

Editorial

Nicola Martinelli

Polytechnic University Bari

nicola.martinelli@poliba.it

Mariella Annese

Polytechnic University Bari

mariella.annese@poliba.it

Giovanna Mangialardi

Polytechnic University Bari

giovanna.mangialardi@poliba.it

The Volume introduced by this editorial is the first issue of "URBANA. International Journal of Urban Policies and Studies," an open-access peer-reviewed international journal that aims to publish innovative and original papers on the processes and values of socio-spatial complexity of urban policies and practices. URBANA aims to prioritize reflection on the operationalization of public policies for cities and territories; in this perspective, this Volume is peculiarly keen on the role of Italian university institutions and cities, called to deal in various ways with the new challenges of contemporaneity to enable a faster turn toward sustainability and a more potent synergy between the actors involved.

This new editorial product of Urban@it, National Center for Urban Policy Studies, joins two other flagship products of the center: "Rapporto sulle città"¹, an annual volume dedicated to the most relevant policies that cross our territories and urban areas, and the editorial series called "Working Papers", characterized by a more open and heterogeneous approach than previous editions since its first release in 2021. All respond to the new cultural directions outlined in the document "Urban@it 2023. Linee di indirizzo del comitato scientifico per il futuro di Urban@it nella transizione urbana, green e digitale"². This new Agenda of the Study Center was widely discussed and shared at an Open Space Technology (Ost) held in June 2021.

The first Volume takes up and amplifies the issues discussed in December 2022 during the Conference "LE UNIVERSITÀ PER LE CITTÀ E I

¹ <https://www.urbanit.it/rapporti-annuali/>.

² <https://www.urbanit.it/chi-siamo/linee-scientifiche-fondamentali/>.

TERRITORI. Proposte per l'integrazione tra politiche universitarie e politiche urbane" organized in Bari by urban@it, with the sponsorship of the Puglia Region, ADISU Puglia, RUS, and Polytechnic University of Bari, in collaboration with the ArCoD Department of Polytechnic University of Bari. These dissertations also considered the relationships between the Right to Study and the Right to the City, problematizing them, too.

The conference was part of the program of the third three-year period of urban@it's activities. It fell within the mission of invisible college self-attributed by the Center during its multi-year activity (2014-2022), focusing on a strong and mutually nurturing relationship between the world of research, institutions, industry, and active citizenship around the theme of urban policies, in a constant policy transfer toward cities and territories.

The recent student protests in most major Italian universities, defined by national media as "Movimento delle Tende", have dramatically highlighted the severe delays in Right to Study policies in Italy, apparently betraying Article 34 of the Constitution.

Indeed, meeting student housing demand is no longer limited to raising the educational levels of the university population. It is now an unresolved sectoral policy issue, spilling over into urban housing issues. As citizens with full rights, students add their difficulties in finding houses to the urban scene, widening the field of those experiencing housing discomfort and exacerbating the conflicts and inequalities concerning access to acceptable houses.

The thesis supported by this volume is that the denial of the minimum levels of the Right to Study corresponds to the denial of the Right to Citizenship, undermining the quality of the typically Italian centuries-old relationships between universities and cities. We believe that this issue can no longer be solved only within the domain of urban competitiveness. Instead, it requires the simultaneous guarantee of university citizenship rights and habitability rights in the contemporary city. The relationship between the competitiveness of university cities and active policies for student welfare is unquestionable. Some universities have performed reorganization concerning their management and assets and experimented with new approaches to the issues of the Right to Study and solving the issues of their communities. These have driven the development of the urban systems they are a part of, increasing their global prominence. The attractiveness of a university location is not only played out on the level of educational offerings and an established brand but also on the ability to provide adequate responses to the demands of university citizenship.

In Italy, student welfare has long been outside the national political agenda, with limited local situations. More than ever, the issue today is to transform the "Right to Study" into a more explicit "Right to the City."

Recent evidence suggests a clear orientation of Italian universities concerning the cogency of contemporary rights crises.

For example, in recent months, Italian universities have developed important experiments concerning housing discomfort through applications to the L 338/2000 call for university housing. The goal was to overcome the enclave dimension of universities about the "external context." Often, project proposals have been hinged on actual Urban Regeneration programs, such as the National Innovative Housing Quality Program - PINQuA.

These experiences allow identifying explicit directions to be shared at the national level to truly enhance the transformation capacity of universities within public and private processes at the urban and territorial scales.

Nowadays, strategies for integrating academic and urban cultures can also characterize the relationship between universities and cities in our country. In our historical condition, the urban redevelopment and enhancement of urban cultural heritage processes open up possible synergies between municipalities and universities. In this context, the scientific community can directly contribute to the maturation of the cultural environment and youth creativity, improving the right to culture while doing education and research.

Moreover, even before NRRP's strong push for ecological transition in cities and territories, Italian universities came together in the Italian University Network for Sustainable Development - RUS. Since 2019, they have contributed to drafting Urban Sustainability Agendas in numerous Italian cities. This has been triggered by the belief that good practices and lifestyles can radiate into urban contexts from university campuses and plexuses—for mobility, waste, energy conservation, and urban green areas, etc.—with the goal of sustainable and, therefore, "fairer" cities.

This all suggests the apparent propensity of universities, as institutional subjects with expert competence, to play an intermediary role between (local and central) public institutions and inhabited territories within a specific acceptation of public engagement. University students can become drivers for territorial transformations in favor of inhabitants and the most fragile contexts through innovative experiments on the Right to Study as a Right to the City, guaranteeing extended material and immaterial accessibility.

Through the National Conference, Urban@it raised the need for the academic community and institutional representatives to reflect on these issues. This confirms the Study Center's ability to identify critical issues for Italian Urban Agendas. These include the relationship between the urban system and the university system concerning the university's role in contemporary society, moving beyond the enclave dimension to become an "anchor institution" of the city while the "knowledge society" keeps advancing.

During the conference, an attempt was made to investigate how and to what extent Italian universities can contribute to the innovation of urban and territorial policies of the contexts in which they operate, fulfilling their institutional tasks of Education, Scientific Research, and Third Mission. The result was an articulated and complex picture of the renewed relationship between universities and cities in contemporary times. In particular, the academic community was asked whether Italian universities can concretely contribute to the innovation of urban and territorial policies in the contexts where they operate. This question was embodied in the contributions presented in the two study days. Italian researchers interacted with student organizations, public administrators, and the local community from a multidisciplinary perspective during this time.

To dissect these issues, five work lines were identified in the National Conference to represent, on the one hand, the complexity of the problem and, on the other hand, the possibilities of integration between university policies and urban policies:

- Session I: University and right-to-study facilities as a tool for urban regeneration;
- Session II: The Role of Urban Cultural and Youth Policies;
- Session III: Urban Sustainability Agendas for Universities;
- Session IV: What Right to Study? A Set of Integrated and Inclusive Policies between the University and the City;
- Session V: Inclusiveness and Accessibility of University Facilities and Urban Spaces.

The lines articulated the organization of the Conference first, the subsequent collection of the Proceedings³, and now this Volume.

The first Volume collects 14 innovative and original papers presented at the National Conference, selected and introduced by the chairs⁴ who led the five sessions mentioned above. The scientific contributions are anticipated by the contributions of three keynote speakers. In detail: Federica Laudisa's contribution regarding the economic advantages of having a university located in the community, students' difficulties in Italian cities, and the perspectives in the NRRP; Marella Lamacchia's contribution concerning current regional policies, with a focus on the "Puglia Regione Universitaria" Project; Gianfranco Viesti's contribution about the levels of tertiary education in our country in relation to the needs of the economy and contemporary society.

³The full proceedings of the conference can be found in Volume No. 15 in the WORKING PAPERS Series - Urban@it 1/2023 (eds.: Annese, Mariella; Mangialardi, Giovanna; Martinelli, Nicola (2023) *Le università per le città e i territori. Proposte per l'integrazione tra politiche universitarie e politiche urbane*. Bologna: Department of Architecture, University of Bologna, p. 767. ISBN 9788854971172. DOI 10.6092/unibo/amsacta/7345. In: Working Papers - Urban@it (15). Eds.: Orioli, Valentina; Martinelli, Nicola. ISSN 2465-2059).

⁴Adolfo F. L. Baratta for Session I, Giuliano Volpe for Session II, Patrizia Lombardi for Session III, Francesca Cognetti for Session IV, and Daniela De Leo for Session V.

The 14 multidisciplinary contributions bring together theoretical reflections, accounts of experiments with identifying innovation elements and unresolved critical issues, and functional proposals for innovating the relationship between universities, cities, and territories to make university and urban policies more integrated.

All are firmly rooted in the present: while providing insight and innovation concerning the more traditional reflection on the relationship between university and city, they look at a national pandemic transition condition recently exacerbated by a new global geopolitical crisis.

The collection of contributions in this first volume of Urban@it's URBANA represents a cultural heritage on issues that Urban@it will continue to explore in the near and immediate future in light of the complex national contextual conditions. What is presented here is preliminary to the 10th Report on Cities, which is being prepared and will be published in January 2025, on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Study Center (Dec. 15, 2014). The Report will focus on the complex contextual conditions in which Italian university institutions are called to deal with the new contemporary challenges in various ways by assessing what contributions they can make.