

KEY
CONCEPTS
IN
URBAN
STUDIES *(Part I)*
LECTURE
SERIES

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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CREATIVITY

Alberto Vanolo

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JAN

'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 analysis 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. First, it will be argued that discourses on urban creativity and on the cultural economy are always fragmented, partial and political. Then the politics of urban creativity will be critically analysed by looking at the forms of social fragmentation and at the culture of neoliberalism at its core. Finally, it will be argued that creativity is always situated; from a geographical point of view, this means that there are a number of ways to be creative, and that creativity crosses the traditional, stereotyped divide between cities of the Global North and the Global South.

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).

NEOLIBERALISM

Ugo Rossi

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JAN

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 inspired 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 rationalised 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 conventionally 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. In the scholarly literature these two terms are customarily used interchangeably. Here we differentiate between them, associating the notion of 'urban neoliberalism' with the urbanisation of neoliberalism and the notion of 'neoliberal urbanism' with the neoliberalisation of the urban experience.

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's co-editor of *Dialogues in Human Geography* and sits in the editorial board of the journal *Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali*. 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.

SELF-ORGANIZATION

Stefano Moroni

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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 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; that is, a theory that takes account of this assortment of discrete phenomena as inter-related issues that are by no means at odds with one another.

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. Rinnovamento istituzionale e rinascita civica* (Carocci, 2013); *Cities and private planning: property rights, entrepreneurship, transaction costs* (Edward Elgar, 2014; with D. Andersson).

SHRINKAGE

Federico Zanfi

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FEB

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 organize 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, 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 demographic and economic trends – that planners must spatially organize a series of dynamics that move in the direction opposite to 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 positions that have been taken up in the debate and some tools – plans and projects – which have been developed to manage the shrinking of built space in urban and territorial situations characterized by conditions of economic and demographic decline.

Federico 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 case. Abitare l’Italia del boom* (Donzelli, 2013; with F. De Pieri, B. Bonomo and G. Caramellino).

GENTRIFICATION

Giovanni Semi

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MAR

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 minimum) 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 matrix, each stage highlighting a different mix of market and public interventions. 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. The meaning of 'market' and 'state' is also problematic in that national and urban trajectories have often produced different ways of 'being the market' and 'being the state'.

The aim of this class is to frame gentrification stages within a broader urban transformation pattern and within a deeper historical account. Moreover, it will try to debunk the notions of both 'Global North' and '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.

Giovanni Semi 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 are two books on Consumption and the middle class (with R. Sassatelli) and on Gentrification, both published by Il Mulino.

DIVERSITY

Camilla Perrone

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MAR

Diversity is a concept that cuts across a very large number of disciplines and fieldworks, 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, 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 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 of *diversity* as an urban feature; (4) exploring the potential of the concept in analysis of urbanisation processes, socio-spatial transformations and urban policy.

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, piani e politiche territoriali* (Utet, 2013; with M. Morisi); *Everyday Life in the Segmented City* (Research in Urban Sociology, Vol. 11/2011; with G. Manella and L. Tripodi).

INFORMALITY

Francesco Chiodelli

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In recent decades, the issue of informality has become particularly prominent. This is due in particular to the importance of the phenomenon of informal settlements (i.e. slums) in many cities of the Global South: according to UN-habitat, in 2012 more than 850 million people lived in informal settlements in cities of the Global South; in some countries, the majority of the population lives in a slum (with some extreme cases, such as Central African Republic, where slum dwellers are 95% of the overall urban population). However, informality is not unknown in Western countries. For instance, it is a problem concerning some particularly deprived minority groups (such as Roma or homeless) in many cities. Moreover, if we go beyond the idea that informality implies poverty or deprivation, we note that the issue also contains a feature of many urban areas in Mediterranean countries, i.e. unauthorized housing ('*abusivismo edilizio*').

The seminar will deal with the concept of informality and seek to provide a common theoretical matrix for the analysis of different forms of informality in the urban realm. The seminar will focus in particular on the relationship between informality and regulation, and it will argue for the importance of considering the role of norms when addressing problems of informality, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view.

Francesco Chiodelli 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. He has published *Gerusalemme Contesa. Dimensioni urbane di un conflitto* (Carocci, 2012) and co-edited *Cities to be tamed? Spatial investigations across the urban South* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

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