

# Ongoing Policies.

## The Puglia Regione Universitaria Project

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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“The Republic recognizes and guarantees the inviolable rights of the person, both as an individual and in the social groups where human personality is expressed. The Republic expects that the fundamental duties of political, economic, and social solidarity be fulfilled.” A reflection on the Article 2 of the Italian Constitution, offered to us by Valentino Castellani,<sup>1</sup> started the inter-institutional project “*Puglia Regione Universitaria: studiare e vivere in città accoglienti e sostenibili*”<sup>2</sup>—Puglia as a University Region. Studying and living in welcoming and sustainable cities—promoted by the Puglia Region in collaboration with the Regional Agency for the Right to University Study - ADISU, the universities and university cities of Apulia.

Alongside the inviolable rights of man, including the right to study from Article 33, Art. 2 of the constitution posits imperative duties of political, economic, and social solidarity: rights to be enforced and duties to be fulfilled in both personal and collective terms. The 2015-2020 government program of the Puglia Region included supporting the right to study through 100 percent coverage of scholarships for eligible students.<sup>3</sup> After achieving this goal, it immediately appeared as a starting point.

Alongside and thanks to the financial resources, a broader parterre of resources—administrative, cultural, professional, etc.—had to be activated to define public policies for guaranteeing those who choose to study in Apulia the full right-duty of citizenship as an unavoidable aspect of the right to study. This is because the urban quality of university cities, in terms of services, sustainability, and cultural offer, constitutes an important factor of attraction for academic students, and the presence of a university represents an important resource for the cities and

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<sup>1</sup> Lectio Magistralis delivered at the States General of the Right to University Education organized by ADISU on September 20 and 21, 2018, at the Charles V Castle in Lecce, on the theme: “University Citizens: studying and living in a sustainable city.”

<sup>2</sup> The general outline of the Project *Puglia Regione Universitaria: studiare e vivere in città accoglienti e sostenibili* was approved and it was funded by the Regional Council with DRC 2383 of 19/12/2019.

<sup>3</sup> 100% coverage of scholarships for eligible students has been achieved in Puglia since 2016 through a major financial commitment from ESF resources.

territories that host it. Moreover, the relationship between cities and universities has always been complex since universities, projected by their mission on global geographic scales, have always related to their territories and cities by posing themselves as a “foreign body” to coexist with, in a relationship between equals, which is not easy for either of the two stakeholders to manage.<sup>4</sup>

Starting from the regional scale, the theme of “Universities for Cities and Territories” can be examined from at least three perspectives: (i) the role of the university, as an educational agency, in the development of human capital and the local business and administrative fabric; (ii) the importance of universities as institutional stakeholders and sometimes real estate players within cities; and (iii) the mutual opportunities that urban contexts and student-citizens can activate by entering into a virtuous dialogue.

Concerning the first perspective, in recent years, Puglia Region has enacted numerous initiatives aimed at strengthening both universities’ teaching offer, funding Type-A researcher positions, PhDs, and third mission as research grants and summer schools in collaboration with businesses and public administrations. However, concerning the third perspective, the Puglia Region has built an innovative path on the national scene through the *Puglia Regione Universitaria* project, combining the right to study with the right to citizenship through an institutional path at the regional scale aimed at the construction of an Agenda.

Based on a Protocol Agreement between public administrations—ex-art 15 of L. 241/90—signed in February 2021, the Puglia Region, ADISU, the Apulian universities—University of Bari, Polytechnic University of Bari, University of Foggia, University of Salento, Libera Università Mediterranea—, and the municipal administrations of the university cities—Bari, Taranto, Lecce, Foggia, and Brindisi—shared the project’s objectives and methodology. Each university committed to scientifically investigating a topic on the entire regional territory and assisting the research of other universities concerning their territorial context; the municipalities committed to supporting the research activities of the universities by helping them in policymaking. The Region and ADISU undertook to coordinate the research under the scientific direction of the Urban@it research center.<sup>5</sup>

The strength and innovativeness of the project are, first and foremost, methodological. It is a participatory path that seeks to bring urban and

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<sup>4</sup> Nicola Costantino, “Prefazione”, in *Spazi della Conoscenza. Università, città e territori*, ed. Nicola Martinelli (Bari: Adda editore, 2012), 7-9.

<sup>5</sup> For Puglia Region, the following have attended in different roles: Councillor S. Leo, M. R. Lamacchia, B. Loconsole, A. Maroccia, R. Pastore, and V. Parente; For ADISU Puglia, A. Cataldo, G. Nuzzo, M. Cataldo, and F. Falsetti attended; for urban@it, Profs. A. Balducci, V. Castellani, V. Fedeli, and N. Martinelli attended. Specifically, the latter structured the Scientific Secretariat in Apulia (Mariella Annese - urban@it director; G. Mangialardi - scientific coordinator; A. Triggiano, C. Danisi, D. Pagano).

university systems into dialogue with a view to shared planning at the regional scale. Student organizations, economic and social forces, urban service managers, and cultural associations are engaged in the reflection, too. It is a transversal operational research approach, exploring five themes: (i) University and Right to University Study facilities as an opportunity for urban regeneration; (ii) The role of the university system in urban cultural policies and youth policies; (iii) Urban University Sustainability Agendas with particular reference to the issue of mobility and energy efficiency; (iv) Innovation in the supply of services for the Right to University Study; (v) Disability and accessibility of university facilities and urban spaces<sup>6</sup>.

In the preliminary stages before the start of the research, the regional offices reflected at length on the advisability of funding City-University Strategic Plans to individual cities universities in Apulia in dialogue with urban@it's scientific committee. This followed the many research works that have studied the issue at the urban scale but finally opted for the construction of a project at the regional scale, considering that many of the discussed issues transcended the urban perimeter of university cities. For example, students demanded suburban transportation services and co-studying spaces in their home cities, in addition to services for out-of-town students in university cities.

Initially, a structured research network among well-defined actors was planned: it involved the Region, with its Agency for the Right to University Study, the four public universities, and the Cities where the universities are located. However, the prominence of a broader range of actors within the institutional research path became clear from the start. This includes, for example, some cities, such as Taranto, Brindisi, and Tricase, that host teaching sites and aspire to qualify as university towns; private universities; music conservatories; some provincial bodies; and a wider array of urban centers that have recognized the value of the presence of university students in their communities. These actors, in their various capacities, have become part of what has been configured as a "cloud" with blurred contours rather than a network, where the various actors with different roles build relationships that are not always linear and not always biunivocal within an unprecedented scale for this type of research, that is, the regional one.

Therefore, the investigation was set up by delving into research themes at different scales of intervention—the building, the city, the inter-municipal territory, the region<sup>7</sup>—and identifying three types of cities to

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<sup>6</sup> The research groups were respectively coordinated by Prof. M. Montemurro - Polytechnic University of Bari; Prof. G. Volpe - University of Bari; Prof. M. A. Aiello - University of Salento; Prof. F. Fanizza - University of Foggia; Prof. A. Tarzia - Libera Università Mediterranea.

<sup>7</sup> The scales of intervention considered were (i) the building for interventions affecting the individual building, teaching facility, residence hall, study hall, etc.; (ii) the city for interventions affecting urban space, urban-scale transportation; (iii) the inter-municipal territory for interventions affecting extended territories, such as suburban transportation; (iv) the region for interventions affecting the entire regional university and territorial system.

focus attention on; the classic distinction found in the literature between university cities and cities with universities<sup>8</sup> was juxtaposed with a typification into (i) university cities, provincial capitals that are home to universities—Bari, Foggia, and Lecce—or with important teaching sites and university facilities—Taranto and Brindisi—; (ii) cities with teaching sites or small private universities: medium-sized cities with a few teaching sites and/or university facilities—Casamassima, Tricase, etc.—; (iii) cities with university students: medium and small urban centers without teaching sites but with university students who need services and spaces dedicated to them.

*Puglia Regione Universitaria* is configured as an action research project. On the impetus of the scientific coordination of urban@it, always aimed at providing policymakers with concrete proposals for action on the main issues affecting urban policies, several “flagship projects” have been launched. The ones where scientific-institutional dialogue has produced the most tangible results are those on student housing in university cities, also because of the attention given to the issue by the NRRP. Indeed, its targets include the increase in student housing places<sup>9</sup> by funding the acquisition of properties already structured to accommodate students and the opportunities offered by the publication of the Fifth Ministerial Call of Law 338/2000, which finances interventions for the construction of housing and residences for university students primarily through the conversion of abandoned properties, but other opportunities and calls aimed at urban regeneration such as PINQuAs.

Puglia Region wanted to participate in a structured way in the Fifth Call of the L. 338/2000<sup>10</sup>. Downstream of a participatory process of territorial consultation with universities and municipalities, initiated in 2021, the Department of Education and Universities has asked municipalities and universities in Puglia to identify disused properties in strategic urban locations. In collaboration with the Regional Agencies for the Right to University Study-ADISU and for the Ecosustainable Development of the Territory-ASSET, it has launched some two-stage open design competitions<sup>11</sup> to ensure adequate participation and design quality. Indeed, this incorporated the awareness that competing by comparing ideas is the main guarantee of achieving quality in architectural works and ensuring the quality of the urban and social environment where they

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<sup>8</sup> Francesco Indovina. “Sinergia tra comunità e università,” *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali* 60/61 (1998): 85-114.

<sup>9</sup> The National Recovery and Resilience Plan has allocated 960 million to increase the number of college student housing from the current 40,000 to over 100,000 by 2026.

<sup>10</sup> By DM no. 1257 of Nov. 30, 2021, the Fifth Call for Projects was issued in implementation of Law 338/2000, which provides co-financing of up to 75 percent for interventions aimed at the construction of housing and residences for university students.

<sup>11</sup> Specifically, the subject of the agreement concerns the fulfillment, pursuant to Art. 152 et seq. of D. Lgs. 50/2016 and R.L. 14/2008 “*Misure a sostegno della qualità delle opere di architettura e di trasformazione del territorio*” of a design competition, whose object is to acquire a technical and economic feasibility project, with the contracting station reserving the right to entrust the winner with the assignment of the design of the final and executive projects and the supervision of works.

are located. Three of these competitions have been concluded: the former convent of the *Carmelitani Scalzi* in Lecce, *Palazzo Frisini* in Taranto, and *Palazzo Cassa Mutua Artigiani* in Brindisi. The resulting projects were evaluated according to the quality of the architectural solutions respecting the historical-architectural values of the building, but also, above all, the spatial integration of the building with the urban context. This also led to a focus on the presence of “threshold spaces” open to the city—courtyards, arcades, co-working spaces, catering services, auditoriums, gyms, etc.—, articulation of the transition between public, collective, and private space, flexibility of housing solutions in terms of typology, quality of attached open spaces, and compliance with green principles. All the projects submitted to both the first and second stages were published in as many booklets to restore the plurality and richness of a collective reflection<sup>12</sup>.

Alongside this, the opportunity to work on raising the quality of the design of spaces for socialization—common spaces and open spaces—in existing university residences was seized. This occurred through in-depth design activities by launching an initial experiment on redesigning common spaces and expanding the Ennio De Giorgi residence in Lecce. Bari Polytechnic University conducted a preliminary typological study as part of the *Puglia Regione Universitaria* research project. Then, a participatory design workshop was held in September 2021<sup>13</sup>. Finally, a project was accomplished: in addition to providing new housing places, it proposes redesigning common spaces and public spaces. This participatory process was shared with young graduates of the Faculties of Engineering and Architecture of the Puglia Region, students living in the university residences, the neighborhood’s community, and the cultural association Sud Est, which manages the adjoining Manifatture Knos. A creative dialogue was opened with the latter, aimed at active participation and the narration of the identity of that place. The Lecce City Council approved the project with the recommendation to ensure the usability of open spaces for neighborhood residents. This need for integration seals the achieved awareness of a necessary opening of student housing facilities in the city.

The participatory and confrontational process promoted as part of *Puglia Regione Universitaria* has already led to greater synergy among the institutions involved from its earliest stages. In particular, the regional administration and the Agency for the Right to Study were invited by the

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<sup>12</sup> AA.VV. (2022), *La residenza universitaria nell'ex convento dei Carmelitani Scalzi a Lecce*, Mario Adda Editore; AA.VV. (2022), *La residenza universitaria nel Palazzo Frisini già Betrotrofio a Taranto*, Mario Adda Editore; AA.VV. (2022), *La residenza universitaria nel Palazzo Cassa Mutua Artigiani a Brindisi*, Mario Adda Editore.

<sup>13</sup> As an implementation of the provisions of the Regional Council’s DGR 2187 of 12/29/2020, ADISU Puglia, together with Puglia Region and the Municipality of Lecce, organized “*Fuori sede - Design Workshop for Temporary Housing of University Citizens*” which was held on September 28/29/30, 2021. Starting from the presentation of a series of case studies, future scenarios were imagined, and the Guidelines for the design of the university residence extension were drawn.

city administrations of Brindisi Taranto and Lecce, engaged in drafting urban redevelopment projects to be submitted to PINQuA<sup>14</sup>, to share the path of integrating the university function in the city. This was aimed at achieving the project's primary objectives: redeveloping urban centers, reducing housing discomfort, and promoting social inclusion<sup>15</sup>. In the application process, Puglia Region and ADISU expressed their interest in managing student services in refurbished buildings, even with a small number of housing places, though that is not particularly convenient in terms of management. The goal is to experiment with a model of integration between the university system and the city, between students and the city community.

One more opportunity to enhance the strategies devised along the research path appeared with “perfect timing”, as stated by the involved researchers and participants. With DM n. 1046/2022 and subsequent DM no. 1252/2022, the MUR launched the two calls for proposals from NRRP funds to purchase or lease facilities ready to be used as university residences. Through ADISU, issuing an expression of interest, Puglia Region chose to set some simple localization rules of “proximity”—max 3 km from railway stations and 2 km from educational venues—, size—max 250 accommodation places—, and quality—presence of collective spaces—; on the other hand, the private market, to which these NRRP calls were also aimed, proposed venues outside of these rules. Their effects on the city-university system will be the subject of careful observation in the near future to avert the possibility that the large availability of resources put forth by the NRRP may produce perverse effects of separation and gentrification in the absence of a clear public strategy.

In conclusion, Puglia Region and ADISU thank the entire interinstitutional network of *Puglia Regione Universitaria*, and, in particular, urban@it. By its own mission, the latter engages in dialogue with those who work in public administrations, not only transferring to them expert knowledge useful for policy formulation and implementation but accompanying them to reflect in an original and creative way on the procedures they deal with. We hope that paths of applied research, such as the one recounted in this contribution, may

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<sup>14</sup> The *Programma Innovativo Nazionale sulla Qualità dell’Abitare* (PINQuA, National Innovative Program on Housing Quality), referred to in DIM 395/2020, is funded by the NRRP and aims to reduce suburban decay, make public housing more energy efficient, and carry out urban regeneration interventions to improve people’s quality of life.

<sup>15</sup> The collaboration with the City of Lecce involves student residences within a mix of housing solutions in the building to be used as a solidarity condominium, “Ex tubercular sanatorium Antonio Galateo.” The collaboration with the City of Brindisi involves a few dozen beds and a student cafeteria within a program of interventions aimed at constructing the new “University of Brindisi” building complex. Finally, the collaboration with the Municipality of Taranto involves the management of university residences planned within a noble palace located within the Program of urban redevelopment and regeneration interventions within the Old City.

lead to the rise of what, paraphrasing Schön<sup>16</sup>, we might call a new generation of reflexive bureaucrats. They shall be capable of transforming the contradictions of bureaucracy into opportunities for the country may be born, aware that, as Franco Cassano teaches, “any attempt to understand cannot live without a constant experience of contradiction” and that, therefore, “the experience of insufficiency and precariousness is the signal for being [...] in the heart of the world”<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Donald A Schön. *Il professionista riflessivo. Per una nuova epistemologia della pratica professionale*, Edizioni Dedalo, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Franco Cassano. *La contraddizione dentro*. Editori Laterza, 2022.