2013; with F. De Pieri, B. Bonomo and C. Caranello).

In recent decades, the issue of informality has become particularly prominent. This is due to the importance of the phenomenon of informal settlements (i.e. slums) in many cities of the ‘Global South’ as theoretical objects, highlighting the role of contact zones, the emergence of new actors and new institutional configurations, the mixing of ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ in the understanding of ‘urban’ and ‘environmental’ problems. Moreover it has served as a normative goal in city planning and a powerful theoretical factor in planning policy. Taking the above into account, the reasoning extends over four steps as follows: (1) analysing key literature on socio-spatial diversity; (2) theoretical focusing on urban diversity; (3) critiques on theories and practices inspired by the concept of diversity that might lead to a different understanding; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisation processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

Francesco Chioppelli is research fellow at GSGS. His research focuses on themes of planning theory, urban conflicts, urban poverty and informality. His papers have appeared in a number of international journals in the fields of Social and Economic Geographies, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Urban Geography, Environment and Planning, Urban Sociology, Vol. 11:2011; with G. Mainella and L. Tripodi).
Human beings are ‘dissipative systems’. They need to intake (to ‘consume’) a certain amount of organised matter-energy (and information) per unit of time. Yet human beings are also ‘conscious systems’ that turn the most elementary acts of consumption into symbolic acts attaching specific value to how the consumption is performed and to the type of goods that are consumed. As ‘dissipative systems’, profound differences exist between the metabolism maintained by different species. As ‘conscious (and self-reflective) systems’ different goods (and constellation of goods) are valued very differently. Therefore, only culture can explain the consumption patterns observed. In turn, culture is continuously evolving, and the consumption patterns are continuously changing. Since consumption is constrained by the social structure in which individuals are embedded, the social sciences – economics, in particular – cannot avoid addressing the distinction between the desired and actual consumption pattern. The relationship between these two patterns has emerged as one of the central questions in the study of the city. The social sciences are concerned with the processes of development and social change, as well as the role of the state in the formation of the city. The political economy of the city is the central concern of the social sciences. The relationship between the desired and actual consumption pattern is a fundamental question in the study of the city.

Antonio G. Calafati coordinates the ‘Doctoral Programme in Urban Studies’ at the GSSI and teaches ‘Urban Economics’ at the Academy of Architecture (USI). Previously he taught at the Marche Polytechnic University (Italy) and at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena (Germany).

Creativity is a popular catchword for many urban policy-makers. Since the publication of Richard Florida’s famous book ‘The Rise of the Creative Class’ in 2002, the promotion of urban creativity and the attraction of creative workers have become key strategies for planners around the world. At the same time, scholars have started to develop critical analyses of the rise of the creative class and to question the obscure concept of creativity. What does it mean exactly to be creative? What is implied by saying that Barcelona is ‘more creative’ than, say, Milan? Is creativity an exclusive feature of the rich and cosmopolitan global cities of the North of the world? And what about the politics, the injustices and the urban problems connected with the promotion of creative environments? The seminar will introduce critical perspectives on urban creativity, with the goal of critically analyzing by focusing on the politics of urban creativity. In turn, the seminar will critically analyze the forms of social fragmentation and the culture of neoliberalism at its core. Finally, the seminar will argue that it is only by understanding the geographical point of view, the space of the city, that these patterns can be understood. It is only by understanding the geographical point of view that the spatial distribution of creative industries can be explained.